

Apples and Oranges

Divergent Meanings of Parents' and Adolescents' Perceptions of Parental Influence

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This study examines the hypothesis that effective parental influence stems from the qualities of the parent-adolescent relationship rather than from explicit efforts to alter adolescents' behaviors. Adolescents' versus parents' perceptions of parental influence as predictors of parent-adolescent relationship quality and of adolescents' social functioning are examined using observational and multireporter data obtained from a sample of 167 adolescents (90 female, 77 male; age $M = 13.34$ years, $SD = 0.65$), their parents, and their same-sex peers. Analyses revealed that adolescents' and parents' perceptions of parental influence were uncorrelated with one another and were differentially related to qualities of adolescents' relationships with parents and friends. Adolescents' perceptions of high parental influence were linked to observations and self-reports of warm, supportive relationships with parents (particularly mothers). In contrast, parents' reports of high influence were linked to lower levels of adolescent autonomy with parents and friends and less relatedness with mothers and friends.

Keywords: *adolescence; development; parent-adolescent relationships; divergent perceptions*

The past several decades have yielded a vast quantity of research demonstrating that the quality of parent-adolescent relationships is integrally linked to adolescents' psychosocial functioning. Several authors have pointed out, however, that the majority of this research has relied on one

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person's assessment of family relationships—whether the rater is the adolescent, a parent, or an outside observer (Jessop, 1981; Sweeting, 2001; Welsh, Galliher, & Powers, 1998).

Furthermore, when reports are gathered from multiple family members, agreement between adolescents and their parents regarding the quality of their relationships has typically been quite low (Collins & Russell, 1991; Jessop, 1981). Although this lack of agreement has often been attributed to measurement error and/or regarded as a methodological nuisance (Feinberg, Howe, Reiss, & Hetherington, 2000; Paikoff, Carlton-Ford, & Brooks-Gunn, 1992), recently there has been a growing interest in examining how and when adolescents and parents diverge in their perceptions of family interactions. The current study examines the degree of parental influence over adolescents' behaviors as one critical arena in which potentially different perceptions may have important implications for adolescents' development.

During early adolescence, the meaning underlying divergent parent versus adolescent perceptions of family processes may be especially important. The developmental transformations that occur during this stage likely result in changes in adolescents' needs within the family (Holmbeck, Paikoff, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995). As young teens begin to struggle for more self-governance, they may be most likely to recognize parental influence when they feel positively toward their parents and respect their opinions. Thus, "My parents influence me" may translate to "I like my parents and care about what they have to say." Similarly, the shift into adolescence may necessitate an adjustment in parents' attitudes and/or behaviors toward their adolescent children (Collins, 1990; Holmbeck et al., 1995; Paikoff, 1991). However, because parents' roles of maintaining authority and keeping adolescents safe are critical (Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Jessop, 1981; Noller, 1994; Smetana, 1991; Welsh et al., 1998), their views of their children and understanding of their developmental needs often may be resistant to change (Holmbeck & O'Donnell, 1991), and they may be highly motivated to influence their adolescents to follow the rules they have established for them. Parents' reports of high levels of influence may therefore reflect the degree to which they are actively focused on controlling their young teens: "I influence my adolescent" may translate to "I am in charge of my adolescent."

Consistent with this notion, discrepancies between parents' and adolescents' perceptions of family life appear to be most prevalent around topics that tap into adolescents' needs for autonomy and individuation (Carlson, Cooper, & Spradling, 1991; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Jessop, 1981, 1982; Noller & Callan, 1986; Paikoff et al., 1992). Although no study to date has directly examined potential discrepancies in parental influence per se, there is some

suggestion that adolescents and parents do view the influence process differently. Adolescents are less likely than parents to report that a rule exists (Jessop, 1981, 1982), more likely to view certain topics as issues of personal choice versus subject to parents' control (Smetana, 1988, 1991, 1995; Smetana & Berent, 1993), and more likely to report dissatisfaction with their families' abilities to change roles and rules (Noller & Callan, 1986). Thus, although there is some evidence that discrepant perceptions regarding parental influence may exist, the meaning of such discrepancies is not yet clear.

