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## Friendship and Deviance: New Evidence on an Old Controversy

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*This study examined the relationship between peer attachment and peer deviance. Study participants were fifth-grade students from an urban school district. Approximately half of the sample was male, and subjects represented a variety of racial/ethnic and socio-economic groups. Subjects were asked questions about each of four best friends including how much they shared thoughts and feelings with the friends (intimacy), and whether they wanted to be like these friends (identification). They also were asked whether these friends got in trouble with the teacher, and whether they, themselves, got in trouble with the teacher. Results indicated that, in general, early adolescents were more attached to friends who did not get into trouble, regardless of whether they got in trouble themselves. These findings are inconsistent with cultural deviance theories and suggest, instead, that early adolescents likely share a common definition that friendships with conventional peers are more desirable than friendships with deviant peers.*

Association with delinquent peers has been shown repeatedly to be a strong correlate of delinquency in adolescence (Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985; Elliott & Voss, 1974; Hirschi, 1969; Johnson, 1979; Johnson, Marcos, & Bahr, 1987). Because peer influence also has been shown to be related strongly to other forms of deviant behaviors—that is, behaviors that are socially defined as undesirable and typically evoke negative sanctions—such as drug use (Huba & Bentler, 1980; Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Kandel, 1985),

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understanding the role of peer relations in generating and maintaining deviant behaviors is an important task for theory and research. Despite the widely recognized correlation between an adolescent's deviant behavior and that of his or her friends, there is controversy about the nature of these relationships.

Different theoretical traditions offer different and sometimes contradictory interpretations of the nature of peer group relations (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Pugh, 1986; Gottfredson, 1987; Hawkins, 1981; Hawkins & Fraser, 1985; Hirschi, 1969; Krohn, 1986). Cultural deviance theories, such as differential association (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978) and social learning (Akers, 1977), postulate that delinquent friendship groups generate and reinforce delinquent behavior in a context of shared but unconventional beliefs. From the point of view of these theoretical traditions, group processes among delinquent and nondelinquent peer groups are no different except that the former subscribe to a different set of norms regarding behavior. Attachment to delinquent friends produces changes in attitudes and beliefs that lead to involvement in deviant behavior. Like any friendship group, relations among delinquent peers are portrayed as "warm" (Thrasher, 1963), "sociable," and "gregarious" (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978).

Social control theory (Hirschi, 1969), on the other hand, maintains that deviance stems solely from a lack of bonding. Lack of bonding to conventional society, especially to the family unit, results in inadequate socialization that, in turn, produces adolescents who lack skills necessary to build conventional friendship networks. In the "pure" version of this theory, association with delinquent peers is an etiological nonevent; it is a secondary outcome of the processes that produce delinquency, not part of those processes. There is no notion of a deviant subculture in control theory, and bonding to deviant others is not recognized by the theory, whereas in cultural deviance theories, social bonds to deviant peers are not only thought to exist, but are also thought to encourage deviance (Hawkins & Fraser, 1985). Control theory emphasizes the pull of prosocial constraints rather than the push of antisocial beliefs, and correspondingly characterizes friendships among delinquents as "cold and brittle" (Hirschi, 1969). From this perspective, delinquents who cannot or will not bond to prosocial others also cannot or will not bond to delinquent others. As Hansell and Wiatrowski (1982) and Hawkins and Fraser (1985) have noted, these two theoretical traditions—cultural deviance and control theories—posit differences in both the structure and the content of deviant and conventional peer groups.

The picture that emerges from previous empirical research regarding the nature of peer relationships among delinquents is ambiguous. In the 1950s and 1960s when cultural deviance theories reached their peak of influence, researchers were already questioning the validity of the argument with

findings that suggested that, far from being sociable, delinquents were socially inept (Glueck & Glueck, 1950; Klein & Crawford, 1967; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965; Yablonsky, 1963). These findings are consistent with a body of more recent research that identified early antisocial behavior (Ensminger, Kellam, & Rubin, 1983; Farrington, 1986) and peer rejection (Coie, in press) as predictors of delinquent behavior in adolescence, and they showed that delinquents were less socially skilled than their conventional peers (Friedman, Rosenthal, Donahoe, Schlundt, & McFall, 1978; Gaffney, 1984; Gaffney & McFall, 1981). Further, Patterson and Dishion (1985), using a multiple indicators approach, found a strong negative effect of social skills on association with delinquent peers. If aggressiveness, social withdrawal, and lack of social skills are indeed related to delinquency as researchers have suggested, it is hard to imagine that delinquents would find one another very attractive as friends. Indeed, Hirschi (1969) found that conventional adolescents were more attached to their friends than were delinquent adolescents. How is it that children who engage in deviant behaviors and are rejected in childhood have deviant friends in adolescence? Is it simply because there are no other choices, implying that even deviant adolescents prefer friendships with conventional others? If so, do deviant adolescents view their deviant friends as less desirable than conventional friends and are they less attached to these friends?

