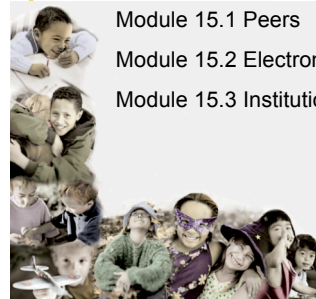**Influences outside the family**

IIE 366: Developmental Psychology

Greg Francis

Lecture 34

Chapter 15: Influences Beyond the Family

Module 15.1 Peers

Module 15.2 Electronic Media

Module 15.3 Institutional Influences

Children and Their Development, 4/e by Robert Kail

15.1 Peers

Development of Peer Interactions

Friendship

Romantic Relationships

Groups

Popularity and Rejection

15.1 Development of Peer Interactions

- Two 6-month-olds will look, smile, and point at each other
  - Nonsocial play (watching others but playing alone)
- Peer interactions become more sophisticated:
  - *parallel* play: play alone but pay attention to what other children are doing, soon after 1st birthday
  - *associative* play: engage in similar activities, smile, talk, offer toys; 15-18 months
  - *cooperative* play: organize play around a theme and take on roles (hide-and-seek); 2nd birthday

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15.1 Development of Peer Interactions

- Most subsequent play is cooperative play
- *Make believe* play:
  - Often use props
  - Children are not confused between reality and make-believe
  - reflects cultural values and promotes cognitive development

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15.1 Development of Peer Interactions

- *Solitary* play: common and normal unless children just wander aimlessly or hover
- Parents' scaffold behaviors
  - Playmate: both at child's level and more advanced level
  - Social director: plan for play periods
  - Mediator: when playmates disagree
  - Coach: how to initiate play, how to make joint decisions, how to resolve conflicts (not always good advice)
- Quality of parent-child attachment influences children's play indirectly
  - Internal working model of how relationships operate

15.1 Friendship

- Based on common interests and mutual liking in children
  - Elementary children expect friends to be trustworthy and helpful
  - Intimacy and loyalty are more important among adolescents, particularly girls
    - » Girls are more likely to have one "best" friend
- Children with good friends have higher self-esteem, are more likely to act prosocially, and are less likely to be lonely and depressed

15.1 Friendship

- Friends usually alike in age, gender, and race
  - Can change with circumstances
- Opposite sex friends are unusual, and generally indicate extremes
  - Everyone wants to be their friend
  - Almost no one wants to be their friend and they get a friend of the opposite sex as a last resort

15.1 Romantic Relationships

- While uncommon in elementary school, romantic relationships become more common as children develop
  - 50% of 15-year olds and 70% of 18 year olds had been in a romantic relationship over the previous 1.5 years
- Function changes with age
  - Younger adolescents find companionship and outlet for sexual exploration
  - Trust and support are important for older adolescents
- Cultural factors influence romantic relationships
  - Children of parents that encourage independence are more likely to have date earlier and more often
  - European Americans vs. Asian or Hispanic Americans

15.1 Romantic Relationships

- By end of high school, roughly two-thirds of American adolescents will have had intercourse at least once
- Sexual activity is influenced by attitudes of parents and peers toward sex
  - Teenagers are less likely to have sex when parents monitor their activities, when they feel close to their parents, and when parents' discourage sex
  - Teens are more likely to have sex if they believe their peers are having sex
- 1 in 11 adolescent girls become pregnant (half of them give birth)
  - 500,000 births each year
  - The mothers and their children often have lots of problems

15.1 Romantic Relationships

- Few teens use contraceptives
  - Ignorance: many adolescents are serous misinformed about conception
  - Illusion of invulnerability: deny reality
  - Lack of motivation: some girls want to become pregnant to gain status as an adult and to have someone to love them
  - Lack of access: don't know where to buy condoms, embarrassed to ask parents about contraceptives, don't know how to use them

15.1 Romantic Relationships

- In one study, college students in the US were asked (as extra credit for a class) to buy condoms and write a report about the experience
  - Students thought it would be easy, but ended up with titles like "The Ordeal," "Shocker: The First Time I Bought Condoms," "The Great Condom Adventure," "Me Buying Condoms?!?"
- There was a consistent narrative
  - Preplanning: e.g., pick an empty store, late at night
  - Walking in the store: often sat in the parking lot to build up courage
  - Looking inconspicuous while wandering: felt paranoid while looking for the condoms, as if the cameras were watching them
  - Finding the "hidden" condom location: often unable to find them, and unwilling to ask anyone for help
  - Making their selection: price, brand, style, color, size, pleasure enhancing features, and additives like lubrication and spermicide
  - Carrying and hiding the condoms: bought something else to camouflage the condoms they were carrying
  - Selecting a cashier and rushing through checkout: wanted a young female who was non-maternal
  - Anticipating ridicule: terrified the cashier would make a comments (some actually did)
  - Walking out of the store: reactions ranged from relief, to embarrassment to empowerment

15.1 Romantic Relationships

- Abstinence programs not consistently effective
- Comprehensive sex education programs are:
  - Teach biological aspects of sex
  - Emphasize responsible sexual behavior
  - Discussions of the pressures to become sexually involved and ways to respond to this pressure
  - Role-playing sessions allow students to practice strategies for refusing to have sex
  - Youths from these programs are less likely to have sex and are more likely to use contraceptives when they do have sex

