

## RESEARCH

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# Transformations in Parent and Friend Faith Support Predicting Adolescents' Religious Faith

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Both parents and peers have been validated by previous research as being important contributors to the development of religious faith. The purpose of this study was to elucidate the contributions of the transmission (e.g., parent church attendance) and transactional (e.g., discussions about faith) models of socialization, as well as explore the possibility that a third model, the transformation model, exists as a meaningful construct contributing to our understanding of social factors and their influence on religious faith. More than 4,000 Christian adolescents ( $M = 16.2$ ) completed measures of perceived support from parents and friends (e.g., faith modeling, faith dialogue) as well as a measure of religious faith. Results indicated that both parent and friend transmission and transaction variables significantly and positively predicted the measure of religious faith, with friends' constructs accounting for more variance in religious faith than that of parents. Mediated regression analyses also revealed that perceived faith support from friends mediated the influence of perceived faith support from parents on religious faith. Results are discussed within the framework of the transformation that takes place in parent–friend relationships during adolescent religious faith development.

For many adolescents, religious faith is a developmental structure that is subject to the influence of various social factors much like many other processes inherent in

human development. The social influences that have the potential to affect people's religious faith are numerous (e.g., parents, peers, schools, religious institutions, literature, clubs, mass media), and the effects of these sources can be direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious, and broad or narrow (Arnett, 1995). It is within this crowded context that this study set out to explore both the unique and complementary roles of parent and friend faith support via two constructs, faith modeling and faith dialogue, within a sample of Christian adolescents that contribute to religious faith.

Parents have been found to be most important to their children's religious faith. The presence (Ozorak, 1989) or absence (Hunsberger, 1985) of parents who model religious behavior (e.g., church attendance) has been found to both positively and negatively, respectively, influence the development of religious faith in their offspring. Cornwall (1987, 1988, 1989) believes that parental influence occurs within the family as a "personal religious community," similar in function to what social learning theorists consider to be necessary and sufficient conditions for spiritual modeling to occur (e.g., Bandura, 2003; Oman & Thoresen, 2003). The theoretical underpinnings of research that focuses on the importance of behavioral modeling contributing to religious faith has been characterized as the *transmission model* (e.g., Flor & Knapp, 2001; Lawrence & Valsiner, 1993), whereby values and beliefs are passed on from the parent to the child unidirectionally. Earlier studies (Hoge & Keeter, 1976; Hoge & Petrillo, 1978; Potvin & Sloan, 1985) have indicated that modeling of behavior (e.g., parental church attendance) is a strong predictor of adolescent religious behavior but may be less important in predicting attitudes towards religious faith (Francis & Gibson, 1993). Okagaki and colleagues (Okagaki, Hammond, & Seamon, 1999), however, found that intentional modeling of religious beliefs and engagement in religious activity resulted in increased desire on adolescents' parts to share in their parents' beliefs.

These findings suggest that religious socialization may be depicted as a unilateral "transmission from" parent to child, whereby the child is seen as a relatively passive recipient of religious beliefs and practices originating from the parent(s) (e.g., Dudley & Dudley, 1986). Such a model, however, has been recently challenged by the proposition of a reciprocal style of religious interaction that seems to characterize the many parent-child religious conversations. This is discussed in the literature as the *transactional model* of socialization (Lawrence & Valsiner, 1993) and is characterized as a process involving action and intention where both parents and children are perceived as active agents in the internalization process (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1997). Support for this method of socialization as it pertains to religious faith is also represented because numerous studies have found that those who had a warm, close relationship with their parents were more likely to share the religious beliefs of their parents (Hoge & Petrillo, 1978; Hoge, Petrillo, & Smith, 1982; Wilson & Sherkat, 1994). Lee, Rice, and Gillespie (1997) found that active faith was highest among youths whose families have worship patterns that in-

