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The Increasing Diversity and Complexity of Family Structures for Adolescents

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

Although a universal feature of adolescence is gaining autonomy from one's family, parents, continue to play a vital role in adolescents' lives. The ways in which adolescents are "parented," including the provision of material and psychosocial resources, the quality of parent–child interactions and relationships, and levels of parental monitoring and scaffolding of youth have been consistently shown to matter for adolescents' academic outcomes, subjective well-being, sexual behavior, substance use, delinquency, and other outcomes (DiClemente et al., 2001; Simons & Conger, 2007; Steinberg, 2001). Thus, social scientists, policy makers, and practitioners continue to investigate and attempt to promote successful models for parenting adolescents.

For better or worse, many current investigations of the features and types of parenting that seem most beneficial to adolescents are based on theories of parenting and adolescence developed decades ago when family structures and their distribution in the population looked very different than they do today. Two cornerstones of contemporary theory, warmth and control, are concepts developed primarily between the 1930s and 1960s (Baldwin, 1955; Baumrind, 1967; Becker, 1964; Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957; Symonds, 1939)—a period in which about 90% of children under the age of 18 lived with two parents (Ruggles & Brower, 2003). Studies of parenting have been increasingly recognizing how styles of parenting and their impact vary across cultures, socioeconomic strata, and family structures (e.g., Lareau, 2003; Newman, 2012; Sorkhabi & Mandara, 2013; see also from this issue Jones, Loiselle, & Highlander, 2018; Lansford et al., 2018; Murry & Lippold, 2018; Stein, Coard, Kiang, Smith, & Mejia, 2018). Thus, to more accurately theorize, measure, and interpret findings regarding the parenting of adolescents, we must be clear about how families and households have changed over time, especially their increasingly dynamic and complex natures.

In this article, we review and summarize a wide body of literature showing how family forms and their prevalence have changed over the last several decades. After defining what we mean by *family* and *adolescence*, we describe the family households of adolescents, or the family members with whom they tend to live. We then discuss how family members might also be spread across other households, near and far. We then examine current practices in measuring the family contexts of adolescents and recommend innovations such as family network and profile methods. It is our goal to provide as detailed a picture as we can as to the range and distribution of adolescents' family con-

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texts in addition to suggesting methods for further enhancing our understanding of parenting contexts during adolescence.

DEFINITIONS

Family has always been a relatively elusive concept —definitions of family have changed over time, families themselves change over time, and members of families change (i.e., development and aging) (Harris, 2008; Powell, Bolzendahl, Geist, & Steelman, 2010). For our purposes, we focus on all parents, siblings, and extended family members who play a role in adolescents' lives. Family members may be related by blood, marriage, or other lasting bonds (e.g., cohabitation, guardianships, or adoption). Some family members reside in the same household as a given adolescent and some do not. Sometimes adolescents move between households following custody arrangements or other special circumstances. Thus, we start by describing change in the family households of adolescents and then broaden our focus to consider nonresidential family members and their connections to adolescents over time.

Adolescence is a phase of life whose exact age bounds vary by expert or study, but are generally considered to encompass the second decade of life. This is roughly the time period from the onset of puberty to the beginning of adult roles (Steinberg, 2016). We cite studies using a variety of age or grade ranges, including 12–17, 18–24, or Grades 7–12, primarily due to the ages of participants. Furthermore, many studies of family structure or stability aggregate data for all minors (ages 0–17). Thus, some of the data that we present apply to all youth, not just adolescents. Where we are able, we comment on the extent to which adolescents' family forms are different than those of younger children.

THE HOUSEHOLDS IN WHICH ADOLESCENTS LIVE

As of 2016, 15% of all American households, and 23% of family households, contained at least one 12–17-year-old (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a). Below we describe the changing prevalence of other family members in the households of adolescents. We discuss the parents, siblings, and grandparents with whom adolescents often live as well as homeless adolescents and adolescents who head their own households.

Parental Structure

The nuclear family (a mother and father—usually married—and their biological child/ren) has long been assumed to be the standard North American family (Smith, 1993) and continues to generally be the standard form to which all others are compared (Powell et al., 2010). As seen in Figure 1, as recently as 1960 about 88% of children (ages 0–17) lived with two parents (biological/adoptive, step, or cohabiting parents), 8% lived with their mothers only, 1% lived with their fathers only, and 3% lived with other relatives or nonrelatives. As of 2016, the percentage of children living with two parents is 69%—a 22% decrease in 56 years. The shift was mostly due to single-mother and single-father families: now, 23% of children live with their mother only and 4% live with their fathers only. These numbers represent a 192% increase in mother-only families and a 259% increase in father-only families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017e). Although father-only families have increased in number faster than mother-only families, mother-only families are still nearly six times more common.

The increase in single-parent households over time is primarily the result of two trends. First, divorce has been on the rise in the United States since the end of the Civil War, with a brief plateauing during the early 1980s (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014). Second, there has been a rise in the percentage of all births occurring to unmarried women, from 4% in 1940 to 41% in 2013 (Curtin, Ventura, & Martinez, 2014). However, just over half (55%) of the births to single mothers, as of 2016, are to cohabiting parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017d), and this has been increasing over time (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008). Thus, increasingly, one biological parent is not residing in the household, and if there are two parents, they may be cohabiting partners rather than marital ones. Because of racial and ethnic variation in rates of nonmarital births, cohabitation, and divorce (Barber, Yarger, & Gatny, 2015; Curtin et al., 2014; Ruggles, 1997; Smith, Morgan, & Koropeckyj-Cox, 1996; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995), the increase in mother-only households and children living with other relatives has been particularly dramatic for Black and Hispanic youth, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The way data were collected for many years, one can identify whether there are two adults living in a household and whether at least one of the adults is biologically or adoptively related to children in the household. However, further specification of the marital or even romantic status of the

