Introduction

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In recent years, interest in the role of parental monitoring has grown considerably. Parental monitoring traditionally has been defined as the acquisition of knowledge about the activities, whereabouts, and companions of one's son or daughter. Understanding the causes, correlates, and consequences of parental monitoring and adolescents' willingness to be monitored is of keen interest to developmental scientists and applied professionals. There is a large body of literature in the health, social, and psychological sciences on the nature, extent, antecedents, and consequences of parental monitoring during childhood, adolescence, and the transition into adulthood. From this body of literature, we know that a lack of parental monitoring is linked to a wide range of adolescent risk behaviors, including drug use, risky sexual behaviors, alcohol use, and cigarette smoking, to name a few. At the same time, recent innovations in parental monitoring research have shown that there is still much work to be done to refine our understanding of parental monitoring.

A 2004 CDC workshop on parental monitoring was a primary catalyst for this volume, but the decision to edit a book on parental monitoring stems from a shared belief that empirical research in this domain offers an important opportunity to improve a range of health and psychosocial outcomes in childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. In editing a book on parental

monitoring, our goals were to (a) provide a current perspective on what we know about parental monitoring, (b) identify areas where research still needs to be pursued, (c) provide a sense of the types of research programs being conducted by leading experts in the field, (d) highlight the theories and methods used in parental monitoring research, and (e) address the applied implications of research on parental monitoring.

The book has been designed to make contributions at the conceptual, methodological, and practical levels and is divided into two parts. Part I addresses existing gaps in the monitoring literature from each contributor's area of expertise within the field of parental monitoring. Part II presents contributors' responses to a set of six questions that were posed to each team of authors, as well as a synthesis of these responses. A common theme across the chapters is the need to refine the study of parental monitoring. Whereas past research has conceptualized parental monitoring primarily as parental knowledge about children's activities, whereabouts, and companions, the chapters here view monitoring in the broader context of the parent-adolescent relationship and the social realities that families contend with as part of their daily lives. In doing so, the authors address a number of issues fundamental to a contextual study of parental monitoring, including how best to define and measure parental monitoring, how parental monitoring works in the dynamics of the parent-adolescent relationship, how parental monitoring varies across childhood, adolescence, and the transition to adulthood, how parental monitoring manifests in diverse families throughout the world, and how parental monitoring can best be targeted in parent-based interventions designed to keep children, adolescents, and young adults safe from harm.

In our own work as scholars of parental monitoring, we have considered the state of parental monitoring research and have attempted to address these fundamental issues via the introduction of a conceptual framework of parental monitoring (chapter 7). In addition to addressing fundamental issues in the monitoring literature, this chapter also seeks to contextualize many of the issues raised in chapters 1–6 by introducing a framework of parental monitoring that can not only be applied to diverse populations across time but also has implications for the development of applied monitoring interventions. Specifically, three core processes of parental monitoring are discussed: (a) *parental behavioral expectations* (i.e., how a parent expects the child to behave and the clarity with which these expectations are conveyed to adolescents), (b) *parental behavioral monitoring* (i.e., how a parent

determines whether a child is behaving in accord with those expectations, also encompassing the notion of how accurate parents are in their behavioral attributions), and (c) *parental behavioral inducement and enforcement* (i.e., how a parent deals with behavioral transgressions from expectations and how parents encourage adolescent compliance). The framework differs from traditional frameworks on parental monitoring in two key ways. First, it focuses on behavior-specific monitoring constructs rather than global monitoring constructs. Second, the framework places parental monitoring in a broader theoretical framework that gives parental monitoring more meaning.

In chapters 1 through 6, the contributors not only address theoretical aspects of parental monitoring, but they also address the applied implications for developing parental monitoring interventions for diverse groups of parents and adolescents. In chapter 1, Håkan Stattin, Margaret Kerr, and Lauree Tilton-Weaver focus on the relationship between parental monitoring knowledge, how parents acquire monitoring knowledge (e.g., through controlling efforts or through spontaneous adolescent disclosures and adolescent adjustment), and adolescent adjustment. A central question addressed in their work is *why* is parental knowledge linked to better adolescent adjustment? In response to this question, the authors describe the results of several studies of adolescents and parents that have been undertaken in Sweden. Their findings call for a reinterpretation of parental monitoring effects that readers should find both informative and provocative. In addition, their work lends support for differentiating between the different types of parental processes that contribute to parental monitoring, including the communication of behavioral expectations, the elicitation of information from adolescents that contribute to parents' monitoring efforts, and the ways in which parents enforce and induce compliance with their behavioral expectations.