volved youth (i.e., participation in prayer, Bible reading, discussion leading). Boyatzis and Janicki (2003) also found that children were actively involved in initiating and expressing their religious ideas within the context of mother-child and father-child dialogues, concluding that such findings stand in strong contention to the literature that children are only passively involved in the communication events that are a key component of religious socialization. Flor and Knapp (2001) also found that although parents' behavior and active desire for the child to be religious predicted the largest portion of unique variance (30%) across all models, dyadic parent-child discussions of faith also predicted significant additional variance in religious faith. Overall, then, parents appear to wield a great amount of control over their adolescent child's faith experience. Beyond simply modeling church attendance and other religious practices, belief and commitment seem best nurtured by both fathers and mothers who allow their children to observe, discuss, and take active leadership in developing their own faith. Both the parental modeling (transmission model) and parental dialogue (transactional model) variables were investigated in this study, and both were expected to predict higher ratings on a measure of religious faith.

Although Fowler (1981) and others (e.g., Cooper & Cooper, 1992; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986) have found that peers can be expected to play an increasing role in the development of many areas of adolescence, empirical evidence regarding the role of peers or friends in adolescent religious faith is comparatively under-represented (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2006). Support for the transmission model discussed earlier (e.g., effects of religious behavior of peers and friends) is somewhat mixed; Hoge and Petrillo (1978) found that peers have at least moderate influence on religious behavior (e.g., participation in the church youth group, enjoyment of that participation), whereas De Vaus (1983) concluded that peers tended to have more influence outside the religious realm (i.e., self-concept). Thus, it may be that Erickson (1992) was at least partially correct in concluding that parental religious activity is not alone in contributing to religious faith during adolescence but that peers may become an increasingly significant positive force in this process.

Assuming the influential presence of both parents and peers in the process of adolescent religious faith, consideration of a third model, the *transformational model*, may serve to extend the applications of both the transmission and transactional model. Supporting the presence of this model, Ryan and Deci (2000) have found that internalization takes place first within the context of the nuclear or extended family and then within the larger community (e.g., friends). Others have found that religious socialization by parents not only shapes their children's religious paradigms but also channels them into social institutions and settings that reinforce and help maintain the individual's religious beliefs and commitment to religious norms (Cornwall, 1989; Erickson, 1992). Martin and his colleagues (Martin, White, & Perlman, 2001) found support for the channeling hypothesis in that both peer and congregation selection acted as mediators between parent influ-

ence and adolescent religiosity. King and colleagues (King, Furrow, & Roth, 2002) used social capital theory to explore the influence of the degree of religiousness via both human capital (e.g., modeling of certain behaviors and activities) and religious capital (e.g., the extent to which the religiousness is actively shared) provided by both parents and peers. The results indicated that parents and peers accounted for significant variance in both adolescents' religious importance and their experience of God, with parents accounting for slightly more variance than peers. Thus, there appears to be support for the notion that, above and beyond the consistent individual contributions of parents and peers (via transmission and transaction) to adolescent religious faith, parents may intentionally move their adolescent children toward peer groups and friendships that may ultimately match or even succeed their own faith influence.

Much of the research just reviewed supports the presence of both the transmission and (to a lesser extent) transactional models as they individually contribute to explaining the development of adolescent religious faith, especially as they substantiate the importance of parents in this process. No published studies to date have attempted to explore beyond these two models to consider how a transformational model may also help to explain the unique and complementary roles of both parents and peers as they assist in explaining adolescent religious faith. This study has two primary purposes. First, using an original measure of parent and friend faith modeling (transmission) and faith dialogue (transaction), the study explores the unique and combined influences of these two relationship dyads in predicting self-reported estimates of religious faith. It was expected that both parents' and friends' perceived faith modeling and faith dialogue would be significantly and positively correlated with and account for significant variance in self-reported estimates of religious faith. It was also expected that perceived faith support from parents would be rated higher than that of friends and more strongly correlated with religious faith. Second, the study also explores whether a transformational model is present when the relative contributions of parents and peers are compared via mediated regression analyses. It is predicted that perceived faith support from friends will have higher correlations with and account for more variance in a measure of religious faith compared with that of parents and that the perceived faith support of friends will act as a mediator between perceived faith support from parents and the estimate of religious faith.