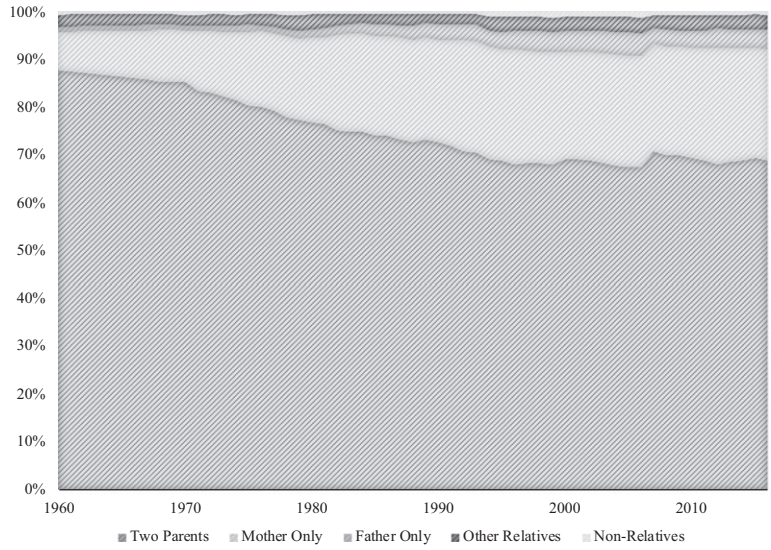

FIGURE 1 Living arrangements of children under 18 years old, 1960–2016.

Notes. The Census report does not have statistics for 1961–1967; for graphical purposes, a linear trend in each category is used between the data points for 1960 and 1968.

Source. U.S. Census Bureau (2017e).

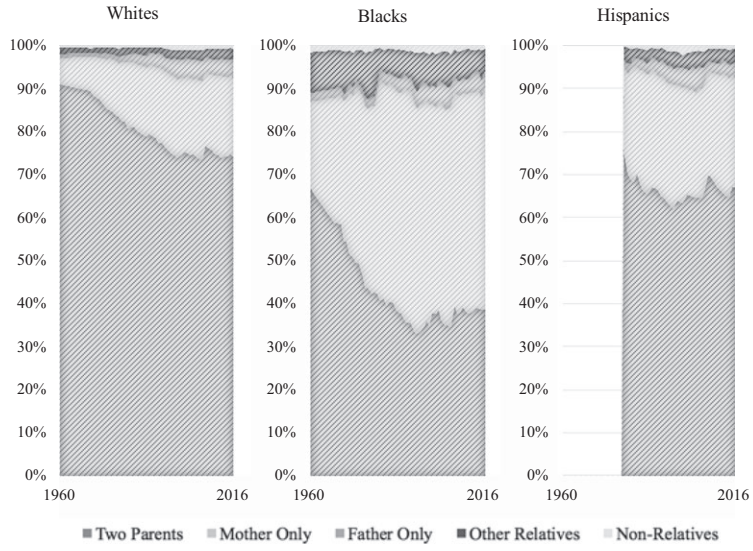

FIGURE 2 Living arrangements of children under 18 years old by race/ethnicity, 1960–2016.

Notes. The Census report does not have statistics for 1961–1967; for graphical purposes, a linear trend in each category is used between the data points for 1960 and 1968. Data for Hispanics begin in 1980 since they were not available before then for the subcategories shown here.

Source. U.S. Census Bureau (2017g).

two adults or how both adults are related to each child is often impossible in data collected from before the mid-1990s. More contemporary data have the specificity that allows us to further distinguish households by the complexity of family relationships. For example, we create Table 1 below by adapting U.S. Census Bureau data based on the Current Population Survey in 2016 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017b). This table builds upon Figure 1 and allows us to hone in on three groups of

adolescents: 9–11-year-olds, 12–14-year-olds, and 15–17-year-olds.

Overall, 9–17-year-olds have very similar living arrangements to 0–17-year-olds. About 68% of 9–14-year-olds and 64% of 15–17-year-olds live with two parents as compared to 69% of all 0–17-year-olds. Twenty-eight percent of 9–14-year-olds and 30% of 15–17-year-olds live with one parent, compared to 27% of 0–17-year-olds. And 4% and 5%, respectively, do not reside with a parent compared to 4% of those aged 0–17. Not surprisingly, the older adolescents (whose parents have had more time to change living situations or family structure) are slightly more likely than the younger children to live in single-parent, other relative, or nonrelative homes.

For the 64–68% of adolescents living with two parents, the vast majority of them (about 96–98%) live with married biological or adoptive parents. For the 28–30% of adolescents who live with one parent, the vast majority of them live with their mothers; specifically, 85% of 9–11-year-olds, 84% of 12–14-year-olds, and 82% of 15–17-year-olds who live with a single parent live with their mother. Conversely, between 15% and 18% of adolescents in a single-parent home live with their single father. For all single-parent categories, the largest groups, by far, are never-married mothers and divorced mothers. Living with a separated mother is the third most common single-parent living arrangement, which describes 11–13% of adolescents. Lastly, for the 4–5% of adolescents who do not live with either parent, the most common arrangement is to live with a grandparent, though this likelihood decreases with age: 65% of 9–11-year-olds, 58% of 12–14-year-olds, and 46% of 15–17-year-olds living without parents are living with a grandparent. The next most common arrangements for those living without either parent are living with another relative (25–33%), living with a nonrelative (7–18%), and living in foster care (4–6%).

Given the family change and diversity we have documented, theory and research about the parenting of adolescents must take into account that both parents and children are increasingly experiencing transitions in who lives with them that may induce emotional and financial stress or raise real or perceived stigma (Cherlin, 2010; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Pryor, 2004). This changes resources for parenting as well as the kinds of issues for which adolescents need support. Furthermore, parents are increasingly spread across different households, which raises issues of how parenting is shared (or not) inside and outside an adolescent's primary residence.

