Adolescent Development

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Chapter 4: Families

Second “Chunk” of the Course

- The Contexts of Adolescence
  - Families (Ch. 4)
  - Peer Groups (Ch. 5)
  - Schools (Ch. 6)
  - Work & Leisure (Ch. 7)

Outline/Overview

- Parent-Teen Conflict: Generation Gap?
- Family Relationships
- Parenting styles
- Autonomy /attachment
- Siblings: Relationships & (Dis)Similarities
- Families and changes in society
  - Divorce & Poverty
Parent-Teen Conflict

- Generation Gap?
  - Popular advice for parents of teens
    - Emphasizes non-normative development
  - Scientific writings
    - Focus on conflict
  - Research indicates
    - Very little emotional distance between teens and parents
  - Emotional relationship - examples
  - Intergenerational values

Generation Gap Fact or Fiction?

- Exists in matters of personal taste
- Transitory preferences, not values shaped over time
- Parent-Child Disagreements (LS)
- Generally mundane issues
- Different perspectives on issues
- Parents - matters of right or wrong
- Teens - personal choice

Family Relationships

- Reorganization & change
  - Adapting to substantial changes
- Parents at midlife meet adolescents
  - MH impact (primarily on parents)
- Transformations in family relations
  - More egalitarian parent – child relationships
Family relationships and adolescent development

Parenting Styles

Critical dimensions of parental behavior

- Parental responsiveness
  - Degree to which parent responds to child’s needs in an accepting, supportive manner
- Parental demandingness
  - Degree to which parent expects/demands mature, responsible behavior from the child

Parenting Styles

- Authoritative parents are warm but firm
  - Use induction – the best parenting style
- Authoritarian parents place a high value on obedience and conformity
- Indulgent parents behave in an accepting, benign, and somewhat more passive way
- Indifferent parents try to minimize the time and energy that they must devote to interacting with their child

Autonomy and Attachment in the Family

- Adolescents who are permitted to assert their own opinions within a family context that is secure and loving
  - Develop higher self-esteem
  - Develop more mature coping abilities
- Adolescents whose autonomy is squelched
  - at risk for developing feelings of depression
- Adolescents who do not feel connected
  - more likely than their peers to develop behavior problems
Family Relationships at Adolescence: Siblings
- Adolescent’s relationships with siblings
  - Become more equal
  - Become more distant
  - Become less emotionally intense
- Quality of sibling relationships are affected by quality of parent-child relationship
- Quality of adolescent-sibling relationship affects adolescent’s relationships with peers

Behavioral Genetics
- Whether and how much given traits are genetically vs. environmentally determined
- How do these two sets of factors interact?
- Two types of environmental influences
  - Shared environmental influences
  - Nonshared environmental influences

Family in a Changing Society
- Fewer than 15% of today’s teens live with both biological parents in a household where the father is the only breadwinner.
Divorce Rate Trend

Families in a Changing Society
- High rates of divorce
- High rates of childbirth outside of marriage
  - Majority of American adolescents born during 1990s will spend some of childhood/adolescence in a single-parent household
  - Half of teens whose parents divorce will spend time in a stepfamily

Adolescents and Divorce
- Quality of relationships with the important adults in a teen’s life is more important than the number of parents present in the house
- Process of going through a divorce, not resulting family structure, matters most
- Adverse consequences of divorce are linked to exposure to marital conflict and disorganized parenting
- Some differences between teens whose parents have divorced and those from intact families are due to genetic factors
Divorce and emotional problems

- Parents under financial stress are harsher, more inconsistent, less involved.
- This leads to problems for the teens.

Economic Stress and Poverty

- Parents under financial stress are
  - Harsher, more inconsistent, less involved
  - This leads to problems for the teens
- Adolescents in these conditions
  - Heightened risk for psychological difficulties
  - Heightened risk for problem behaviors