## METHOD

### Participants

Eligible participants included more than 7,000 adolescents aged 14 to 18 attending an international denominational Christian youth conference in Toronto, Canada.

More than 95% of the participants were from continental North America (United States and Canada). All conference participants received parental consent to complete the survey before administration.

## Measures

### *Religious Belief and Commitment Scale*

A shortened version of the 16-item Religious Belief and Commitment Scale (RBC; Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1993) was used in the study. Four areas of religious faith are measured by this scale: trust and belief in God, integration of faith with everyday life, spiritual growth and development, and sense of faith community. Four of the items from the original RBC scale were dropped from the scale because they were deemed inappropriate for the younger members of the adolescent sample (e.g., dealing with political or environmental issues). The participants responded to each of the 12 remaining items by indicating how well each statement described their thoughts on religious faith ranging from 1 = (*never true*) to 5 = (*always true*).

### *Perceived Faith Support From Parents and Friends*

For the purpose of establishing the perceived faith support from both friends and parents, participants were asked how frequently they related with nine statements pertaining to the thoughts and behaviors of one or both of their parents and their Christian friends ranging from 1 = (*never*) to 4 = (*frequently*). The items were created for the purpose of establishing a measure of dyadic dialogue with parents related to faith (e.g., “My parent(s) and I talk about how we are doing as Christians”) and perceived modeling of faith (e.g., “My parent(s) show me what it means to be an authentic Christian”) from a teen’s parent(s). Identical items were created for gaining estimates of perceived faith dialogue and faith modeling for friends. For those participants not presently living with their parents, the option of responding “Doesn’t apply” was also available, and similarly, for those participants not having any Christian friends, the option of responding “Doesn’t apply” was also available. Participants indicating either of these options were excluded from further analysis.

### *Demographics*

The variables of age, gender, and family structure were also measured. Age was assessed in single year units from 14 through 18. Family structure was assessed by asking who the participants presently lived with, followed by eight options: mother and father, mother only, father only, adoptive parents, mother and stepfather, father and stepmother, other relative, and other. Rather than having eight separate catego-

ries of family structure in the analysis, participants living with both biological parents were coded as 0, and those living in families that did not include both biological parents were coded as 1.

### Procedure

Given that participants were under age 18, consent forms were mailed to each participant's home approximately 8 weeks before the event. The letter instructed the parent or caregiver as to the purpose of the study and gave the option of not having the child participate in the study. The survey was administered during a Supper Club meeting in which 8 to 10 youth and one or more adult leaders were assembled. Time to complete the survey varied from 10 to 25 minutes.

## RESULTS

### Description of the Sample

Included in the data analysis for this study are responses from 4,600 participants who completed all of the measures. The mean age of the participants was just over 16 ( $M = 16.15$ ). There were 1,932 male participants (42%) and 2,668 female participants (58%); 93% of the sample was White, with the remaining 7% comprising Black, Hispanic, or "other" racial groups. More than three quarters of the sample (78.7%) indicated that they currently lived with their mother and father, and the remaining lived in various forms of family structures. Age, race, and family demographic variables were entered into point-biserial correlation analysis. None of the demographic variables were found to be significantly ( $p > .05$ ) correlated with any of the perceived faith support or religious faith variables and were dropped from further analysis.

### *Religious Belief and Commitment*

Principle components factor analysis of the RBC scale was completed to determine whether there was any redundancy of the items measuring religious faith. It was found that all 12 of the items loaded significantly on a single factor with an eigenvalue of 7.07 that accounted for 50.49 percent of the variance. Table 1 provides mean scores, standard deviations, and factor loadings of the individual items. Overall mean score for the RBC scale for participants was just over four ( $M = 4.1$ ). Thus, participants indicated that the statements were "often" true in describing their thoughts on their own faith. Reliability analysis of the 12-item RBC Scale revealed a Cronbach alpha of .92.