Same-sex parents. There have also been changes over time in the percentage of children living with two parents of the same sex. Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider (2013) find that about 16% of same-sex cohabiting or married couples in the United States have biological, adoptive, or stepchildren under age 18 living with them as of 2012 (11% of male couples and 22% of female couples). This is higher than the 1990 rate of 13%, but is lower than estimates between 2000 and 2008, which fluctuated between 17% and 19% (Gates, 2012). With current estimates of same-sex couples from the American Community Survey at about 860,000 for 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017c), if 15–20% of them have one child, then between 129,000 and 172,000 youth are currently living with co-resident same-sex parents.

One noteworthy trend among same-sex couples is the proportional increases in adoptive children compared to biological children, which may be due to LGBT individuals coming out earlier in life and thus becoming less likely to have children while in relationships with opposite sex partners (Gates, 2012). The global increase in assisted reproductive techniques (ART; Dyer et al., 2016), in tandem with medical advances and fertility clinics welcoming same-sex couples, is also increasing the ability for same-sex individuals (whether coupled or not) to become parents (Greenfeld & Seli, 2016; Grover, Shmorgun, Moskovtsev, Baratz, & Librach, 2013). With the number of same-sex couples growing each year between 2008 and 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017c), the proportion of adolescents living with same-sex parents has grown.

Theory and research on parenting often consider mothers' and fathers' roles in providing warmth and control, and sometimes claim unique and essential roles of both, but evidence suggests the gender composition of parents has minimal influence on children's psychological and social outcomes (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). However, parents' gender is correlated with how parents and children get along, parents' emphasis on gender conformity, and parenting skills; so, theory and research on parenting should continue to examine the gender composition of parents as a factor shaping parenting and its outcomes (Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2007; Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997).

Although social acceptance of same-sex couples marrying and having children is growing, there is still potential for parents and children in these families to experience stigma and discrimination

TABLE 1
Living Arrangements of Children and Adolescents in the United States in 2016 (Numbers in Thousands)

	Two Parents			*One Parent*										*No Parent*			
				Mother Only					*Father Only*								
	Total	*Married*	*Unmarried*	*Married*[a]	*Widowed*	*Divorced*	*Separated*	*Never Married*	*Married*[a]	*Widowed*	*Divorced*	*Separated*	*Never Married*	*Grandparent*	*Other Relative*	*Other Nonrelative*	*Foster*
All children 0–17	73,745	47,724	2,955	878	606	5,131	2,389	8,219	160	174	1,164	366	1,142	1,556	723	336	222
Within category %		94	6	4	3	25	12	41	1	1	6	2	6	55	25	12	8
Global category %		65	4	1	1	7	3	11	0	0	2	0	2	2	1	0	0
		69%						27%							4%		
9–11 Years	12,401	8,123	353	151	102	1,015	436	1,260	28	30	212	64	174	294	111	31	17
Within category %		96	4	4	3	29	13	36	1	1	6	2	5	65	25	7	4
Global category %		66	3	1	1	8	4	10	0	0	2	1	1	2	1	0	0
		68%						28%							4%		
12–14 Years	12,322	8,173	226	151	129	1,099	458	1,075	32	43	251	67	166	260	121	44	27
Within category %		97	3	4	4	32	13	31	1	1	7	2	5	58	27	10	6
Global category %		66	2	1	1	9	4	9	0	0	2	1	1	2	1	0	0
		68%						28%							4%		
15–17 Years	12,780	8,031	202	180	239	1,432	437	919	37	65	401	47	133	300	214	116	27
Within category %		98	2	5	6	37	11	24	1	2	10	1	3	46	33	18	4
Global category %		63	2	1	2	11	3	7	0	1	3	0	1	2	2	1	0
		64%[b,c]						30%[b,c]							5%[b,c]		

Note. Calculations of significant differences were made following the source documentation instructions.
[a]Spouse absent.
[b]Estimates different at 95% confidence from 9- to 11-year-olds.
[c]Estimates different at 95% confidence from 12- to 14-year-olds.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2017b).

(Gates, 2015). As Jones et al. (2018, this issue), Mills-Koonce, Rehder, and McCurdy (2018, this issue), Murry and Lippold (2018, this issue), and Stein et al. (2018, this issue) all point out, in families facing real and perceived stigma, parents face the challenge of building a positive sense of oneself and one's family in addition to helping children understand and persevere in these social dynamics.

Foster and adoptive parents. In September of 2015, about 172,000 adolescents, ages 10–20 were living in foster care; during the same year, 92,000 adolescents entered foster care and 99,000 exited foster care (Children's Bureau, 2016). Among youth ages 0–20 who exited, 51% were reunified with their parents or primary caretakers and 22% were adopted (Children's Bureau, 2016). In published statistics, adopted children are typically included with those who are biologically related to parents. However, Child Trends (2012) uses more detailed survey data on adoption from 2007 to show that 2% of all children (ages 0–17) live with at least one adoptive parent and no biological parents. Of those, 37% were in foster care at some point, 38% were adopted through private domestic adoption, and 25% were adopted internationally. One more recent estimate suggests that approximately 7% of children ages 0–17 in the United States live with at least one adoptive parent, but this includes those adopted by a step-parent, unlike the prior estimate (Kreider & Lofquist, 2014).

Fostering and adopting children raises all kinds of distinctive parenting issues. Adolescent foster or adoptive children have often experienced prior neglect, abuse, or abandonment, making them less trusting of parent figures in general (Pryor, 2004). Adoptive parents and children sometimes differ notably in culture or appearance, posing potential issues for how they or others view their relationships (Pryor, 2004). Foster parents may be managing uncertainty about how long a child or children will be in their home and what kinds of bonds to forge (Pryor, 2004). Birth parents may still be in contact and involved with their children, raising issues of how to manage co-parenting with foster parents. In other words, there are additional factors at play in foster or adoptive parenting, highlighting key roles of parents and how those are modified across family structure.