The findings that showed deviant adolescents as less skilled than conventional adolescents, although consistent with social control theories, are hard to reconcile with those of other research. Polk (1971) and Conger (1976) reported that peer attachment *increased* delinquency—a finding in direct contradiction to social control hypotheses, and one that implied that delinquent peer groups can be close. Similarly, Giordano et al. (1986) found that the friendships of delinquents were similar to those of nondelinquents on a variety of dimensions including relationship stability, frequency of interaction, trust and concern for one another, and the amount of disclosure to one another. In fact, delinquent friends reported that they were *more* likely to influence each other than nondelinquent friends, suggesting that delinquent peer groups may be more cohesive than conventional friendship groups. However, they were also more likely to experience conflict than nondelinquent friends, which may reflect their greater aggressiveness and lack of social skills. In a study of aggressive behaviors, Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest, and Garipey (1988) also found few differences between friendships of deviant and conventional children. Although aggressive children were less popular and less well liked in general than nonaggressive children, they tended to affiliate with other aggressive children, and were just as likely as nonaggressive children to be nuclear members of these social groups.

Reconciling these contrasting portraits of deviant peer relationships is a necessary task for those attempting to forge delinquency theories with empirical validity (e.g., Hawkins, Lishner, Catalano, & Howard, 1986; Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Johnson et al., 1987; Krohn, 1986), and has important implications for intervention. An important and unanswered question is whether deviant adolescents are seen by their friends as equally desirable and valued friends, as are conventional adolescents. If adolescents who engage in deviant behaviors are selected as friends, are they admired as role models and viewed as close intimate friends by those with whom they are friends? Alternatively, are deviant adolescents viewed as less desirable and less intimate friends than are conventional adolescents? Cultural deviance theories imply that deviant adolescents will be as intimate and identify as strongly with their deviant friends as do conventional adolescents. Social control theory, on the other hand, suggests that deviant adolescents do not bond to one another and therefore their friendships, characterized by coldness rather than intimacy, will be strikingly different than those of conventional adolescents.

The answers to these questions have important implications for intervention. If adolescents are less attached to their deviant friends than to their conventional friends, then this may be a key to preventing and breaking delinquent peer associations. The problem would not be how to break up strong and desirable relationships, but rather how to replace less desirable friendships with more desirable ones (Hawkins & Fraser, 1985). This could be accomplished through increasing skills for social interaction without resorting to aggression, and by increasing opportunities for interaction with conventional children perhaps through cooperative learning in schools (Slavin, 1980). If, on the other hand, attachments to deviant friends are as strong as attachments to conventional friends, then it will be much harder to intervene. Increasing skills for social interaction and opportunities for more involvement with conventional others is not likely to succeed because, in this case, there is not a shared definition of what is socially desirable.

Although adolescent friendship groups are characterized by considerable similarity among members on a wide variety of dimensions (Kandel, 1978), researchers rarely find complete homophily in such groups. In such a case, the attachment of an adolescent to a given individual in the peer group may depend on whether that person is deviant or not. Whether this is true, regardless of the adolescent's own antisocial behavior, is an equally important issue. Unfortunately, the data available in most studies cannot directly address these questions because the deviance of *individual* friends was not measured.

This article presents findings based on a sample of early adolescents regarding the relationship between the attachment to friends and the friend's

deviance. Specific questions addressed include: (a) Is there an association between an early adolescent's deviance and that of his or her peers, as has been found consistently for older adolescents (see Elliott et al., 1985); (b) do early adolescents who are themselves deviant have more deviant friends than do conventional early adolescents; (c) do early adolescents feel equally close to both nondeviant and deviant friends; (d) do they identify more with their nondeviant or their deviant friends; and (e) do these relationships change when the deviance of the early adolescent is taken into account?

For the questions addressed in these analyses, an indicator of peer deviance that is accessible or knowable by the rater was needed. It needed to be salient in the social environment so that an early adolescent could distinguish one "type" of peer from another. For analysis purposes, this measure also must have sufficient variation to allow meaningful comparisons. Serious forms of deviance that occur in later adolescence, like delinquency and drug use, were precluded because at this age rates of these behaviors are very low. Problem behavior at school, however, seemed to fit these criteria and was therefore selected as the measure of deviance.