TABLE 1  
Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Factor Loadings for Religious  
Belief and Commitment Scale

<i>Scale Item</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>
1. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.	3.30	.972	.630
2. I take time for periods of prayer and meditation.	3.56	.967	.687
3. I help others with their religious questions and struggles.	3.79	.962	.682
4. I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.	3.88	.907	.746
5. I have a real sense that God is guiding me.	3.96	.909	.745
6. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.	4.01	.877	.764
7. My faith shapes the way I think and act every day.	4.18	.853	.742
8. I like to worship and pray with others.	4.24	.887	.690
9. My life is filled with meaning and purpose.	4.27	.862	.676
10. I believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in my life.	4.40	.847	.774
11. My faith helps me to know right from wrong.	4.47	.755	.644
12. My life is committed to Jesus Christ.	4.56	.784	.746

*Note.* 1 = never true; 2 = rarely true; 3 = sometimes true; 4 = often true; 5 = always true.

### *Perceived Faith Support From Parents and Friends*

Principle components analyses (PCA) of the Perceived Faith Support from Parents (PFS-P) and Friends (PFS-F) scales were completed and revealed identical two-factor solution for both scales. Mean scores, standard deviations, and factor loadings are presented in Table 2. The two-factor solution for the PFS-P scale produced eigenvalues of 5.28 and 1.20 that accounted for 58.68 and 13.33 percent of the variance, respectively (72.01% of variance accounted for by the two components), whereas the solution for the PFS-F scale revealed a two-factor solution with eigenvalues of 4.61 and 1.06 that accounted for 57.68 and 13.24 percent of the variance, respectively (70.92% of variance accounted for by these two components). One item contributed negligibly to the overall variance in both analyses (i.e., "My parents and friends intentionally build relationships with non-Christians") and was dropped from further analysis. Oblique rotations (e.g., Promax) on the remaining eight items for both scales revealed four items loaded heavily on the first factor and four items loaded heavily on the second factor. Factor 1 is best described by the term *faith dialogue*, because many of the items speak of the dyadic sharing and accountability experienced by the participant with parents (Cronbach  $\alpha = .86$ ) or friends (Chronbach  $\alpha = .87$ ), whereas Factor 2 is best described by the term *faith modeling*, because the items speak strongly of the demonstrated authenticity and consistency of their parents' (Cronbach  $\alpha = .90$ ) or friends' (Chronbach  $\alpha = .85$ ) religious faith.

TABLE 2  
Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Factor Loadings  
for Perceived Faith Support

<i>Scale Item</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>
<b>Parents</b>				
Faith Dialogue	2.71	.786		
1. I read and talk about the Bible with my parent(s).	2.46	.945	.832	
2. I pray together with my parent(s).	2.51	1.01	.807	
3. My parent(s) and I talk about how we are doing as Christians.	2.63	.917	.838	
4. My parent(s) encourage me to grow closer to God in my own way.	3.26	.880	.643	
Faith Modeling	3.38	.724		
1. My parent(s) show me what it means to be an authentic Christian.	3.28	.954		.761
2. I agree with the attitudes and beliefs of my parent(s).	3.37	.782		.775
3. My parent(s) show their faith in Christ by how they talk and act.	3.43	.826		.853
4. My parent(s) are consistent in how they live out their faith.	3.47	.819		.864
<b>Friends</b>				
Faith Dialogue	2.81	.717		
1. I read and talk about the Bible with my friends.	2.64	.864	.778	
2. My friends and I talk about how we are doing as Christians.	2.83	.839	.823	
3. My friends encourage me to grow closer to God in my own way.	2.83	.877	.760	
4. I pray together with my friends.	2.84	.886	.772	
Faith Modeling	3.05	.672		
1. My friends show me what it means to be an authentic Christian.	2.89	.840		.777
2. My friends are consistent in how they live out their faith.	2.96	.827		.809
3. My friends show their faith in Christ by how they talk and act.	3.09	.821		.783
4. I agree with the attitudes and beliefs of my friends.	3.17	.713		.808

*Note.* F1 = Factor 1 (Faith Dialogue); F2 = Factor 2 (Faith Modeling).