Siblings

Another important feature of family or household context, when it comes to parenting, is how many and what types of siblings live with adolescents on average. Using data from 2009, Kreider and Ellis (2011) find that about 58 million children live with siblings (78%). Of these children, the majority (82%) live with only full siblings, 14% live with a half-sibling, 2% live with a stepsibling, and 2% live with an adopted sibling. About 22% of all youth have no siblings, 38% have one sibling, 24% have two siblings, 11% have three siblings, and 5% have four or more siblings.

Siblings function as both sources of intimacy and conflict for adolescents (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992), which is largely a continuation of their sibling relationships from childhood (Dunn, Slomkowski, & Beardsall, 1994). Intimacy remains stable among same-sex sibling dyads throughout adolescence, but increases for mixed-sex dyads, while conflict appears to taper off during middle to late adolescence (Kim, McHale, Wayne Osgood, & Crouter, 2006). Theory and research on parenting often focuses on one dyad despite there often being other children in the family. The number of siblings has implications for how resources (material and emotional) are shared, which is directly related to parenting (Blake, 1981). This takes on even more complexity in blended families with a combination of sibling types.

Grandparents

Table 1, discussed earlier, shows that about 2% of all children live without parents but with a grandparent. Figure 3 adds to this statistic by showing trends over time in children living with grandparents, in any combination with or without parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017f). The figure shows a doubling in the percent of children who live with a grandparent between 1980 and 2014, from 3.2% to 6.6%. Notably, about two-thirds of children living with a grandparent are also living with one of their parents (typically the mother). These are called multigenerational households, or households containing three or more generations, and have been shown elsewhere to also vary by race—with Hispanics and Blacks having the highest rates (8% of households), followed by Asians (6%) and Whites (4%) (Vespa et al., 2013). Theories and research on grandparents as parents should factor in how the middle generation (biological parents) fit into the family and parenting, as well as how life course stages and developmental compatibility between family members affect grandparents' parenting styles (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson, & Merriwether-deVries, 1995; Kemp, 2007).

Homeless Adolescents

Although rare, another important family form to address for adolescents is homelessness. About 7% of the homeless population are unaccompanied children (under 18 years old) and youth (18–24), and about 37,000 children and youth were experiencing homelessness during a point-in-time estimate in 2015 (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2016). However, this is likely an underestimate, since enumeration techniques are not as effective for youth, and youth often do not congregate in the same areas as those in older age groups. Indeed, survey estimates of youth who experience at least one night of homelessness in a given year range from about 1 million to 1.7 million (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2013). Homelessness is surely a taxing and stigmatizing experience for adolescents and their parents, further straining what parents can or cannot provide adolescents.

Adolescents as Parents

Births to adolescents are declining and reached an all-time low in 2015 (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Matthews, 2017), predominately due to improved contraceptive usage (Lindberg, Santelli, & Desai, 2016), though many adolescents do become parents—usually unintentionally. Finer and Zolna (2014) show that, as of 2008, 91% of pregnancies among 15–17-year-olds and 77% of pregnancies among 18–19-year-olds are unintended. Nevertheless, in 2015, adolescent females, ages 15–19 had about 230,000 births, with about 1% of 15–17-year-old girls giving birth and 4% of 18–19-year old girls (Martin et al., 2017). Adolescent parents and their children face a number of obstacles and are at an increased risk for a host of negative outcomes, yet intervention programs have the potential to mitigate these (see Pinzon & Jones [2012] for a comprehensive review on both outcomes of adolescent parenting and interventions). Parents may need to adjust their parenting when their adolescent becomes a parent, providing new kinds of support and more autonomy in some cases.

HOUSEHOLD TRANSITIONS EXPERIENCED BY ADOLESCENTS

What we have presented to this point are snapshots of what the households of children or adolescents look like across the population in certain years. Another way of understanding variance in the family contexts of youth is to consider how stable these contexts are over time. Several studies have conceptualized family instability as the number of transitions households experience (Cavanagh, 2008; Fomby, Mollborn, & Sennott, 2010), and increasingly studies are comparing particular types of transitions or the timing of those transitions and their associations with child well-being (Lee & McLanahan, 2015). When households lose or gain parents or siblings, it is likely to affect parenting resources and styles (Pryor, 2004).

Parental Transitions

Brown (2006) uses data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add

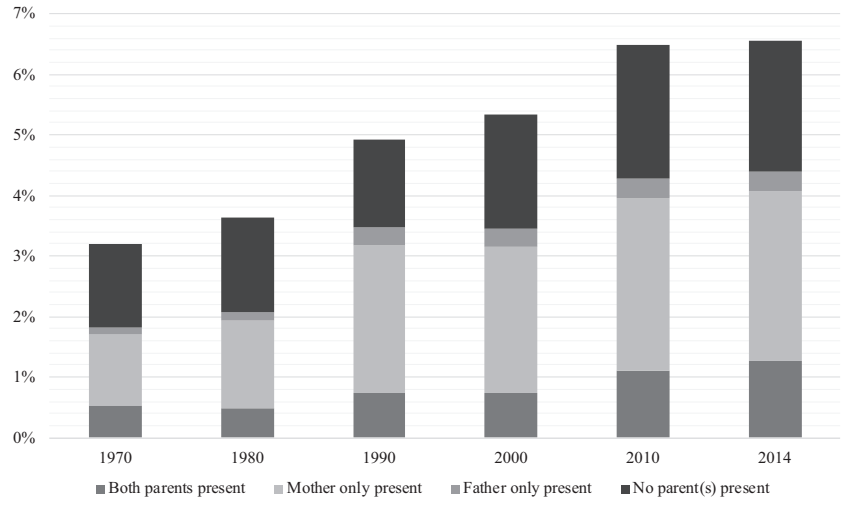

FIGURE 3 Children under 18 living with grandparents as percentage of all children under 18.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2017f).

