



# Peer Groups

Agents of Socialization

# Peer groups

- A social group whose members have interests, social position, and age in common
  - By the time they enter school, kids have discovered the peer group
  - Will often change as individuals change
- Adolescents spend a lot of time with their peers
- Hierarchically unique relationship
  - Members have equal status within group



# Changes with Peer Groups Over Time

- Increased time spent with peers
- Functioning with less adult supervision
  - Offers the opportunity to discuss interests and topics not done with adults
- Increasing contact with members of opposite-sex
- Emergence of crowds



# Peer Groups vs. Family Groups

- Peers may affect short-term interests, but parents retain greater sway over long-term goals
  - Ex. Friends help change your taste in music, but parents will influence your decisions on college
- Peer groups are more easily changeable than blood ties of family
  - Family connections are much stronger
    - Most childhood friendships dissolve after High School. Strongest relationship will remain but, most will fall off
  - Families can be estranged from each other due to conflict



# The School

- Schooling enlarges children's social worlds to include people with backgrounds very different from their own.
- Teach a wide range of knowledge & skills
- Are most children's first experience with bureaucracy
  - Runs on impersonal rules
  - A strict time schedule
  - "Just a number"
    - ex. Julia = #17
  - These being the hallmarks of many organizations that will employ them later in life.



# Peer groups

- Any neighborhood or school is a combination of many peer groups.
- People are influenced by peer groups that they would like to join
  - Process called **anticipatory socialization**
    - Learning that helps a person achieve a desired position
      - Ex. Dressing the same as the school group you would like to join
      - Ex. Trying to fit in as part of a new job an individual begins wearing similar suits and hanging out at same bars/restaurants



# Causes of Peer Groups

- Factor # 1: Educational system
  - Age Grouping
    - Isolating children from adult population
    - Putting large numbers of children together
  - Exposure to diversity
    - Different ethnicities, different backgrounds
- Factor #2: Work/Family life
  - Tougher child labor laws
    - Children required to go to school
  - Both parents working
    - Longer hours means more free time for children
- Factor #3: Population shifts
  - 1 to 7 ratio of adolescents to adults
    - More kids starting in 1950s



# Cliques and Crowds

- Cliques are small groups defined by common activities/friendship and form a regular social group
- Crowds are larger, more vaguely defined groups, based on reputation
  - Jocks, brains, nerds, druggies, toughs, punks, populars, socies, and so on
  - not necessarily friends and do not necessarily spend time together



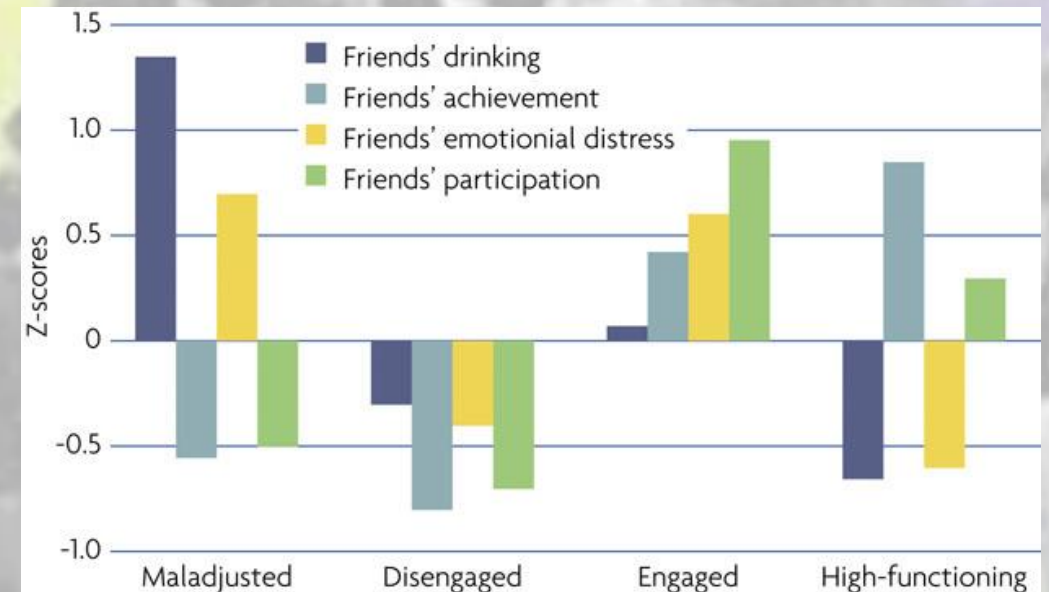
# Clique Composition

- Cliques typically are composed of people of:
  - same age
  - same race
  - same socioeconomic background
  - same sex – at least during early and middle adolescence
- Shared interests and activities
  - Orientation toward school
  - Orientation toward the teen culture
  - Involvement in antisocial activity
- Deviant peer groups
  - Aggressive adolescents gravitate toward each other



# Analyzing Family Roles with Peers

- Role of family in friendship choice
  - Parents socialize certain traits
  - Predispose teens toward certain crowds
  - Crowds reward them for the traits that led them there in the first place
  - Traits are strengthened
- Antisocial peers reinforce antisocial traits



# Understanding Crowds

- Larger, more vaguely defined groups, based on reputation
  - Jocks, brains, nerds, druggies
- May or may not spend time together
- Peak in importance in middle adolescence
- Vary according to involvement in adult institutions vs. peer activities



# Understanding Popularity

- Popularity (Status): The degree to which children are liked or disliked by their peers as a group.
- Measuring popularity: Sociometric techniques
  - Nomination technique: “Tell me the names of 3 kids in class that you like...”
  - Rating scale technique: The child is asked to rate each child in the class on a 5 point scale
  - Paired comparison technique: The child is presented with the names of 2 children at a time and asked which they like more

Sociometric systems classify children into five groups:

- Popular
- Rejected
- Neglected
- Average
- Controversial.

# Peer Conflicts

- Both boys and girls can be aggressive and popular at the same time
  - Aggression coupled with poor emotion regulation creates peer problems
    - Boys are more physically aggressive than girls
    - Girls also act aggressively toward peers, but often engage in relational aggression
      - Ruin a reputation
      - Disrupt a friendship



# Victimization and Harassment

- Unpopular youngsters may lack the social skills and social understanding necessary to be popular with peers
  - Easy targets for bullying
  - Creates a cycle of teasing, feeling less socially adept, leading to more bullying
  - Blame themselves for their victimization
- Victimization can lead to lower earnings as an adult because of the cyclical nature of bullying

# Impacts of Rejection

- Rejected children (especially if they are aggressive) are more likely than others to have lower grade-point averages and be viewed as poor students.
  - The tendency of rejected children to do more poorly in school worsens over time.
- Rejected children are more likely than popular children to be suspended, repeat a grade, or drop out of school.
  - They are more likely to get in trouble with the law.