### Transmission and Transactional Models in Adolescent Religious Faith

The first stated purpose of the study was to validate the presence of both the transmission and transactional models of religious faith. Table 3 indicates that both perceived parents' and perceived friends' faith modeling (transmission model) and faith dialogue (transactional model) were significantly and positively correlated with the measure of religious faith (e.g., RBC). As expected, the results seem to indicate that the faith dialogue and faith modeling variables representing the transaction and transmission models, respectively, were significant and positive in their relationship with religious belief and commitment for both parents and friend social systems. Table 3 also reveals that the correlations between the faith modeling and faith dialogue scales within each of the relationship dyads were also very high and positive. This finding suggests that there is significant overlap in the elements of perceived faith support (e.g., faith modeling and faith dialogue) as they are ex-

TABLE 3  
Correlations Among Parent and Peer Faith Support and Religious Belief and Commitment

	<i>RBC</i>	<i>FM-F</i>	<i>FD-F</i>	<i>FM-P</i>	<i>FD-P</i>
Religious Belief and Commitment (RBC)	1.00				
Faith Modeling — Friends (FM-F)	.43	1.00			
Faith Dialogue — Friends (FD-F)	.58	.64	1.00		
Faith Modeling — Parents (FM-P)	.22	.18	.13	1.00	
Faith Dialogue — Parents (FD-P)	.35	.18	.29	.63	1.00

All correlations significant at  $p < .001$ .

pressed within parent–adolescent and adolescent–friendship relationship systems. Given the high intercorrelation between the faith modeling and faith dialogue scales for friends ( $r = .64, p < .001$ ) and parents ( $r = .63, p < .001$ ), respectively, they were collapsed into two scales, the PFS-F and the PFS-P, for the remaining analyses. Intercorrelation of these two scales was somewhat weak but still significant ( $r = .23, p < .001$ ).

### Transformation Model and Adolescent Religious Faith

The second stated purpose of the study was to explore whether a transformational model existed wherein perceived faith support from friends (PFS-F) would mediate between the perceived faith support of parents (PFS-P) and the measure of religious faith. Although both the friend and parent scales were significantly and positively correlated with the RBC scale, the PFS-F scale ( $r = .56$ ) was notably higher than that of the PFS-P scale ( $r = .30$ ). As expected, this finding suggests that faith support from friends is more strongly associated with religious faith than is faith support from parents. The research strategy outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used to examine whether any mediating effects were present, an indication that a transformation model may be at work in describing how parental influence may also result in their children choosing friends who are also a source of faith support to them. The first step of the mediation hypothesis examined whether perceived faith support from parents (PFS-P) was significantly predictive of perceived faith support from friends (PFS-F). Table 4 indicates that this hypothesis was supported. The second step of the mediation hypothesis involves establishing a predictive relationship between perceived faith support from parents (PFS-P) and the measure of religious faith, Belief and Commitment Scale (RBC). Table 4 also indicates support for this hypothesis. The third step of the mediation hypothesis involves establishing a predictive relationship between the perceived faith support from friends (PFS-F) and the measure of religious faith (RBC). Table 4 indicates support for this hypothesis.

TABLE 4  
Mediated Regression Analyses

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE<sub>B</sub></i>	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Step One					
PFS-P	.210	.012	.235	313.95	.000
Criterion: PFS-F					$R^2 = .055$
Step Two					
PFS-P	.274	.012	.312	556.27	.000
Criterion: RBC					$R^2 = .097$
Step Three					
PFS-F	.535	.011	.555	2353.17	.000
Criterion: RBC					$R^2 = .309$
Step Four					
PFS-P	.162	.010	.187	1296.72	.000
PFS-F	.489	.011	.508		
					$R^2 = .338$

*Note.* PFS-P = perceived faith support from parents; PFS-F = perceived faith support from friends; BCS = belief and commitment scale.