Health), a nationally representative sample of youth in Grades 7–11 during the 1994–1995 school year, to report the frequency of family transitions within 1 year of adolescence. Ninety-three percent of these youth experienced no household transitions in that year; specifically, 62% of adolescents in this sample lived with two biological parents throughout the year (married or cohabiting), 12% remained in a previously formed stepfamily, and 19% remained with a single mother. Seven percent of adolescents experienced a household or family transition during that year: 4% moved from a two-parent family to a single-mother family, 3% went from a single-mother household to a two-parent household (either cohabiting or married), and 1% experienced a transition from one two-parent household type to another (usually from a cohabiting stepfamily to a married stepfamily). Laughlin (2014) shows that 12% of children ages 12–17 years old in 2011 had experienced a change in the number of residential parents or parent's partners in the home in the past 4 years.

Considering the trajectories of household structure throughout all of childhood and adolescence, K. S. Mitchell (2013) uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 Mother's and Children sample to estimate latent classes of children's long-term living arrangements for youth who were 14–19 years old in 2006. She finds five general pathways: (1) consistently living with two biological parents from birth (55%), long-term living with a single mother (18%), living with married biological parents who divorce (12%), gaining a stepfather through marriage (11%), and being born to cohabiting parents who later married or broke up (4%). Although these five pathways do not encompass the experiences of all adolescents, they give a good sense of the most common experiences over time.

Custody and Living Arrangements

Using data from the 2009 American Community Survey, Elliott and Simmons (2011) show that about 18% of men and 44% of women with a divorce in the past year were living with children under 18. This equates to over a million children experiencing a divorce in the past year, with the median age of these children around 9.8—about the onset of adolescence. Following many of these divorces will be custody arrangements that inevitably change the living situation of the adolescents involved. Custody arrangements have changed tremendously over the past few centuries (see DiFonzo [2014] for a review), but the most recent trend (from the mid-1980s to the present) has been a substantial decline in sole custody awards to mothers coupled with a dramatic increase in shared custody awards (Cancian, Meyer, Brown, & Cook, 2014). Estimates of custody awards from 2008, based on a very large sample of court records in Wisconsin, suggest that about 42% of awards are now for sole mother custody, 45% are for shared custody, 9% are for sole father custody, and the rest are for split custody (Cancian et al., 2014).

Other Residential Transitions

The period between late adolescence and early adulthood, often called "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, 2004), is marked by numerous transitions and identity exploration. For example, about 69% of high school graduates begin college immediately following their high school completion (McFarland et al., 2017). This is often accompanied by a residential move, as about half of college students live apart from their parents, which is split about evenly between those with and without roommates (Sallie Mae, 2017). Thus, late adolescence is a period of home-leaving for many but not necessarily independent living for most. For adolescents who do not go on to college, many of them begin some sort of paid work, establish their own household, or start families (DeLuca, Clampet-Lundquist, & Edin, 2016; L. L. Mitchell & Syed, 2015), often with difficulties in the labor market due to having no more than a high school degree (Rosenbaum, 2001). Especially among disadvantaged youth, the typical explorations of emerging adulthood may not be possible (Côté, 2014); these youth often face an expedited path to adulthood that involves forgoing postsecondary education and becoming independent as quickly as possible (DeLuca et al., 2016).

Interestingly, the percentage of older adolescents and young adults who return to their parents' home after leaving, who are sometimes referred to as "boomerang kids," has been increasing over time in the United States (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). In fact, recent estimates show that living with parents is the most common living situation for 18- to 34-year-olds, at 32% (Fry, 2016). The reaction of parents to this phenomenon varies, but there is an expectation among parents in the United States that their live-in adult children are working toward independence (Newman, 2012).

In general, the increasing fluidity and change in the households and family structures of adolescents signals a growing need for theories and

research on the parenting of adolescents to not just expand to consider different family forms, but to also recognize family instability as its own context for parenting (Pryor, 2004). As the life course perspective recognizes (Elder, 1998), young people (and their parents) carry forward their early life experiences, and so a divorced and single mother might not just be parenting with reduced time and resources in the present, but she and her child or children are also living with the experiences of the past, such as how well was the divorce handled by all. Due to distress and disruption, parenting is often temporarily compromised during and immediately following a transition in family structure (Capaldi & Patterson, 1991; DeGarmo & Forgatch, 1999).

NONRESIDENTIAL FAMILY MEMBERS OF ADOLESCENTS

Nonresident Fathers

Due to rising rates of births to single mothers and divorce, as well as the fragility of cohabiting unions, many children have nonresident fathers for some or all of adolescence. In Figure 1, we show that about 27% of youth live away from their father, with the majority of them (23% of youth) living with a single mother. Rates of single motherhood also vary substantially by race, with 18% of White children, 52% of Black children, and 25% of Hispanic children living with a single mother as of 2016 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017g). Nonresident fathers, as a group, substantially increased involvement in their children's lives between 1976 and 2002, with more fathers seeing their children weekly and fewer fathers reporting no contact at all (Amato, Meyers, & Emery, 2009). Cheadle, Amato, and King (2010) add nuance to this finding and identify four latent classes of nonresident father involvement: 38% of fathers have high and stable involvement over time, 32% have low and stable involvement, 23% have high involvement initially but decrease it over time, and 8% have low involvement initially but increase it over time.

Nonresident Mothers

Although uncommon, some children spend years not living with their biological or adoptive mothers. In Figure 1 we show that about 8% of youth live away from their mother, with about half of these youth (4%) residing with single fathers. Table 1 further shows that this percentage is about the same for 9–11-year-olds, 12–14-year-olds, and 15–17-year-olds. The economic situation of nonresident mothers tends to be worse, on average, than that of nonresident fathers, as they earn less money and are less likely to be working (Sousa & Sorensen, 2006). However, nonresident mothers tend to spend more time with their children than nonresident fathers (Gunnoe, 1993). Because of the historical norm that mothers are more likely to get custody, women who lose or have less custody than fathers probably face stigma that will affect their parenting and create a need for children to also be parented in ways that helps them prepare for potential discrimination. Being a nonresident parent, father or mother, introduces challenges to spending time with one's children to parent, and may remove one from involvement in important decisions or parenting tasks (Pryor, 2004).