Adolescents may well feel the greatest levels of parental influence not when parents are overtly trying to control them but rather when the parent-teen relationship is strong. Similarly, parents may feel most influential when they are highly focused on controlling their adolescents' behaviors. To the extent that adolescents' reports of influence may reflect warmth and support and parents' reports of influence may reflect (possibly excessive) concern over control, each viewpoint likely captures divergent aspects of the developing autonomy and relatedness processes within the parent-adolescent relationship. As such, they may be differentially related to a number of different outcomes for teens, including functioning within their close relationships. Past research has suggested that autonomy inhibition is linked to a range of other components of the parent-adolescent relationship, such as less parent-teen involvement, poorer communication, less positive affective expression, and increased parent-adolescent conflict and hostility (Allen, Hauser, O'Connor, Bell, & Eickholt, 1996; Bulcroft, 1991; Collins, 1990; Smetana, 1995; Smetana & Berent, 1993). Although peer relationship outcomes have not been studied as extensively, similar patterns have been found: Autonomy promotion (on the part of either the parent or the adolescent) within the parent-adolescent relationship has been linked to increased interpersonal competence and more intimate friendships (Allen, Bell, & Boykin, 2000; Hall, 2002; McElhaney, 2000; McElhaney & Allen, 2001), whereas undermining of autonomy has been linked to decreased interpersonal competence, greater amounts of hostility in relationships with peers, and increasingly distant peer relationships (Allen et al., 2000; Allen & Hauser, 1993; Allen, Hauser, O'Connor, & Bell, 2002; Marsh & McFarland, 2002; McElhaney, 2000; Tencer, Meyer, & Hall, 2003). This pattern of findings indicates that inhibition of autonomy is problematic in terms of developmental outcomes both within the family and within the peer group.

Past research has typically relied on an examination of difference scores to look at the question of divergent perceptions, with the inherent assumption that the difference between parents' and adolescents' viewpoints is *quantitative* (seeing more or less of the same construct) rather than *qualitative* (interpreting the

same construct differently). The current study proposes that adolescents' and parents' perceptions should be considered as each offering a unique vantage point on the meaning of family interactions (Bell, Rychener, & Munsch, 2001; Carlton-Ford, Paikoff, & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Holmbeck & O'Donnell, 1991; Schwarz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky, 1985). This approach is particularly important given research demonstrating that parents and adolescents do interpret key family processes in qualitatively different ways (e.g., Smetana, 1988, 1991, 1995; Smetana & Berent, 1993). Thus, the current multimethod, multi-reporter study assesses differing parental and adolescent perceptions of parental influence processes by examining the main effects of each viewpoint on both parent-adolescent relationship quality and adolescents' functioning with peers.

Given our proposition that parents and adolescents have different viewpoints when it comes to parental influence, we hypothesized that (a) parents' and adolescents' perceptions of influence will not be strongly correlated. To further explain this divergence between parents' and adolescents' perceptions of influence, we hypothesized that (b) parents' perceptions will be linked to their focus on controlling their adolescents' behavior (and thus significantly correlated with reports of parental control), whereas adolescents' perceptions will be more closely linked with their feelings of closeness with their parents (and thus significantly correlated with reports of parental support). Finally, we expected that if parents and adolescents are truly viewing parental influence through two difference lenses, then the links between their respective reports of influence ought to also differentially predict outcomes. We hypothesized that (c) parents' reports of influence will predict diminished autonomy functioning as observed not only within the mother- and father-adolescent relationships but also within adolescents' relationships with their friends. Furthermore, we proposed that (d) parents' reports of influence will also be linked to *fewer* expressions of support and relatedness within adolescents' close relationships, whereas (e) adolescents' reports of parental influence will be linked to *higher* levels of observed support and relatedness within these relationships (mother-teen, father-teen, and teen-friend).

Method

Participants

This sample was drawn from a larger longitudinal investigation of adolescent social development in familial and peer contexts. Participants included 167 seventh and eighth graders (90 females, 77 males; age

$\bar{X} = 13.34$, $SD = 0.65$) and their parents. Approximately 52% of the adolescents in the study lived with two biological parents, another 34% lived with just one parent, 12% lived in a household with one biological parent and a nonbiological parent figure (stepparent or parent's partner), and an additional 4 teens lived with one or both of their biological grandparents. The sample included 105 adolescents who identified themselves as Caucasian and 62 as being from a minority and/or mixed ethnicity group. Adolescents' parents reported a median family income in the \$40,000 through \$59,999 range, with an overall sample range from less than \$5,000 through more than \$60,000. Adolescents also nominated their closest same-gendered friend to be included in the study. Close friends reported that they had known the adolescents for an average of 4 years ($\bar{X} = 4.09$, $SD = 2.98$).