The final step of the mediation hypothesis involves establishing if the relationship between perceived faith support from parents (PFS-P) and the measure of religious faith (RBC) is significantly lower after controlling for the mediating impact of perceived faith support from friends (PFS-F). Table 4 indicates a significant decrease in the contribution of perceived faith support from parents (Sobel test  $\Delta B = .274$  to  $.162$ ,  $z = 16.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ) when perceived faith support from friends was mediated between perceived faith support from parents and the measure of religious faith. These findings suggest that although parents' faith support continues to account for significant variance in adolescent religious faith, this influence may be attenuated by the perceived faith support of friends.

## DISCUSSION

This study set out to explore the unique and complementary roles of parents and friends in predicting adolescent religious faith. In several ways, the results confirmed the findings of earlier studies as they pertain to both the transmission and transactional models of faith development; both processes of religious socialization accounted for significant variance in the estimate of religious faith. The findings also demonstrated that an alternative pathway—the transformational pathway—exists to enrich the understanding of the important interpersonal relationships, namely, that of friends, associated with religious faith. It was found that the perceived faith support of friends mediated the influence of similar parental support on adolescents' religious belief and commitment. Thus, the magnitude

of perceived faith support of parents on religious belief and commitment is at least partially mediated by the perceived faith support from an adolescent's friends.

The transmission model was strongly supported by the findings that both parent and friend modeling of faith behavior (e.g., showing faith by word and deed, consistency in how they live out their faith, etc.) is significantly predictive of adolescent religious faith. This resonates with the findings of others (e.g., Flor & Knapp, 2001; Hoge & Petrillo, 1978; King et al., 2002; Martin et al., 2001) that adolescents who witness in their parents consistent and powerful examples of Christian lifestyle and fellowship are more likely themselves to express a stronger belief in God, integration of faith and life, and participation in spiritual acts. Likewise, the transaction model was also supported by the results, with both parent and friend faith dialogue (e.g., prayer, read and talk about Bible, etc.) accounting for significant variance in religious faith. This finding, too, is commensurate with previous research (e.g., King et al., 2002; Lee et al., 1997; Martin et al., 2001) in that participation in dyadic discussion about one's personal religious faith is positively associated with more active engagement with that subjective faith. The benefits of faith interaction to one's faith development may have more than just short-term consequences, as others (e.g., Boyatzis, 1996) have found such open discussion about religion to have predictive power beyond the adolescent years.

The results also indicated that the respective contributions of parents and friends were not uniform. It was found that although parents were rated slightly higher than friends in faith modeling (and nearly identical in faith dialogue), perception of faith support from friends was more highly correlated with religious belief and commitment than perceived faith support from parents. Such results find support in the literature; Martin and colleagues (2001) found similar correlational results in their study, and King et al. (2002) found that family influences (e.g., communication, activities) were moderately stronger predictors of religious importance and experience than were peer variables. Several factors may be at work to explain the inconsistency of these findings. First, the present sample was constructed almost exclusively of Christian adolescents who were very much engaged with both their religious faith and their church denomination. It may be that the singularity of this sample was the result of parents channeling (Cornwall, 1989) the adolescent toward not only strong denominational affiliation but also friendship relations that possibly exceeded the parents in faith modeling and faith dialogue. Second, there may be more simply a developmental phenomenon (e.g., age) that is contributing to the prominence of friends' contributions to religious belief and commitment. The mean age of the sample was just over 16 years, suggesting that these adolescents may have been further along in their individuation attempts (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986) compared with other samples (e.g., King et al., 2002) whose mean age was at least 1 year younger. Fowler (1981) illuminates the friendship dynamics at work during mid-adolescence; despite adolescents' genuine feelings of having made choices and commitments of which they are the authors, a truer reading may be that mid-adoles-

cent faith is largely mediated by significant others outside the family unit than it was in early adolescence.