Multipartner Fertility

Adults have become increasingly likely to have children with more than one partner, often called multipartner fertility (MPF). Recent estimates suggest that about 10% of adults have MPF (Monte, 2017). This means many adolescents have siblings (with full, partial, or no biological ties) with whom they may be maintaining relationships, potentially across residences. Once again, because surveys usually only collect information on household members, we know little about how many adolescents have siblings of any kind residing in other households, nor the quality, benefits, or consequences of those relationships. It is likely that the presence of siblings across other households stretches resources such that adolescents in these situations may get, on average, less time and support from their parents (Meyer & Cancian, 2012; Tach, Mincy, & Edin, 2010). There may also be tension between different parent figures or parents and children that interferes with or complicates the parenting of adolescents (Pryor, 2004).

Extended Family

Adolescents are often close to and exchange support with extended family members, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, or cousins (Sterrett, Jones, McKee, & Kincaid, 2011). Increasing gains in longevity translate to a higher likelihood that adolescents know their grandparents longer than in previous generations (Kemp, 2007). The closer grandparents live to their grandchildren, the more emotionally close they are, but grandparents

who live far away often use electronic forms of communication, and studies show that frequent phone or email conversations build closeness (Harwood, 2000). Kinds of support that grandparents provide include emotional support, peace-keeping, "straight talking," and sharing family history (Soliz, 2008).

Although research is increasingly incorporating the roles of nonresidential family members, and especially parental figures, in the lives of adolescents (Jones, Zalot, Foster, Sterrett, & Chester, 2007), more could be done to examine forms of support (or conflict) provided to adolescents and residential parent figures. Past theories and methods have relied heavily on the household context and often assumed that two biological parents are involved, but now the socialization and raising of adolescents falls to a larger network of adults. The better we understand the forms family configurations and exchanges take, the better we can tailor theory, research, and practice or interventions to fit families as they are.

MEASURING FAMILY CONTEXTS FOR THE PARENTING OF ADOLESCENTS

In addition to data on families collected through the U.S. Census, there are a number of high quality, nationally representative sample surveys, many of which are used in the research reported above, that make the description of adolescent family contexts possible. What we know about the family contexts in which adolescents live depends on how we collect data and "measure" family life. Although we learn a great deal from existing data, in some ways, the designs of these studies limit our ability to fully understand certain aspects of adolescents' families.

Most existing surveys mainly collect information about family members who reside together in households. For some surveys, like the Current Population Survey or the American Community Survey, households are a sampling unit, and one member of the household reports on all others. The quality of those data for understanding family structures within households depends heavily on a well designed household roster or matrix that lists all members of a household and carefully notes the relationships between all members. When data do not include complete information about the relations between each household member and all other household members, we are restricted from knowing important family characteristics, like whether a married or cohabiting couple in a household are biological, adoptive, or step-parents to the child or children in the household (Manning, Brown, & Stykes, 2014; O'Hara, Shattuck, & Goerge, 2017). Furthermore, data often lack the detail necessary to determine whether co-resident children are full, half, or unrelated siblings (McHale, Updegraff, & Whiteman, 2012).

For many years, household surveys such as U.S. Census forms (up until 1980) required the "household head" to be the household respondent. This was typically a man. In 1980, the Census changed procedure, allowing any "householder" to be the respondent, and this would include men or women who jointly own or rent the home. The proportion of reporting householders who are women has increased over time (Ruggles & Brower, 2003). On the other hand, in many more recently established survey studies, such as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 Children and Young Adults, or the National Study of Youth and Religion, mothers are the primary reporting parent and source of information on other members of the household. Household- or child-focused studies are often designed to have mothers (whenever possible) as reporters because of long-standing assumptions about their chief importance in and knowledge of children's development and family processes (Schaeffer, Seltzer, & Dykema, 1998). It has also proved easier and less costly, historically, to locate and recruit women or mothers for survey research (Braver & Bay, 1992; Schaeffer et al., 1998). Despite the benefits of relying on mothers for family information, only having reports from one parent limits the information we have about adolescents and their families.

Regardless of how residential family members and their relationships to each other are documented, household-based surveys are also limited by the extent to which they can shed light on family members who reside outside the focal household (Manning et al., 2014). This includes nonresidential parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, or even adults who are not blood relatives but play a central role in parenting adolescents. Some studies, like the National Study of Families and Households, involve interviews with multiple parents, including follow-ups with parents who leave the household. Very few nationally representative studies of youth or families collect data from nonresidential parents from the start. One exception is the Fragile Families Study (Reichman, Teitler,

Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 2001), in which fathers are interviewed at all the same time points as mothers, even if they live apart. It is undoubtedly expensive to fully delineate and measure adolescents' families, especially from the perspective of multiple family members, but the value in doing so justifies consideration of how we might more creatively approach the collection of data on adolescents' family contexts.

A handful of other previously identified factors may also bias our understandings of adolescents or young adults' living arrangements when young people themselves are the sampling units. For example, when youth are sampled from schools, youth who are not in school either because of dropping out or being homeschooled may be missing from the sampling frame (Johnston & O'Malley, 1985). Thus, the types of families or households those youth tend to have could be underrepresented in the data. Furthermore, some studies restrict residents of institutions from being in the sampling frame, meaning that when focusing on youth those who live on a college campus or are incarcerated (and their family situations) are underrepresented. And, some studies restrict their samples to college students, making findings less generalizable to the whole population of late adolescents or young adults (Côté, 2014; L. L. Mitchell & Syed, 2015).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Family Networks

One alternative that could address limitations inherent in the household-centric design of surveys is the application of social network approaches and methods to the collection of data on family members (Bernardi, 2011; Widmer, 2010). These methods have been primarily used for adults' social networks to date, and to collect information on the most influential people in their lives. Widmer (2010) argues that families are best defined as configurations created out of the interdependencies between family members. Using a social network approach to conceptualize families allows researchers to put adolescents at the center of a network of family members, considering the social, psychological, biological, and geographic distances of those in the web of family. It also makes it possible to assess the type and quality of ties between members of an adolescent's family network, including the social capital available (Widmer, 2010). Furthermore, one could consider the support networks (family or wider) of multiple family members and the extent to which they overlap or leave certain family members isolated (Bernardi, 2011).