Further justification for this measure of deviance comes from prior research that indicated that children who demonstrated problem behavior at school at early ages were more likely to become delinquent or involved in other serious problem behaviors at later ages (see Ensminger et al., 1983; Loeber, 1987; Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Spivack, 1983). Because Cairns and Cairns (1988) found greater agreement between a child and his or her friends on specific items like "gets in trouble at school" than on less specific items, this type of measure was chosen for the analyses presented in this article.

The term "deviance" is used in this study to define behaviors that are socially disapproved of, typically evoking negative sanctions. This use of the term is consistent with sociological definitions of deviance (see Clinard, 1974), as well as with definitions employed by other researchers (e.g., Jessor & Jessor, 1977). Of course, not all early adolescents who get in trouble in school later become delinquents, and getting in trouble in school may be minor deviance for some early adolescents, just as many older adolescents who engage in delinquency "outgrow" their deviance and become conventional adults. But the evidence suggests that this group is the group from which delinquents will likely emerge in later adolescence.

Two dimensions of attachment to friends were included in the analyses presented: intimacy and identification with the friend. Intimacy was chosen because it reflects the warmth and closeness of the bond between friends that cultural deviance theorists have described, and appears to tap the affective dimension of peer attachment as conceptualized by Hirschi (1969). It is consistent also with other researchers' conceptualizations of attachment (e.g.,

Giordano et al., 1986; Krohn & Massey, 1980). Moreover, considerable social psychological research has indicated that self-disclosure is characteristic of close intimate relationships (cf. review by Cozby, 1973). Hirschi (1969) suggested that identification is a crucial element of attachment; therefore, a measure of identification based on Hirschi's empirical work also was employed in the analyses reported here.

This study differed from previous studies of friendships in two ways: (a) the deviance of the subject and that of *each* of his or her four closest friends was measured, and (b) these relationships were examined in a sample of early adolescents from an urban school environment. The focus on a younger age group than typically has been studied is important for several reasons. First, recent research (e.g., Agnew, 1985) suggested that control theory propositions were most relevant for early adolescents and younger children. Second, misconduct among early adolescents has been shown, as noted previously, to be predictive of delinquency in later adolescence (Loeber, 1987).

## METHOD

### Overview

Data for the analyses presented in this article were collected as part of an ongoing longitudinal study guided by the social development model (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Catalano & Hawkins, 1986). The ongoing study seeks to identify the relative contributions of childhood risk factors to the etiology of adolescent delinquency and drug use, and to test the effects of a set of preventive interventions. Data collection began in 1981 with a panel of 568 first-grade students. In 1985, when subjects entered fifth grade, the panel was expanded to include *all* fifth-grade students enrolled in 18 elementary schools in a large urban school district in the Northwestern United States. Schools were chosen to maximize racial, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity in the sample.

### Procedures

Data presented in this article were collected during the fall of 1985 when students were in the fifth grade. Letters were sent to parents describing the study and asking for permission to include their child in the study. In addition, all fifth-grade students in participating schools were given information about the study and asked if they wished to participate. Students whose parents requested that their child not participate and/or students who did not wish to

participate were not included in the study. Of the 1,053 fifth-grade students enrolled in participating schools and therefore eligible for study participation, 919 (87%) completed a questionnaire in the fall of their fifth-grade year. Reasons for nonparticipation included absences from school both the day of questionnaire administration and on the make-up day ( $n = 16$ ), student refusals to participate ( $n = 47$ ), parent refusals ( $n = 154$ ), language problems ( $n = 8$ ), and 9 were excluded for miscellaneous other reasons. No significant differences were found between those who completed the questionnaire and those who did not on race, gender, or family income (measured as eligibility for the federally funded reduced fee lunch program).

The questionnaire contained items explicitly developed to measure the theoretical constructs of the social development model and included measures of bonding to friends, perceptions of friends' deviance, and subject's own deviance. Questionnaires were administered in classrooms by project personnel who read aloud to the students both the questions and the potential responses. Students had copies of the questionnaire on which they indicated their responses to each question. Students were assured that their answers were completely confidential and only codes but no names or other identifying information appeared on the questionnaires. They were not permitted to talk with one another during administration of the questionnaire, and their behavior was monitored to ensure that questionnaires were completed independently.