The second stated purpose of the study was to explore evidence for the presence of a transformational model of religious socialization. Given the important role of parents in adolescent religious faith was well supported by the findings of this study, it would be erroneous to conclude that peers completely supersede the impact that mothers and fathers have on the faith development of their adolescent children. Such findings do, however, support the notion that parent-adolescent relationships appear to change according to the increasingly prominent role of friendships. More accurately, the youth represented in this sample may be at the height of experiencing what Parks (1991) called the "tyranny of the they," with the "they" being influenced by both an inflated sense of peer faith conformity and the dynamics of a more subjugated role of parentally initiated faith dialogue and modeling. Thus, adolescence involves the developmental task of achieving independence while maintaining an affectionate and supportive relationship with parents (Rice & Mulkeen, 1995).

The results of this study did reveal, however, that for this sample of Christian adolescents, the perceived faith support from friends did account for more change in their own religious faith. This contrasts with the findings of previous studies (Cornwall, 1988; Erickson, 1992; King et al., 2002; Ozorak, 1989) that parents were found to influence adolescent religious belief and behavior more significantly than did peers. Several reasons have been proposed to make sense of these discrepant results. First, participants were asked to rate the perceived influence of parents and friends during the closing hours of a conference that was heavily peer-oriented. The physical and emotional proximity of age-related friends may have artificially inflated the ratings of the influence of friends just by the nature of the context of the questionnaire administration. Thus, the influence of parents may have suffered from being "out of sight, out of mind" compared with the palpable and immediate context of friends. Second, with only a few exceptions, most studies do not operationally distinguish between peers and friends. Higher levels of loyalty, trust or dependability, and intimacy qualitatively distinguish friendships from more mundane peer relationships (e.g., Laursen & Bukowski, 1997). In contrast to previous studies that have looked at the impact of peers on religiosity, this survey asked adolescents to respond to perceived support from "your Christian friends," not just peers in general. Shelton (1983) accurately pointed out that identity acquisition often finds support in close interpersonal relationships with one or more friends and that such relationship often provides reinforcement for the personal religious questioning that the adolescent experiences. Thus, when questioned about the modeling of and dialogue with Christian friends, adolescents' own belief and commitment was predicted more strongly by the perceived support of such friends compared with that of parents.

Not only did the perceptions of faith support from friends account for more variance in adolescent religious faith than that of parents, friends were also found

to mediate partially the influence of parents, suggesting that the presence of the transformation model may have been activated here. Ozorak's (1989) cognitive anchoring theory suggests that parental modeling and support provide a foundation on which the adolescent can begin his or her search for meaning through faith. The adolescent's experience of faith, however, does not normally end with the acceptance of his or her parents' faith, but such extrinsic adherence only provides the necessary motivation for the adolescent to find meaning in belief and commitment that is truly his or her own. Contrary to Cornwall (1987, 1988, 1989), parents may indeed be necessary for the development of faith, but they may not be sufficient in bringing the adolescent to his or her potential in belief and commitment. Rather than simply channeling the adolescent into faith-believing peer groups as some other studies have concluded (Martin et al., 2001), it is more likely that the internalization of beliefs that was initially nurtured by parents evolves to include and be represented by meaningful and deepening friend relationships (e.g., Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1997). The relationship with Christian friends becomes, then, not only useful to the adolescent as a place to be comfortable with shared beliefs, but also a forum that legitimates the adolescent's own search for individual belief and commitment that was started many years earlier within the context of the parent-child relationship (e.g., Boyatzis, 1996; Parks, 1991).