Adolescents were recruited from a public middle school drawing from suburban and urban populations in the southeastern United States. Students were recruited via an initial mailing to parents along with follow-up contact efforts at school lunches. Adolescents who indicated that they were interested in the study were contacted by telephone. Siblings of target adolescents and students already participating as a target adolescent's close friend were ineligible for participation. Approximately two-thirds of individuals approached (and who were eligible) expressed willingness to participate in the study. This sample appeared generally comparable to the larger population of families in this school system in terms of both racial/ethnic composition (37% non-White in sample vs. approximately 40% in the school system) and socioeconomic status (mean household income \$44,900 in the sample versus \$48,000 in the community).

Participating adolescents came in for two visits, the first with their parent or parents and the second with their close friend. Self-report data were gathered from adolescents about their relationships with their parent or parents with whom they resided; when two residential parents were not present, nonresidential parents with whom the adolescent had regular contact were also recruited for participation when possible and were included as targets of the teens' reports (e.g., a local but nonresidential father). All participants provided informed assent before each interview session, and parents provided informed consent. All interviews took place in private offices within a university academic building. Parents, adolescents, and friends were all paid for their participation.

Measures

Reported parental influence. The Parental Influence Questionnaire (Marsh, Hall, Insabella, & McElhaney, 1999) was developed for the current

study and contained six items consisting of a range of behaviors that could be subject to parental influence. Adolescents were asked to rate the extent to which their “parents” (rated as a unit) were a part of why they did (or did not) engage in various behaviors, including not teasing, not smoking, not fighting, not cutting school, spending time with family, and respecting adults. Mothers and fathers each completed a parallel version in which they rated their own influence for the same six items. Influence over each behavior was rated on a 4-point scale (from *not at all a part* to *a big part*), and scores from each of the six items were summed to form the total Parental Influence Over Following Rules Scale. Given that adolescents reported on both parents together and that mothers’ and fathers’ reports were significantly positively correlated, mothers’ and fathers’ reports of influence were combined (by averaging their scores together) to provide a parallel to the adolescents’ reports.¹ The correlation between mothers’ and fathers’ reports on this measure was .21 ($p < .05$). Cronbach’s alphas were .76 for adolescents’ reports regarding their parents’ influence and .81 for parents’ reports about their own influence.

Reported parental support. A 19-item version of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) was used to assess the degree of psychological support present in the parent-adolescent relationship in terms of mutual trust, quality of communication, and degree of alienation. For example, adolescents were asked to rate the extent to which their parent respected their feelings, encouraged them to talk about difficulties, and understood their experiences, each on a 5-point scale (from *not true* to *almost always true*), with higher scores indicating more positive and supportive relationship quality. Adolescents completed this scale about each of their parents, and their responses to these items were then summed (with the alienation items reverse coded) to provide an overall index of positivity and support (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). A parent-report version was created for the current study, in which mothers and fathers were asked to rate the same 19 items. To provide a parallel to the joint parental influence measure described above, adolescents’ perceptions of their relationships with their mothers and fathers (which were significantly positively correlated: $r = .57, p < .001$) were averaged together. Mothers’ and fathers’ reports were also significantly positively correlated ($r = .26, p < .01$) and were also averaged together. Total scores from the adolescent version of the IPPA have been associated with psychological well-being, self-satisfaction, lower self-reports of depression, higher likelihood of seeking social support, and less symptomatic response to stressful life events (Armsden &

Greenberg, 1987; Armsden, McCauley, Greenberg, Bruke, & Mitchell, 1991). Cronbach's alphas for the overall summary scale were .90 for adolescents' reports of both parents and .92 for parents' combined reports.

Reported parental psychological control. Adolescents and parents completed the Psychological Control scale from the Child Report of Parenting Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1970). This scale included 10 items assessing the degree to which each parent used pressuring and controlling tactics, such as "My mother wants to control whatever I do" and "My mother is always trying to change me." Each item was rated on a 3-point scale (from *not like* to *a lot like*), and adolescents completed versions for both their mother and father. Parents also completed this scale, rating the degree that they utilized psychologically controlling techniques with the target teen. As with the IPPA above, adolescents' perceptions of their relationships with their mothers and fathers on the Psychological Control scale were significantly positively correlated ($r = .68, p < .001$) and were averaged together to create a parallel to the parental influence measure; mothers' and fathers' reports were also significantly correlated ($r = .16, p < .10$) and were similarly combined. This measure has been found to be significantly related to indices of poorer family functioning and negative adolescent behavioral outcomes (Collins, 1990; Litovsky & Dusek, 1985; Schaefer, 1965; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1970; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). Cronbach's alphas for this scale were .87 for adolescents' reports and .74 for parents' reports.