The conceptualization of adolescents' families as social networks suggests new forms of data collection as well (Bernardi, 2011; Widmer, 2010). In survey studies designed to understand the role of family and family members in the lives of adolescents, rather than a standard household roster, adolescents might be asked to complete a sociogram or network diagram that systematically elicits reports of the important family members in an adolescent's life (Widmer, Aeby, & Sapin, 2013). "Important" could be defined according to key theories or research questions. For example, studies might focus on listing and describing family ties based on levels of closeness, social support, financial support, or time spent together. Furthermore, adolescents could report perceptions of how close each of these family members is to every other family member, so that standard network measures, such as density or centrality, could be applied to understanding family characteristics. Other family members could also become participants in the study and provide their own assessment of adolescents' family networks and the ties involved.

In longitudinal studies, the repeated mapping of adolescents' family networks could provide rich data for shifts over time in influential family members, family relationships, and family living arrangements. This dynamic approach allows for assessing levels of stability or instability in family networks as well as various trajectories in network change. For example, Widmer (2010) demonstrates how change in family configurations in the short and long term is related to psychological well-being.

Using a social network approach in measuring the family structures, ties, and interactions of adolescents could address several issues raised earlier in the paper. For one, this measurement strategy could do a better job of documenting family relations across households, not limiting researchers to the context of one household. Second, depending on how data about family networks are collected, this approach could do a better job of characterizing types and features of family relationships (Widmer, 2010). With a variety of studies indicating that levels of warmth and control provided by parents are more predictive of youth well-being than the family structure(s) in which they have lived (Arnold, Lucier-Greer, Mancini, Ford, & Wickrama, 2017; Demo & Acock, 1996; Lansford, Ceballo,

Abbey, & Stewart, 2001; Phillips, 2012), it is important that we understand how family configurations improve or challenge the ability of parents to provide high quality parenting (Pryor, 2004; Murry and Lippold, 2018, this issue).

Family Profiles

Another alternative for measuring the family contexts in which adolescents live is to use cluster analysis or latent class methods to suggest "types" or "profiles" of families. Common types of families would be identified by a set of indicators of family structure, such as number and type of parent figures, sibling types and living arrangements, different residential custody arrangements, multigenerational living, and more. Family configurations could represent families at one moment in time or a set of experiences across time.

Research on the implications of family structure for children and adolescents often focuses on one part of family structure at a time, like whether there are one or two parents in the home, or the impact of a remarriage on adolescents. However, the relationship status or transitions experienced by parents might be different based on whether an adolescent has siblings or not and how many. Manning et al. (2014) and others describe the multifaceted nature of families as *complexity*, and they recommend an approach that documents types of parent figures as well as siblings. Methods such as latent class analysis could achieve this.

Indicators of dynamic living arrangements such as shared residential custody could be included in analyses. One could represent family transitions over time such as having ever lived with a single parent, a step-parent (married or cohabiting), having had a biological-, half-, or step-sibling, having ever lived with a grandparent, having experienced a parental dissolution, having moved from home, or having returned to home.

The use of social network or configurational methods has the potential to transform the study of adolescents' family contexts and parenting by providing better coverage of family members and processes. Rather than having to rely on certain segments of what adolescents might define as their family, or only consider one aspect of family structure at a time, these methods allow the complexity of families to be more fully captured. Moreover, with network or family profile methods, measures of the quality or content of family interactions could be included. This might include family experiences, such as death, severe or chronic health issues, incarceration, or deportation of a family member as factors that define a family and present new issues for parenting adolescents.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding forms of family in which adolescents come of age and their impact is challenging on a number of fronts. There are many dynamics at play. The definition of *family* has been changing over time, families experience changes of members across time, and parents and adolescents themselves are developing through time. Furthermore, there are key measurement challenges, including the extent to which we focus on household members as family, who we ask to report on family structure and dynamics, and how to best capture changes in these very complex processes over time.

Despite these challenges, we do have a sense of the range and prevalence of family forms and how these have changed over time. Adolescents increasingly live in single-parent, step-parent, and no-biological-parent homes. Having step-siblings or half-siblings in the home or in other homes is more common. Grandparents are increasingly present in adolescents' homes and lives. Older adolescents or young adults are more likely to return to their parents' homes for a period of time. Furthermore, the number of changes in living arrangements families experience has increased. Because so much about adolescents' families has changed since the middle of the 20th century when foundational theories of parenting were developed, it is important we consider how newer contexts for parenting might alter or expand theory or research on parenting adolescents.

The many aspects of family change experienced in the United States over the past few decades share a common set of implications for parenting adolescents. Different forms and increasing change within families involves relationship transitions for both parents and children, can be stigmatizing for parents and children, might increase the number of parent figures needing to coordinate support and guidance for an adolescent, and can be a source of difference or distance between parents and children.

Relationship transitions, such as separation or divorce, are associated with more parental stress and harsher parenting in mothers (Beck, Cooper, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010; Cooper, McLanahan, Meadows, Brooks-Gunn, & Johnson, 2009). Amato (2004, p. 32) contends that, while there are many risk factors associated with divorce,

"disruptions in parent–child relationships have the greatest potential to affect children negatively." Families with "boomerang" adolescents, who have moved out and then return, may have challenges negotiating appropriate autonomy-granting and independence-building (Newman, 2012). Thus, the transitions involved in creating increasingly new and different family forms raise challenges to parenting adolescents. Classic theories highlighting the importance of warmth and control (e.g., Baldwin, 1955; Baumrind, 1967; Becker, 1964; Sears et al., 1957; Symonds, 1939) can be enhanced in thinking about ways parents can adequately provide support to adolescents during times of transition and in new family forms.