In chapter 2 the importance of examining parental monitoring in a broader system of parental influence is addressed by Robert Laird, Matthew Marrero, and Jennifer Sherwood. Laird and colleagues build upon Stattin and Kerr's (2000) call to distinguish between monitoring processes, such as knowledge, and behavior by presenting and applying a conceptual model of developmental and interactional antecedents of monitoring knowledge. Drawing upon data from the Baton Rouge Families and Teens Project, the authors examine how attributes of the parent-adolescent relationship (such as communication, acceptance, conflict, and trust), the monitoring processes of parental solicitation, adolescent disclosure, and the frequency of monitoring

related conversations, and parental monitoring knowledge all influence early adolescent involvement in delinquent behavior. In addition, Laird, Marrero, and Sherwood also examine developmental and interactional processes that can explain *why* and *how* some parents become and remain knowledgeable about adolescents' whereabouts and activities while other parents do not. Readers interested in knowing more about the factors that promote parents to monitor their children and the variability in monitoring trajectories over time in the context of the parent-adolescent relationship will be especially interested in their findings.

In addition to occurring in a broader system of parental influences, parental monitoring also takes place in a larger social and environmental milieu. To date, relatively little is known about how broader social factors may facilitate or hinder parents' monitoring efforts. In chapter 3, Deborah Belle and Brenda Phillips present the results of a qualitative study that seeks to identify barriers to parental monitoring among a cohort of working parents. Drawing upon interviews conducted over a four-year period with working parents and their adolescent children, the authors provide a rich description of parental monitoring in action. In doing so, Belle and Phillips provide a valuable contribution to researchers interested in identifying the factors that can help or hinder parents' efforts to monitor their children, especially in the after-school hours when parents are at work and parental monitoring takes on different forms.

In chapter 4 a fundamental question about the cultural equivalence of parental monitoring is examined by Sonia Venkatraman, Thomas Dishion, Jeff Kiesner, and François Poulin. Their effort to determine if parental monitoring has the same meaning and outcomes in different cultural contexts addresses fundamental issues on the measurement of parental monitoring and is a welcome addition to the literature. The work of Venkatraman and colleagues asks us to consider if the meaning and dynamics of parental monitoring are the same in different cultures. Venkatraman and colleagues provide insight into this question by studying the relationship between parental monitoring and adolescent problem behavior in India, Italy, and Canada. Their findings remind us of the importance of examining monitoring *in context* and attending to potential cultural differences in our research and practice.

Whereas chapters 1 through 4 deal with theoretical and conceptual issues of parental monitoring, chapters 5 and 6 discuss the development and evaluation of parental monitoring interventions for diverse groups of

young people. To date, there have been a handful of parent-based interventions expressly focused on the construct of parental monitoring. Each developed for distinct adolescent populations and behaviors; these interventions are well described and contextualized in chapters 5 and 6. All readers concerned about understanding how best to develop parental monitoring interventions will be keenly interested in this information.

To date, almost no monitoring interventions have targeted college-aged youth. In part, this is because prevailing wisdom assumes that parental influence wanes as adolescents graduate from high school and transition to college. However, a focus on parental monitoring for this population is especially important because college students are vulnerable to a number of health risk behaviors, including alcohol use and abuse. Despite this, almost all college-drinking interventions fail to involve parents and are delivered to students when they are already on campus. In chapter 5, Rob Turrisi, Anne Ray, and Caitlin Abar further the field of parental monitoring by presenting the results of a parental monitoring intervention for college freshmen. Using a strong theory grounded in empirical literature on social psychological theories of decision making and parent-teen relationships, Turrisi and colleagues examine the relationship between parental monitoring and drinking tendencies during the transition from high school to college, the mediational processes through which parental monitoring affects drinking outcomes, and a set of variables implicated in the alcohol literature that may serve to moderate the effect of parental monitoring on drinking outcomes. Their results suggest that a well-designed parental monitoring intervention for college students can have a beneficial effect on reducing high-risk drinking and preventing harm even at this stage of late adolescent/early adult development.