Observed support in interactions with mothers and friends. Adolescents participated in an 8-minute interaction task with their mothers (and a corresponding 6-minute interaction with their close friends), during which they asked their mothers and close friends for help with a "problem they were having that they could use some advice or support about." Typical topics included dating, problems with peers or siblings, raising money, or deciding about joining sports teams. These interactions were coded using the supportive behavior coding system (Allen, Hall, et al., 2001), which was based on several other similar systems (Crowell et al., 1998; Haynes & Fainsilber, 1993; Julien et al., 1997). Each interaction was separately coded directly from the videotape by two trained raters who were blind to the rest of the data. Any coding disagreements were resolved by averaging coders' scores together. A subset of interactions was coded and discussed by the entire coding team to maintain reliability and integrity in using the system.

Training toward adequate reliability consisted of approximately 20 through 30 hours of reviewing coding materials, coding tapes, and attending training meetings aimed at discussing and applying coding manual techniques to specific interactions. Judgments of adequate reliability were made when coder disagreements for a new coder were found to be typically within the range experienced by existing coders, with ultimate assessments of coder reliability of course obtained via intraclass correlations.

For the purposes of the current study, adolescents' active engagement in soliciting support from their mothers and close friends was assessed. This scale included behaviors coded on three subscales: the degree to which adolescents' were seen as *engaged* with their mothers and close friends during their discussion (exhibiting verbal or nonverbal signs of attending to the other person and being interested in what he or she has to say) and the degree to which they directly called on them for either *emotional support* (self-disclosure of emotional information and/or emotional behavior that directly or indirectly enlist the support of the other person) or *instrumental support* (clear and persistent requests for help regarding a specific goal; e.g., making the football team). Each of these three subscales (engagement, calling for emotional support, calling for instrumental support) were rated globally on a 4-point scale intended to capture both the overall quantity and the overall quality of the relevant behaviors exhibited over the course of the entire discussion. For example, multiple and consistent signs of attending to and caring about what the other person was saying would earn a higher score for engagement than one striking example of engagement in the context of generally ignoring the other person. Intraclass correlation for active engagement with mothers was .66 and for active engagement with peers was .64.

Observed adolescent autonomy and relatedness with mothers and fathers. Each adolescent-mother and adolescent-father dyad participated in an 8-minute videotaped revealed-differences task, discussing a family issue that they had identified as an area of disagreement. Typical topics included money, grades, household rules, friends, and siblings. The autonomy-relatedness coding system (Allen, Hauser, Bell, McElhane, & Tate, 1998) was used to code these interactions. This system uses concrete behavioral guidelines to evaluate individual speeches and behaviors on eight subscales and then uses an algorithm to convert these scores to 0 through 4 scales that account for both the frequency and intensity of the behaviors displayed. Two additional subscales include global ratings in which the 0 through 4 scores are based on the tone of the entire interaction. These 10 subscales are

then combined on an a priori basis to yield several overall scales including adolescents' behaviors promoting autonomy and their behaviors promoting relatedness. The Promoting Autonomy scale includes the degree to which the teens clearly *state their reasons* for holding a given position and the level of *confidence* that they exhibited during the discussion. Behaviors coded on the Promoting Relatedness scale include signs of *validating* or agreeing with the other person and maintaining a high level of *engagement* during the discussion.

Each interaction was coded separately by two trained coders who were blind to the rest of the data, using both the videotape and a typed transcript of the interaction. Any coding disagreements were resolved by averaging coders' scores together. A subset of interactions was coded and discussed by the entire coding team to maintain reliability and integrity in using the system. Training toward adequate reliability consisted of approximately 20 through 30 hours of reviewing coding materials, coding established practice tapes, and attending training meetings aimed at discussing and applying coding manual techniques to specific interactions. Judgments of adequate reliability were made when coder disagreements for a new coder were found to be typically within the range experienced by existing coders, with ultimate assessments of coder reliability of course obtained via intraclass correlations. Intraclass correlations for each scale were as follows: Promoting Autonomy with mothers = .89, Promoting Autonomy with fathers = .91, Promoting Relatedness with mothers = .77, and Promoting Relatedness with fathers = .88. Observed family interactions coded with this system have been associated with specific adolescent competencies, functioning with peers, and levels of psychopathology 11 years later (Allen et al., 1996; Allen & Hauser, 1996; Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Marsh, McFarland, Allen, McElhaney, & Land, 2003; O'Connor, Allen, Bell, & Hauser, 1996).