### Subject Characteristics

The fifth-grade panel of 919 students was 46% White, 25% African-American, 21% Asian-American, and 9% were from other ethnic categories. There were about equal numbers of males (52%) and females (48%). According to official school district records, 38% of the sample qualified for the federally funded free or reduced fee lunch program, and 39% came from single parent families. The vast majority of the students were either 10 or 11 years of age at the time of the questionnaire administration, the typical age range for fifth-grade students.

### Measures

*Attachment to Peers.* Subjects were asked to identify (using initials) in rank order their four best friends. They were then asked a series of questions concerning each of these friends. Intimacy was measured by an item asking: "Do you share your thoughts and feelings with this person?" and identifica-

tion was measured by an item asking: "Do you want to be the kind of person this person is?" Students responded to these items on 4-point scales by checking *YES!*, *yes*, *no*, or *NO!* to indicate degree of endorsement or emphasis; the higher the score, the greater the attachment to the friend.

*Peer Deviance.* As a measure of problem behavior at school, subjects were asked with regard to each of their four best friends: "Does this person do things that gets them into trouble with the teacher?" Students responded either *yes* (scored 1) or *no* (scored 0).

*Subject Deviance.* Subjects were asked: "Some kids do things that get them into trouble with the teacher. Do you ever get into trouble with the teacher?" Responses were scored on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 to 4 with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of the statement.

## RESULTS

The data were analyzed in four steps. First, correlations were computed to examine the association between the subject's deviance and that of his or her four best friends. Then, a *t* test was performed to see whether the number of deviant friends differs depending on whether or not the subject is deviant. Next addressed were the study's main questions including: (a) Are early adolescents as attached to friends who get in trouble with their teachers as to friends who do not; (b) does this relationship change when the deviance of the subject is taken into account? These questions were examined using a regression model in which the subject's own deviance, his or her best friend's deviance, and the interaction between these variables were the predictor variables. The dependent variables included intimacy and identification with the friend. Separate analyses were conducted for each of the four best friends.

To examine the association between the subject's deviance and that of his or her friends, point biserial correlations were computed. The variables correlated included the subject's report of the extent to which he or she gets in trouble with the teacher and whether his or her best friend gets in trouble with the teacher. A positive and significant relationship between being in trouble with the teacher and the subject's friend being in trouble with the teacher was found for each of the four friends. For the very best friend this correlation was .22 ( $p < .01$ ), for the second best friend it was .26 ( $p < .01$ ), for the third best friend it was .13 ( $p < .01$ ), and for the fourth best friend it was .14 ( $p < .01$ ). Although the correlations are modest, they are consistent

with that of considerable prior research, cited previously, that indicated that deviant adolescents are more likely to have deviant friends than nondeviant friends. These results provided additional support for using "trouble with teacher" as a measure of deviance in late childhood and early adolescence.

To address the question of whether deviant early adolescents have more deviant friends than do conventional early adolescents, subjects were classified as either deviant or conventional. Subjects who reported that they got in trouble with the teacher (i.e., they responded either "yes" or "YES!" to the question about getting in trouble with the teacher) were classified as deviant whereas those subjects who reported that they did not get in trouble with the teacher (i.e., those who responded either "no" or "NO!") were classified as conventional. A variable was computed that indicated the number of best friends who get in trouble with the teacher (i.e., those for whom the subject responded "yes" when asked if this friend gets in trouble with the teacher). This variable ranges from 0 (none of the four best friends get in trouble with the teacher) to 4 (all four friends get in trouble with the teacher). Because the test for homogeneity of variance was significant ( $F[1, 524] = 3.31, p < .01$ ), the  $t$  test was computed using separate estimates of the variance. The results indicated that deviant subjects had significantly more deviant friends than did conventional subjects ( $t = -6.36, df = 524, p < .01$ ). The mean number of deviant friends for subjects who were classified as conventional was .29 ( $SD = 0.60$ ) whereas the mean number of deviant friends for deviant subjects was .78 ( $SD = 1.08$ ).

For the regression analyses, an initial model was estimated that included the three predictor variables: subject's own deviance, subject's report of friend's deviance, and the interaction between the two variables. The variables constituting the interaction term were first transformed to  $z$  scores, then their product was entered in the analysis. Listwise deletion of missing data was used in all regressions; therefore, subjects who did not provide complete data on all variables in the regressions were not included in the analyses. For example, subjects who reported fewer than four best friends were not included in the analyses. Variables that were not significant were eliminated and a final trimmed model was estimated (see Blalock, 1972). The results of these analyses for the final model are displayed in Table 1.

