The Pleasures of Youth: Parent and Peer Compliance Toward Discretionary Time

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In the past, research into an adolescent’s leisure time has almost exclusively focused on furnishing a record or checklist of activities. This investigation evaluates attitudinal dimensions of leisure, peer identification, and parental accommodation as it relates to patterns of leisure present in an affluent adolescent subculture. Two factors emerged from the attitudinal study, representing achievement and egalitarian dispositions. Patterns of peer and parental compliance were measured against these dispositions. Parental and peer influences were found to affect the outcome of an adolescent’s attitudes. Differences between sexes and between early and late adolescence were also discovered to influence levels of compliance with parents and peers, thereby affecting an adolescent’s leisure attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Parent and peer influence has repeatedly been identified as an important determinant of a youth’s orientation, but the reaction of youth to either peer or parent referent is not automatic. Many social factors serve to control compliance

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of a youth's reaction to referent roles. The course of this inquiry is specifically
directed to defining the influence of parents and peers in structuring a young
person's leisure attitudes to determine if they are attitudinally structured as an
instrument of achievement among youth. Rather than employing a strategy of
contrived situations about immediate or future decisions judged by parent or
peer compliance, we will follow a course of action suggested by Larson (1972, p.
72). First, compliance with parent and peer influences will be measured on such
issues as authority or giving assistance to youth. Second, orientations to leisure
will be measured to determine the influence of parent or peer on a youth, and,
third, the relationship between leisure and the value of achievement orientation
will be considered.

Patterns of conduct by parents help determine an adolescent's orienta-
tions. Independence training, authority relationships, and parental dominance re-
sult in behavior by parents that inhibits or accelerates socialization. In trying to
understand the adolescent, Bachman (1970, p. 1) stresses that "family back-
ground is a powerful force — or more accurately, a cluster of powerful forces —
shaping an individual's capacities and accomplishments throughout his life." The
educational and occupational attainments of parents, the physical resources of
the home, the personal relationships between parents and children — these fac-
tors and many more are what social scientists mean by family background. Re-
searchers have attempted to find umbrella concepts to reflect a more theoreti-
cally parsimonious view of the adolescent-parent relationship, and two variables,
parental power and support, have frequently been employed (Bowerman and
Bahr, 1973, p. 363). Various dimensions of the power relationship have been
tested for their effectiveness on adolescent behavior by Smith (1970). This study
is important in that both the conflict approach (Davis, 1940; Coleman, 1961)
and the social influence approach (Kandel and Lesser, 1969) are incorporated
into the same design by the concept of power.

Parental power processes assume a major role in shaping adolescent behav-
ior. Specific sources of influence have been identified for parents; among them is
the variable of paternal and maternal outcome control of resources. The variable
measures the parent's influences in deciding how much money an adolescent re-
ceives, evaluates the parent's influence in deciding how and when things are done
in the household, and assesses the adolescent's perception of the parent's ability
to influence the actions of others. In Smith's (1970, p. 869) analysis of the foun-
dations of parental influence on the adolescent, he found that "parental power
resource accounts for far more of the variance in parental influence upon adoles-
cents than either adolescence dependencies or alternatives." A parent's ability to
control resources defines a key factor in the power process.

Whether parental control of resources specifically affects an adolescent's
response to his discretionary time and the organization of his free time is yet
another question. Paternal and maternal influence has been shown to operate in
intensifying educational aspirations and molding heterosexual responses to life
(Smith, 1970); however, it is not altogether clear if activities of a more voluntary