Observed adolescent autonomy and relatedness with peers. Each adolescent-close friend dyad participated in an 8-minute videotaped task in which they were presented with a revealed-differences task. In this case, their task involved a hypothetical dilemma requiring them to decide which 7 out of a possible 12 fictional patients with a rare disease should be selected for a limited amount of antidote (based on the sinking-ship dilemma; Pfeiffer & Jones, 1974). After making their decisions separately, adolescents and their close friends were then brought together to compare their answers and were then asked to try to come up with a consensus list of 7 patients. The autonomy-relatedness coding system for peer interactions,

which yields scales that are parallel to the system for coding adolescent-parent interactions as described above, was used to code these interactions (Allen, Hauser, et al., 1998; Allen, Porter, & McFarland, 2001). Two overall scales were utilized in the current study: adolescents' behaviors promoting autonomy (stating reasons clearly and confidently) and their behaviors promoting relatedness (validating and maintaining engagement). Each interaction was reliably coded by two trained coders who were blind to the rest of the data (intraclass correlation = .86 for Promoting Autonomy scale, .65 for Promoting Relatedness scale) in the same manner as described above. Previous research has demonstrated that adolescents' promoting autonomy with peers predicts popularity both cross-sectionally and over time (Little & McFarland, 2004; McFarland & Little, 2004).

Degree of neighborhood risk. Mothers reported the degree to which they considered their neighborhood to be risky (reflecting poverty and crime) using the Neighborhood Quality Questionnaire (McElhaney, 1998). Items for this measure were compiled from the Neighborhood Cohesion measure (Adolescent Pathways Project, 1992) and a measure of neighborhood risk created by Gonzales, Cauce, Freidman, and Mason (1996). Mothers responded to questions such as "There are abandoned buildings and vandalism in my neighborhood" and "There are teenagers out on the streets late at night in my neighborhood" using a 4-point, Likert-type scale from *not at all true* to *very true*. In the current study, this neighborhood risk variable was correlated with family income ($r = -.31, p < .001$), but it is believed to more comprehensively reflect the combined effects of risk factors associated with living in poverty in high-risk urban areas than poverty status alone (McElhaney & Allen, 2001). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .91.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of all variables examined.

Hypothesis 1: Examining quantitative divergence in perceptions of parental influence. First, we hypothesized that regardless of the mean difference between parents' and adolescents' reported perceptions of parental influence, parents' and adolescents' reports would not be highly correlated.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of All Variables

	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>
Parental influence (AR)	19.25	3.82
Parental influence (PR)	18.01	3.75
Parental support (AR)	62.53	11.33
Parental support (PR)	77.86	7.45
Parental psychological control (AR)	15.11	3.49
Parental psychological control (PR)	14.05	3.05
Adolescent active engagement with mothers (O)	1.95	0.66
Adolescent active engagement with friends (O)	2.01	0.69
Adolescent autonomy with mothers (O)	2.15	0.79
Adolescent autonomy with fathers (O)	2.26	0.80
Adolescent autonomy with friends (O)	2.35	0.94
Adolescent relatedness with mothers (O)	1.53	0.51
Adolescent relatedness with fathers (O)	1.73	0.66
Adolescent relatedness with friends (O)	2.37	0.79

Note: AR = adolescent report; PR = parent report; O = observed.

The average difference between parents' and adolescents' reports of parental influence was approximately 1.24 ($SD = 5.01$), with adolescents reporting more influence than parents ($t = 3.27, p < .01$). The degree of correspondence between parents' and adolescents' reports of parental influence as indicated by the Pearson's correlation coefficient was relatively low ($r = .12, p = .10$). Thus, these initial analyses indicated that although there was not a large mean difference between parents' and adolescents' levels of perceived parental influence, their perceptions of influence were essentially uncorrelated.

Hypothesis 2: Examining qualitative divergence in perceptions of parental influence. To more thoroughly investigate why parents and adolescents might hold divergent views of influence, we examined how each report of parental influence correlated with two other self-report measures of parent-adolescent relationship functioning: parental support and use of psychological control. We hypothesized that parents' perceptions of influence would be linked to their focus on controlling their adolescents' behavior, whereas adolescents' perceptions of influence would be more closely linked with their feelings of closeness with their parents. Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Intercorrelations of Reports of Influence With Self-Reported Relationship Quality

	Parental Influence (AR)	Parental Influence (PR)
Parental support (AR)	.15*	-.04
Parental support (PR)	.12	.21**
Psychological control (AR)	.14 [†]	.33***
Psychological control (PR)	.11	.34***

Note: AR = adolescent report; PR = parent report.

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Although the results were generally consistent with the hypothesis, there were some interesting deviations to the expected patterns. Consistent with the hypotheses, when *parents* reported that they influenced their adolescent to follow rules, both adolescents and parents reported significantly higher levels of psychological control. However, parents who reported high levels of influence were also likely to see themselves as having a closer and more supportive relationship with their adolescents (though their teens did not agree). When *adolescents* reported that their parents influenced them to follow rules, they did report higher levels of parental support but also were somewhat likely to report that their parents utilized psychological control (with the latter correlation at the trend level).