With regard to intimacy (sharing thoughts and feelings with one's friend), the interaction between subject's deviance and friend's deviance was not significant for any friend except for the third best friend. Further, the subject's own deviance was not related to the level of intimacy with any of the four best friends. With one exception (the second best friend), there was a significant inverse relationship between the deviance of the friend and the

**TABLE 1: Results of Regression of Attachment to Friends on Friend's Deviance, Subject's Deviance, and Their Interaction: Trimmed Models**

<i>Attachment</i>	<i>Predictor Variables</i>						<i>n</i>
	<i>Friend's Deviance</i>		<i>Subject's Deviance</i>		<i>Interaction</i>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	
<i>Intimacy</i>							
1st best friend	-.08	-1.99*					659
2nd best friend	-.02	-0.43					705
3rd best friend	-.11	-2.84**			.09	2.40*	678
4th best friend	-.12	-3.01**					598
<i>Identification</i>							
1st best friend	-.21	-5.62***					657
2nd best friend	-.14	-3.70**					674
3rd best friend	-.10	-2.65**	-.11	-2.78**			661
4th best friend	-.13	-3.22**					585

NOTE: Trimmed models are models re-estimated with all nonsignificant variables deleted. Coefficients are standardized.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

level of intimacy the subject expressed toward the friend. In general, less intimacy was expressed toward deviant than toward conventional friends.

A similar pattern of results was obtained for identification with the friend (want to be like the friend). None of the interactions of subject's deviance and friend's deviance was significant in these analyses. With one exception, there was a significant inverse relationship between the friend's deviance and the extent of identification with the friend. The exception was the third best friend, where the subject's deviance, not including the friend's deviance, predicted identification with the friend.

For ease of presentation, the variables were dichotomized (yes vs. no) to display graphically the relationship between attachment to friends and friend's deviance. Figure 1 shows the relationship between intimacy and the friend's deviance for each of the subjects' four best friends, (the results for identification with friends were very similar and therefore were not displayed). Evident in the figure is the greater level of attachment to friends who did not get in trouble with the teacher relative to those who did. Recall that these relationships held regardless of whether the subject was deviant or not. Noteworthy also is the fact that as the friendship became more distant—from the first to fourth best friends—the proportion of subjects who were intimate with the friend declined. This was true regardless of whether or not the friend

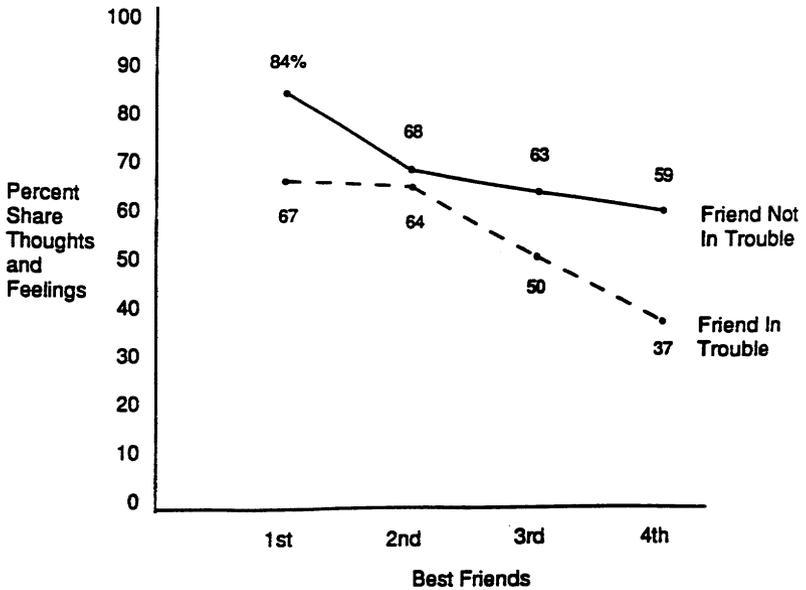


Figure 1: Intimacy with friends in trouble versus those not in trouble.

was perceived to be one who got in trouble with the teacher. This pattern suggests the validity of these measures of attachment. That is, it is expected that individuals feel greatest intimacy with their very best friend and the least intimacy with their fourth best friend.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the relationship between attachment to friends and the friend's deviance during early adolescence. Whether measured as intimacy (sharing thoughts and feelings with the friend) or as identification (want to be like the friend), the results indicated that greater attachment generally existed when the friend was conventional than when deviant. The only exception was the level of intimacy expressed toward the second best friend. The relationship between attachment and the deviance of friends was

not qualified by whether or not the subject was deviant, except for the case of the third best friend and then only for intimacy. The subject's own deviance, with the single exception of identification with the third best friend, was not related to the level of attachment expressed toward close friends. Consistent with previous research on older adolescents, there was a positive association between the subject's deviance and that of his or her four best friends. Relatedly, deviant subjects reported a greater number of deviant friends than did conventional subjects.

