Outline/Overview

- Peer groups/relations
  - Origins
  - Organization
- Dyads
- Cliques
- Crowds
- Research methods
- Popularity & rejection
- Mechanisms of peer influence

Peer Groups

- Groups of people who are roughly the same age
- Modernization has led to more age segregation
  - Schools
  - Workplace
  - Community
- U.S. high school seniors < 15% of waking hours spent with family
- Mood effects of peer contact
Contemporary Adolescent Peer Groups: Origins

- Educational Origins of Adolescent Peer Groups
- Age grading in public schools
- Impact on social life has been staggering
- Organized activities outside of school contribute to age segregation
- Separation of adults and adolescents
  - Adults at work
  - Teens at school
- Youth Culture

The Nature of Adolescent Peer Groups

- Changes in Peer Groups during Adolescence
- There is a sharp increase during adolescence in the time spent with peers versus adults.
- Sex cleavage disappears
- Schools become larger, more anonymous
Organization of Peer Relations

- Dyads (Steinberg doesn’t really discuss much in this chapter)
- Cliques
- Crowds

Dyads

- Individual friendships
- 90% of youth can name a close friend
- Majority will list at least one person who reciprocates
- Involvement in romantic relationships increases as move through adolescence

Clique vs. Crowds - Difference

- Cliques are small groups defined by common activities or simply by friendship
- Crowds are larger, more vaguely defined groups, based on reputation
Cliques: Similarity among Members

- Adolescents’ cliques typically are composed of people of the:
  - same age
  - same race
  - same socioeconomic background
  - same sex - at least during early and middle adolescence

- Three factors in determining clique membership:
  - orientation toward school
  - orientation toward the teen culture
  - involvement in antisocial activity

- Stability of membership

Crowds

- Crowds as Reference Groups
  - Crowds contribute to the definition of norms and standards for clothing, leisure, and tastes in music among other things
  - Based on image, reputation, some common feature.

Functions of crowds

1. Place in a location in the social structure
2. Channel one toward certain peers
3. Reward some lifestyles and disparage others
   - Ingroup-Outgroup dynamics
   - Racial-Ethnic diversity & perceived differences
   - Ways to combat stereotyping?
A model for mapping the social world of adolescent peer groups

Cliquies: Common Interests among Friends
- Similarity Between Friends: Selection or Socialization?
- Which comes first: Joining a clique or becoming interested in a clique’s activities?
- With regard to antisocial activities, such as delinquency or drug use, it appears as if “birds of a feather flock together”
- How stable are friendships over time?
- Moderate stability over the school year

Features of peer organizations
- Contingent on broader social & cultural context
- Dynamic system of peers
- A single, coherent social network??
- Relationships at one level affect those at other levels
Research methods for studying peer groups?
- Ethnography
- Sociometric techniques
- Self-report

Popularity and Rejection in Adolescent Peer Groups
- Chief determinant of popularity during adolescence: Social skills
- Three types of unpopular adolescents
  - Aggressive
    - Fights with other students, bullies others
  - Withdrawn
    - Exceedingly shy, timid, and inhibited
    - Victims of bullying
  - Aggressive-Withdrawn=combination
    - Hostile, but nervous about initiating friendships
- Social skills training can help

Sociometric status data
- Peer nominations of most/least liked
  - Popular
  - Rejected
  - Neglected
  - Controversial
- Most stable?
- Least stable?
Modes of peer influence

- How do peers exert their influence?
  1.
  2.
  3.
  4.

- Complicating factors
  1. Reciprocal processes
  2. Diversity of networks
  3. Interdependence and reinforcement

Peer Group and Psychosocial Development

- In promoting normal development, peers
  - Provide models and feedback in regard to identity
  - Influence self-image
  - Assist the development of autonomy
  - Provide a context for decision-making skills
  - Interact in intimate and sexual relationships
  - Influence one another regarding achievement