Plan of Analyses: Hypotheses 3 and 4

The remaining hypotheses were tested by conducting a series of regression analyses that examined the degree to which adolescents' and parents' reports of influence predicted observed behaviors during mother-adolescent, father-adolescent, and adolescent-friend interactions. As family processes linked to autonomy functioning have often been shown to vary by adolescent gender (e.g., Holmbeck & Hill, 1991; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991) and the context of neighborhood risk (e.g., McElhaney & Allen, 2001), both of these variables were included as covariates in all regression analyses, and the moderating effects of these variables were also examined. Regression analyses were conducted in hierarchical fashion, with the demographic variables of adolescent gender and level of neighborhood risk entered first, followed by both adolescents' and parents' perceptions of influence. Before being entered into the models, the variables in question were centered and standardized (with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one). In

addition, these centered variable were multiplied together to create the interaction terms, which were then tested systematically in the following fashion: The interaction between the two influence measures was entered first (after the main effects), then the gender (gender and each of the influence variables) and risk terms (risk and each of the influence variables) were entered in turn as separate blocks in the final step. None of these interaction effects were found to be significant.

Hypothesis 3: Predicting observations of adolescent autonomy functioning. The first set of regression models, presented in Table 3, examined the relation between parents' reports of parental influence and adolescents' expressions of autonomy with mothers, fathers, and friends, respectively, during the revealed-differences tasks. These analyses revealed that parents' reports of influence significantly predicted adolescents' expressions of autonomy in the expected directions, in that parental reports were linked to *fewer* adolescent expressions of autonomy with mothers ($\beta = -.26, p < .01$), fathers ($\beta = -.28, p < .01$), and friends ($\beta = -.30, p < .001$). (No predictions were made regarding adolescents' reports of parental influence for these models, and no significant effects were found.) Thus, these three models provide support for the hypotheses that parents' reports of influence tap into the control dimension within parent-adolescent relationships: They are associated with diminished adolescent autonomy functioning not only within mother and father-adolescent relationships but also within adolescents' relationships with their friends.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b: Predicting observed support and relatedness. The next set of regression models examined the relation between adolescents' and parents' reports of parental influence and the degree to which adolescents were actively engaged in asking for support from both their mother and their close friend. As predicted, these analyses revealed that adolescents' reports of influence significantly predicted increased levels of active engagement with both their mothers ($\beta = .28, p < .01$) and their close friends ($\beta = .18, p < .05$) (see Table 4). These models also revealed significant main effects *in the opposite direction* for parents' reports of influence: When parents reported high levels of influence, their adolescents were less likely to actively communicate with and elicit support from either their mothers ($\beta = -.17, p < .05$) or their close friends ($\beta = -.24, p < .01$).

The final set of analyses examined the links between adolescents' and parents' reports of parental influence and adolescents' expressions of relatedness

Table 3
Predicting Expressions of Autonomy During Adolescents' Interactions With Mothers, Fathers, and Friends From Adolescents' and Parents' Reports of Parental Influence

	Adolescent Autonomy With Mothers			Adolescent Autonomy With Fathers			Adolescent Autonomy With Friends		
	β	ΔR^2	Total R^2	β	ΔR^2	Total R^2	β	ΔR^2	Total R^2
Step 1									
Adolescent gender	.12			-.16			-.03		
Neighborhood risk	-.08	.02	.02	-.10	.07 [†]	.07 [†]	.05	.01	.01
Step 2									
Adolescent-reported parental influence	-.06			-.15			-.03		
Parent-reported parental influence	-.26***	.07***	.09**	-.28***	.09**	.16**	-.30***	.09**	.10***

Note: β values are from the final model.
[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 4
Predicting Adolescents' Active Engagement During Supportive Interactions With Their Mothers and Their Close Friends From Adolescents' and Mothers' Reports of Parental Influence

	Adolescent Active Engagement With Mothers			Adolescent Active Engagement With Close Friends		
	β	ΔR^2	Total R^2	β	ΔR^2	Total R^2
Step 1						
Adolescent gender	-.02			.00		
Neighborhood risk	-.06	.00	.00	-.07	.01	.01
Step 2						
Adolescent-reported parental influence	.28**			.18*		
Parent-reported parental influence	-.17*	.10**	.10**	-.24**	.08**	.09**