The general finding that the early adolescents in this study were more attached to conventional friends than to deviant friends, regardless of the subject's deviance, is consistent with social control theory. It is inconsistent with cultural deviance theories in the sense that the finding suggests that both conventional and deviant early adolescents may share a common definition that friendships with conventional peers are more desirable. Alternatively, it may be that the deviant early adolescents simply lack the social skills which would make them attractive as friends.

On the other hand, the general finding that deviant early adolescents were no less attached to their friends than were conventional early adolescents is inconsistent with social control theory. To the extent that such attachment implies a warm relationship between friends, this finding appears consistent with cultural deviance theory and contrary to control theory's depiction of a deviant youth's friendship relations as "cold and brittle." The findings are also at odds with the notion espoused by control theory that deviant individuals do not or cannot bond to others. Whether this is because the measure of deviance (getting in trouble with teachers) tapped less serious forms of deviance at this age and therefore even subjects classified as deviant still had some ability to bond to others, or because social control theory is wrong about attachment among deviant friends, cannot be determined from the data. However, as noted previously, the Giordano et al. (1986) data also suggested that deviant adolescents form close attachments to their friends. Thus, the problem for deviant early adolescents does not appear to be an inability to bond. Rather, as noted previously, it may be that they lack the social skills necessary to attract friends. If so, interventions seeking to enhance the social skills of these early adolescents might be especially promising.

The exceptions to these general findings were difficult to interpret. In one case the subject's own deviance was negatively related to the degree of identification with the (third best) friend. This finding is consistent with social control theory that asserts that deviant adolescents do not bond to others. However, given the consistent lack of an effect for the subject's own deviance in all the other analyses, this was likely a chance occurrence. It is also unclear as to what the isolated interaction between the subject's deviance

and the friend's deviance means. It, too, may have been a chance finding. This seems especially likely given that it occurred in only one of eight analyses, and only for a more distant friend (the third ranked friend). Nonetheless, in future research the possibility of such interactions no doubt should be explored.

Although the findings from this study must be regarded as preliminary, there are clear implications for theory if they can be replicated. The distinction between conventional and deviant best friends made by subjects in this study, even when subjects themselves were deviant, suggests an intervention strategy that focuses on improving skills for interacting with others and providing greater opportunities for interaction and involvement with conventional others. Because deviant close friends may be viewed as less desirable as models, and less close as friends, than are conventional friends, the friendship should be easier to disengage from when there are more desirable alternatives.

The present study has several limitations. Subjects were asked about friendships already in existence and therefore the study could not address the question of how such friendships came about in the first place. Future research should examine friendship choices to see whether early adolescents *prefer* friends who are conventional over friends who are deviant. This study included two dimensions of friendship: intimacy and identification. To better understand the nature of adolescent peer influence, future research should examine other dimensions of friendships as well. The work of Giordano et al. (1986) represented a promising approach in this regard. The measure of deviance used in the present study included only one dimension of deviance: getting in trouble with the teacher. Whether the results would hold for other types of deviance, or other dimensions of school problems, is a question for future research. Finally, the study relied on subject self-reports of their own deviance as well as that of their friends. Although self-reports of deviance are typically used in research of this type, bias in such reports is always a possibility.

The findings presented here cannot resolve the controversy concerning the nature of deviant peer relations. They do suggest, however, that neither control theory alone, nor cultural deviance theories alone, are likely to provide an adequate understanding of the nature of adolescent peer relationships. Yet, both contain some ideas that are borne out by the data. The findings suggest that those theorists who seek a synthesis of these theoretical perspectives should be encouraged in their work in that both theories appear to have some merit. Meanwhile, those engaged in empirical research should be encouraged to measure the deviance of *individual* peers rather than continuing the practice of asking only about the number of deviant peers. In that way,

the direction and nature of peer influence is likely to be better understood. Clearly more research is needed to better understand the nature of peer relationships and the processes through which these relationships help generate and maintain deviance and conformity. Longitudinal research will be especially valuable in helping sort out these issues.

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