15.1 Romantic Relationships

- 15% of teens experience a period of questioning regarding their sexual orientation
- 5% of teens in US describe their sexual orientation as gay
  - Heredity and hormones may influence sexual orientation
  - Many factors have been studied and shown to be *false*:
    » Sons become gay when raised by a domineering mother and a weak father
    » Girls become lesbians when their father is the primary role model
    » Children raised by gay or lesbian parents usually adopt their parents' sexual orientation
    » Gay and lesbian adults were, as children, seduced by an older person of their sex

15.1 Groups

- Two types of groups:
  - *Cliques*: four to six individuals who are good friends and tend to be similar in age, sex, race, and interests
  - *Crowds:* larger mixed-sex group of older children or adolescent who have similar values and attitudes and are known by a common label (jocks, preppies, burnouts, nerds, brains….)
- Some crowds have higher status; self-esteem of members often reflects status of group
- When parents emphasized achievement, monitored out-of-school behavior, and made decisions jointly, their children were less likely to be in "druggie" crowd
- Authoritative parenting practices associated with children joining crowds that endorse adult standards of behavior
  - Normals, jocks, brains

15.1 Groups

- Groups have a *dominance hierarchy* that may be based on physical power (young boys) or traits that are important to the group (older boys and girls)
- Groups establish norms and peer pressure follows, but not all pressure is bad: Groups exert pressure primarily where social standards are not clear-cut

15.1 Popularity and Rejection

- 5 common categories:
  - *Popular:* liked by many classmates
  - *Rejected:* disliked by many classmates
  - *Controversial:* both liked and disliked by classmates
  - *Average:* liked and disliked by some classmates, but without the intensity for others
  - *Neglected:* ignored by classmates
- Popular children tend to be attractive, smart, and socially skilled (cooperative, friendly, and helpful)
- Rejected children are socially unskilled (either aggressive or poor self-control); related to parents' behavior and discipline
- Rejected children are often lonely and dislike school
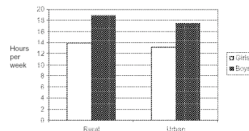
15.2 Electronic Media

Television

Computers

15.2 Television

- School age children spend 20-25 hours each week watching TV
  - 15,000 in total for the typical high school graduate
  - Boys watch more than girls (data from Ireland)
- Increases with age up to adolescence
- Children with lower IQs watch more TV

15.2 Television

- The *medium* per se has limited impact on children (research results are unreliable)
  - TV does *not* cause less time reading, playing sports, or playing with friends (may be the other way around, poor readers watch more TV)
  - TV does not cause reduced attention
  - TV viewers do not become passive, lazy thinkers, or less creative

15.2 Television

- *Content* on TV does influence children
  - Many shows increase aggression
  - Can teach prosocial behavior
  - Can promote cognitive growth
- Commercial ads influence children, but they don't understand persuasive intent and lack of truthfulness in ads until 8 or 9 years

15.2 Computers

- Video games: exposure to violent video games may lead to aggressive behavior
  - Some games can improve spatial skills (including first-person shooter games)
- Children use the internet for homework, communicating with friends, and entertainment
- Computers used in schools for tutoring, providing experiential learning (simulations), and achieving traditional academic goals (graphics and word processing)
  - Some studies have shown that computers do not lead to increased academic performance

15.3 Institutional Influences

Day Care

Part-Time Employment

Neighborhoods

School

15.3 Day Care

- The idea of a stay-at-home mother as being normal is actually relatively new in most societies
- Children in *high-quality* day care do not differ from children raised at home by mothers
- Low-quality day care is related to behavior problems, slower cognitive development, and less readiness for school
- After school is provided for many children until their parents come home from work
  - Often beneficial for children
  - Sports have variable effects: some studies show an increased likelihood to drink and to have lower grades

15.3 Day Care

- Some children can care for themselves after school. Variety of ways
  - Latchkey children
  - Unsupervised
  - Friends house
  - Phone call from parents
- Some children can take care of themselves
  - Although there is a risk of problem behavior when children and adolescents spend after-school hours away from home
- Many factors must be considered
  - child's maturity, neighborhood safety
  - parents must monitor their children's behavior

15.3 Part-Time Employment

- Majority of high school seniors work part-time
  - 25% of high school freshmen
  - 75% of high school seniors
- Often encouraged by adults:
  - Teaches self-discipline, self-confidence, and job skills
- When students work more than 15 hours per week during the school year
  - school performance suffers
  - mental health and behavioral problems increase
  - the sense of affluence is misleading (earn and spend is the norm)
- Best when hours are limited, the job allows use of existing skills or teaches new ones, and some of the money is saved

15.3 Neighborhoods

- Children more likely to thrive in neighborhoods that are economically advantaged (adults have higher levels of education and income) and stable
  - Most effects are indirect
- These neighborhoods have more resources such as good schools and libraries, have adults who monitor children, and do not have parents who live with the chronic stress of poverty

15.3 School

- Schools are successful when they
  - emphasize academic excellence
  - are safe and nurturing
  - involve parents
  - monitor progress of students, teachers, and programs
- Students learn when teachers
  - manage classrooms effectively
  - are responsible for students' learning
  - emphasize mastery of topics
  - teach actively and pay attention to pacing
  - value tutoring and teach techniques for monitoring own learning

Next time

- Friends