Note: β values are from the final model.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

during the revealed-differences tasks with their mothers, fathers, and close friends. As can be seen in Table 5, significant main effects were found for both adolescents' and parents' reports predicting adolescents' expressions of relatedness with their mothers. Specifically, when adolescents reported high levels of influence from their parents, they expressed *more* relatedness during interactions with their mothers ($\beta = .19, p < .05$). However, when parents reported high levels of influence over their teens, these adolescents expressed *less* relatedness during interactions with their mothers ($\beta = -.21, p < .05$). No effects were found for either adolescents' or parents' reports of influence in predicting relatedness during interactions with fathers ($\beta = .09, p > .10$; $\beta = -.16, p > .10$) or with close friends ($\beta = -.04, p > .10$; $\beta = -.03, p > .10$) (not depicted).

Discussion

There has been a growing interest in examining how and when adolescents and parents diverge in their perceptions of family interactions, with the assertion that a closer examination of this divergence will further enhance our overall understanding of how the quality of parent-adolescent

Table 5
Predicting Adolescents' Expressions of Relatedness With Mothers
From Adolescents' and Parents' Reports of Parental Influence

	β	ΔR^2	Total R^2
Step 1			
Adolescent gender	-.04		
Neighborhood risk	.02	.01	.01
Step 2			
Adolescent-reported parental influence	.19*		
Parent-reported parental influence	-.21*	.06*	.07*

Note: β values are from the final model.

* $p < .05$.

relationships affects adolescents' development (Collins, 1990, 1991; Paikoff, 1991). The current study proposed that teens' versus parents' perceptions of parental influence, in particular, would reflect qualitatively different aspects of the autonomy-relatedness dimension within the parent-adolescent relationship during early adolescence. Specifically, adolescents reporting high levels of influence were expected to be focusing on the degree of trust and support present in the relationship, whereas parents were expected to be focusing on the degree of control they were exerting. Given past research on the correlates and outcomes of autonomy and relatedness processes, adolescents' and parents' reports of influence were also expected to be differentially related to adolescents' functioning in their close relationships. The results of the current study indicated that adolescents' reports of parental influence predicted higher levels of support and engagement in both the mother-adolescent and adolescent-friend relationship, whereas parents' reports of influence predicted both less support and engagement and decreased adolescent autonomy across all three dyads examined (mother-adolescent, father-adolescent, and adolescent-friend).

With regard to self-report measures, when parents reported that they influenced their adolescent to follow rules, both adolescents and parents also reported high levels of psychological control. Interestingly, these parents also tended to see themselves as more supportive, though adolescents did not agree. When adolescents reported that their parents influenced them, they also reported a supportive parent-adolescent relationship, though this finding was somewhat less robust. Thus, to a certain extent, adolescents and their parents do appear to interpret "influence" differently, in that they seem to base their responses on qualitatively different aspects

of the parent-adolescent relationship. Past studies have suggested that adolescents' increasing needs for autonomy and individuation will necessarily lead to changes in their perceptions of their families (e.g., parents becoming decreasingly influential; Berndt, 1979; Hunter & Youniss, 1982). The current results suggest something more nuanced: Adolescents are more likely to endorse parents as influential in the context of a positive and supportive relationship. With regard to parents' perceptions, results are consistent with studies suggesting that parents' investment in maintaining order and protecting adolescents may lead them to value control and obedience (e.g., Jessop, 1981).

The results of this study also indicate that as parents' reports of influence are reflective of a focus on control, they are linked with decreased adolescent autonomy not only within their relationships with their parents but also in interactions with their friends. Thus, parents who emphasized influence had adolescents who generated fewer opinions during their discussions of disagreements and were also less confident in expressing the opinions that they did put forth. These young teens may have either failed to develop the skills necessary to express themselves or learned that expressing their opinions is not a worthwhile endeavor. Alternatively, to the extent that parental focus on influence is linked with controlling parenting, these adolescents may be too depressed or anxious to express themselves well or confidently (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Baron & MacGillivray, 1989; Conger, Conger, & Scaramella, 1997; Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; Leondari & Kiosseoglou, 2002; Litovsky & Dusek, 1985; Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001; Rogers, Buchanan, & Winchel, 2003). Nonetheless, parental focus on observable influence may lead parents down the wrong path and is likely to interfere with the adolescents' ability to function autonomously in close relationships.