The strengths of this study rest in its ability to estimate both the social support factors (e.g., faith modeling, faith dialogue) from parents and friends as well as religious faith via a measure of religious belief and commitment. The literature on adolescent religiosity is replete with examples of single-item measures of socialization (e.g., parent church attendance) that is then used to correlate with or predict various adolescent outcomes (Hoge & Keeter, 1976; Potvin & Sloan, 1985). Such practice potentially truncates the discussion about social factors contributing to adolescent religious faith, reducing it to isolated, behavioral elements when clearly it is more multidimensional in nature. As recommended from recent attempts in this regard (e.g., Martin et al., 2001), the perceived faith support scales in the present study represent an attempt to operationalize important socialization factors (relational modeling of faith, faith dialogue) that are notable in the development of religious faith. Thus, although well less than half of the variance in religious belief and commitment was accounted for using the parent and friend faith support scales, this study demonstrated that faith development is much more than simply a process of religious transmission.

The study also benefited from the use of a measure of religious faith that included integration of multiple dimensions of religiosity. The use of a multiple-item measure of religious faith that has shown good reliability in previous studies (e.g., Sanders, 1998) reflected the theological territory covered by two themes found in most faith tradition—namely, one's personal relationship to God (vertical) and one's social relationship with others (horizontal). This is a major improvement on previous measures of religiosity by way of church attendance or singular ratings of religious affiliation (e.g., Donahue & Benson, 1995; Smith, Denton, Faris, &

Regnerus, 2002). Thus, valid and reliable results that allow one to link, methodologically and heuristically, social support factors (e.g., parent, friends) with religiosity that estimates personal, social, and divine elements of faith development is good practice for this study and for future research endeavors.

Several limitations of this study are acknowledged. First, as with most studies that employ self-report measures, the task of having adolescents rate their own and others' faith-related actions and attitudes is fraught with risk. Adolescents may impose their own idealistic goals onto others' religious behavior, the result of which may have been artificial inflations in the correlations between ratings of faith support and their own religious faith. Second, the generalizability of findings from this study to populations outside of this conservative evangelical denomination is noted as a significant limitation. Future studies would do well to explore the nature of parent and friend influence on faith development with samples that are more representative of the population as a whole. Third, as a result of this narrow population sampling, all analyses involved assessing the relationship between various domains of parent and friend support and high RBC scores (mean score = 4.1 of 5). As a result, the restriction of range in the dependent variable may have attenuated what could have been more robust differences among the adolescent participants. Fourth, the cross-sectional design, the result being that the directionality between parent and friend faith support influencing the religious could just as well have been reversed (e.g., higher religious faith influencing more perceived support from parents, friends, or both). More longitudinally designed studies are needed that will follow the trajectories of social factors as they influence faith outcomes (positively or negatively) and, thus, allow for more definitive statements on which factors produce specific outcomes. Finally, assessing parents' ratings as a combined unit may not have allowed for differences to be exposed such as the adolescents' appraisal of mother and father as separate entities. Previous research (Hoge & Petrillo, 1978; Hunsberger, 1985; Martin et al., 2001; Okagaki et al., 1999) has demonstrated that this may be useful for further extricating the dynamics of relationships with both mother and father in predicting adolescent faith development, and future efforts in this regard would do well to assess these two parental dyads separately.

This study has elucidated the dynamic nature of the transmission and transaction models inherent in the religious socialization of a sample of Christian adolescents. Beyond establishing the additive effects of friends' faith dialogue and modeling (examples of transaction and transmission, respectively) to that of parents in accounting for change in a measure of religious faith, it was revealed that a transformation process may also be active that has previously been either overstated (i.e., that the interaction between parents and the adolescent had negligible influence on his or her spiritual development) or was one-dimensional in its effect (i.e., that parental religiosity only influenced religious behavior and not belief or commitment). As a result, we have discovered a new level of understanding about the system of parent-peer-adolescent relationships that was heretofore explored

mainly from the views of dyadic religious communication or behavioral modeling, prodding us to exercise heightened theoretical and methodological discernment in studying the complexities of religious socialization.

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