These considerations all point to an increased need for cooperation, negotiation, and understanding among parents, partners, and children (Amato, 2004). Theory and research should continue to address the extent to which relationship transitions limit parents' abilities to provide optimal support and monitoring, and whether, at the same time, adolescents in these situations might need more support and monitoring. Parents themselves should and often do acknowledge the need to process these transitions in as healthy a manner as possible to protect their and their adolescents' well-being. For example, authoritative parenting, in which parents are warm, involved, and supportive of their adolescent's autonomy and decision making, yet are clear and firm about their boundaries and expectations, can be successful across multiple family types and cultures (Baumrind, 1971; Sorkhabi & Mandara, 2013; Steinberg, 2001). Other parents and family members who are not dealing with family transitions might consider how they can best support those parents who are, in the interest of helping families emerge from transitions.

When family forms are changing so fast, and society holds strong nostalgia for an ideal family of the past (Coontz, 1992), there is great potential for suspicion and condemnation of nonnuclear families, same-sex parent families, or foster/adoptive families that stem from a failure or inadequacy on the part of biological parents. Thus, parents and adolescents in these family forms, with these experiences and identities, face personal challenges that arise from marginalization, and they worry about and attend to each other's harm from such discrimination. These processes are also discussed by Murry and Lippold (2018, this issue) and are a potential context in which to consider what optimal parenting of adolescents involves.

Parents in these often-judged families can benefit from being aware and educated about the risk of experiencing real and perceived stigma. If parents are presented with data to show the relative normality of their experiences today and the questionable reasoning in assuming a golden age of families in the past (Coontz, 1992), they may gain confidence as parents, allowing them to provide the support and monitoring that seems more essential to adolescents than family structure in and of itself. Likewise, adolescents who face potential stigma because of their family experiences can be taught how to understand and cope with it. Finally, parents and adolescents who have consistently been part of a nuclear, biological, heterosexual parent family should also recognize that different family forms are not necessarily inferior family forms. They should connect with different kinds of families to learn how their lives are more similar than they know. Because everyone recognizes the dangers in assuming that family structure equates to family quality, the risk of stigma for parents and children in new family forms will decline.

Complex families with multiple parent figures, including grandparents, other relatives, nonresidential parents, and foster parents, have increased potential for conflicts about parenting and greater challenges negotiating a unified and beneficial parenting approach (Pryor, 2004). As a greater number of parent figures become involved in adolescents' lives, parenting behaviors become responsive to the desires and circumstances of a range of parent types, new children, and others. These complex family networks will affect access to, and relationships with, all of a parent's children (Meyer & Cancian, 2012; Tach et al., 2010).

Finally, with greater heterogeneity and change over time in the number of parent figures involved in an adolescent's life comes the potential for greater distance between parents and the adolescent along a number of lines. Step-parents, foster or adoptive parents, or even parents who had children via ART, and their adolescent children, often have issues surrounding the lack of biological connection between them and/or negotiating how to establish strong bonds and encourage their connection with their biological parents (if they are still involved) (Pryor, 2004). Grandparents who parent may share biological ties with adolescents, but their age difference may pose challenges to parenting. Nonresident mothers or fathers may be or feel less involved in key decisions or socialization

processes due to their limits on time together (Pryor, 2004).

We have covered a variety of aspects of family structure and their implications for the contemporary study of parenting adolescents. Yet, there remain other ways in which families differ that might impact parenting and should also be studied further. We focused on permanent relationship and living arrangement change in our survey of the literature, but families can become separated in temporary (but often long-term) ways that hold many of the same implications for how parenting might unfold. For example, military families deal with frequent moves as well as deployment of at least one parent (Arnold et al., 2017). There has been a massive increase in the likelihood an adolescent will be separated from a parent who is incarcerated, presenting its own unique challenges (Johnson & Easterling, 2012; Murphey & Cooper, 2015). Deportation is increasingly an issue for immigrant families in the United States, and refugees may have family members left in their country of origin. There are also family experiences that do not change the structure of family, but shift the balance of resources or parenting. This could include parent or child physical or mental health issues or parent unemployment. In general, the better we are at considering the range of family forms and experiences in our measures and models, the more advice can be tailored to specific parenting contexts for adolescents.

In addition to incorporating new family forms and their implications into our theorizing and research on parenting adolescents, we must also advance our methods of measuring families. Because of the challenges in grasping all complexities of adolescents' families, research should continue to pursue and implement new ways to conceptualize and measure family forms and processes. Social network methods bring a flexibility and comprehensiveness to the measurement of significant family ties, and also allow the study of multiple family members' perspectives. Profile or clustering methods permit studying unique configurations of certain aspects of family structure and the quality of interactions.

In the absence of these alternate forms of data on families, we recommend that studies focused on or controlling for the role of family structure in parenting theorize the appropriate dimensions of family context to a given topic, and include as many of those as possible. This would include measures of number and type of parents, siblings, and extended family members and involvement of nonresidential parent figures in an adolescent's life. We also recommend modeling interactions between parenting styles and family structure so that we can better evaluate the extent to which the importance of key constructs, like emotional support or behavioral monitoring, varies by family context.

More fully recognizing the contemporary range of family structures and the particular issues involved with each greatly improves the odds that we are more accurately theorizing, measuring, and analyzing best practices for parenting adolescents. In turn, the public can also be better informed about the growing normality of nonnuclear, impermanent family structures, possibly lowering stigma of certain families and raising parents' and adolescents' confidence in maintaining strong bonds and successfully preparing for the transition to adulthood.

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