The current results also supported the hypotheses that adolescents' and parents' perceptions of parental influence would predict the level of support and engagement in adolescents' relationships with their parents. When adolescents reported that their parents were a strong influence, they were more likely to call on their mothers for practical advice and emotional support. In addition, higher levels of adolescent warmth and engagement were observed when teens and their mothers discussed a topic of disagreement. However, the opposite pattern was found with regard to parents' reports of their own influence—these parents had teens who were less engaged and less likely to ask for support or advice from their mothers and who showed less warmth and engagement when discussing a disagreement with them. Given that adolescents who felt influenced tended to see their parents as supportive, it is not

surprising that their interactions with their mothers were characterized by warmth, sensitivity, and engagement, regardless of whether adolescents were coming to their mothers for help or discussing a disagreement. These findings counter the notion that adolescents do not want to be influenced by their parents and instead suggest that perhaps the best form of parental influence during adolescence revolves around maintaining a close and supportive parent-teen relationship (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). The corresponding finding that parents' reports of their own influence predicted less warmth and engagement may be similarly understood. Parents who perceive high levels of influence over their adolescents are likely to be focused on controlling adolescents' behaviors, which not only may run counter to adolescents' growing need for autonomy (e.g., Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Holmbeck et al., 1995) but in this case also predicts a lack of close connection between teens and their parents—particularly their mothers.

With regard to the supportive interactions, similar patterns of findings were observed for adolescent-mother and adolescent-friend interactions. Teens who reported that their parents influenced them were more likely to be quite active in asking their friends for both emotional support and guidance, whereas adolescents with parents who reported high levels of influence were much less likely to seek this type of help from their friends. This finding is consistent with recent attachment-based studies, suggesting that positive and supportive relationships with parents may serve as a "springboard" or template for other relationships—such that teens who see their parents as warm and influential may be primed to seek out help from others. In contrast, teens whose primary attachment relationships are more distant and controlling may be more reluctant to seek out support from others—either because their model of relationships does not include this repertoire and/or because they have learned that such requests for support are not satisfactorily met (Allen, Marsh, et al., 2002; Allen, Moore, Kuperminc, & Bell, 1998; Engels, Finkenauer, Meeus, & Dekovic, 2001; Porter, 2005; Rubin et al., 2004). Alternatively, as previously suggested, both warmth and control are dimensions of parent-adolescent relationships that have been consistently linked to adolescents' socioemotional and behavioral functioning, which in turn could account for teens' willingness to seek support from their friends. In any case, what is clear is that adolescents who are most successful in interacting with their peers see their parents as influential, whereas parents who report being influential have teens who are struggling in their friendships.

Given the cross-sectional nature of these analyses, causal explanations must be considered with caution. For example, it could be that adolescents'

perception of influence may play a role in “setting the stage” for positive interactions with their parents and close friends, or it could be that when adolescents and mothers have a relationship characterized by high levels of sensitivity and connectedness, adolescents may be more effectively influenced. The links between parental reports of influence and parent-adolescent relationship functioning could be an example of reverse causality—adolescents who fail to assert their autonomy and/or fail to actively engage with their parents could be generally “checked out” of the parent-adolescent relationship, and parents could thus be highly focused on influencing them in response to this behavioral pattern. Finally, reports of influence and the quality of parent-adolescent and adolescent-friend relationships also could be affected by any number of third variables such as adolescents’ socioemotional functioning, as suggested above, family stress, adolescents’ agreeableness, ego development, and/or level of self-worth. Our participants were young adolescents, at an age during which autonomy struggles with parents are often heightened. Further longitudinal research with this sample as they move into middle and late adolescence may help to clarify the possible causal pathways by which parental influence may affect adolescents’ functioning.

The present study indicates that adolescents and parents generally interpret parental influence differently and that the way in which influence is understood provides a marker for how adolescents function within their close relationships. This study took the approach of measuring the degree to which adolescents and parents internalized and understood parental influence and linked this perception of influence to crucial indices of adolescents’ functioning—namely, the quality of both parent and peer relationships. This study heightens our appreciation of the effects of the different perspectives that adolescents and parents may hold with regard to dynamics within the parent-adolescent relationship and thus highlights the value of collecting and examining data on such relationships from multiple sources. Further research on this topic would benefit from an even more detailed comparison of all possible viewpoints of family functioning. Although complex, this type of analysis would provide important insights into how individual viewpoints may translate into discrete and often discrepant behavioral patterns. This study further indicates that as adolescents begin to struggle for autonomy, parents may have to adjust their understanding of how explicit their role is in adolescents’ decision-making processes. During adolescence, the most effective form of parental influence is not limited to control of adolescents’ behavior but rather more broadly encompasses a relationship in which adolescents feel supported and understood enough that they make the choice to follow their parents’ lead.

Note

1. For all self-report measures of family functioning, in families in which one parent was absent or unavailable, reports from the available parent were utilized to match adolescents' reports.

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