Although a range of parental monitoring interventions are being developed and evaluated, few have been scaled up to be disseminated to a broader population of American parents and youth. Dissemination of efficacious parental monitoring interventions is critical to helping parents become more effective at monitoring their children. It also is a primary way to bridge the gap between research and practice. In chapter 6, Jennifer Galbraith and Bonita Stanton describe the research-to-practice path of *Informed Parents and Children Together*, a video-based, HIV prevention, parental monitoring intervention developed for African American parents of adolescents. Together, they describe the qualitative research activities conducted to develop the intervention as well as the logistical and content

considerations undertaken to ensure that the intervention was feasible and appealing to a wide range of parents. In addition, the randomized controlled trials conducted to evaluate the intervention are described. Readers interested in learning more about how interventions are prepared for dissemination will welcome their discussion of the efforts and challenges necessary to package the intervention for national dissemination.

Part I closes with the introduction of a broader framework of parental monitoring and supervision that builds on the work presented in chapters 1–6. James Jaccard, Vincent Guilamo-Ramos, Alida Bouris, and Patricia Dittus draw upon the literature on parental monitoring to present a framework of monitoring and supervision that proposes three overarching constructs: *parental behavioral expectations*, *parental behavioral monitoring*, and *parental behavioral inducement and enforcement*. These constructs provide readers with a framework that can be used in empirical research with diverse families to study the range of health and behavioral outcomes of interest to parental monitoring researchers. In addition, the chapter discusses how this framework can be used in the development of applied monitoring interventions and supplements the arguments highlighted in chapters 5 and 6.

The decision to depart from the traditional edited volume and to use a Q & A format for the second part of the book grew out of the CDC-sponsored workshop. At the meeting, one day was devoted to presentations traditionally found at workshops and the second day was devoted to a participant Q & A session where each participant answered the same set of questions about the field more generally. The results of this session were insightful and stimulating. For example, one of the questions the group was asked to address was how to define and measure parental monitoring. A distinction is sometimes made in the literature between parental monitoring behaviors and perceived parental monitoring knowledge. There are numerous measures of parental monitoring available in the literature as well. This was one area in which the group of experts to a large extent reached consensus. The group agreed that the distinction between monitoring behaviors and parents' perceived knowledge of children's whereabouts, activities, and companions is important—one implies an active process, whereas the other may not. Both may be important constructs, but it is typically perceived knowledge that is measured. The group generally agreed that the Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, and Steinberg (1993) measure of general monitoring knowledge is a viable overall measure, but that behavior-specific

measures also are useful, despite the fact that there is so little research on them.

Another question the group was asked to discuss was what specific messages about monitoring should parents be given in the context of a brief intervention. Although the participating group of experts had limited experience in developing or testing interventions, they came up with numerous creative suggestions based on their research experience.

This type of discussion is represented in the second part of the book, where our contributors give us their thoughts about a number of important issues related to parental monitoring. Each team of contributors was provided with six questions and asked to provide their expert opinion. The specific questions focus on the following issues of central import to the field of parental monitoring: (a) defining parental monitoring, (b) measuring parental monitoring, (c) factors influencing parental monitoring, (d) factors influencing adolescent compliance, (e) parental monitoring as an influence of adolescent risk behavior, and (f) designing interventions to impact monitoring.

In summary, we feel that this volume is a useful contribution to the field of parental monitoring. It fills an important gap in the existing literature on parental monitoring and provides readers with an accurate overview of what we currently know, what remains to be known, and concrete suggestions to improve our knowledge base. It will be valuable for both researchers and practitioners working on parental monitoring in a wide range of disciplines and contexts. We hope that this book not only contributes to the next wave of innovative research, but that it also plays a tangible role in all of our ongoing efforts to help keep children, adolescents, and young adults safe from harm.

References

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Parental Monitoring of Adolescents