Adolescence: A Field of Study; A Stage of Life

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Prepared for
Adolescent Health and Development
A Definition of Terms

Young People

10 24
A Definition of Terms

Young People

10

Youth

15
Terms according to WHO

Young People

10 - 24

Youth

15 - 24

Adolescence

10 - 19
Adolescence is a term coined by G. Stanley Hall in 1904.
Why?
Why? Why Then?

- Rousseau and a shift in the philosophy of childhood.
- Industrial Revolution
- Mandatory education
- Age segregation and the evolution of a “youth culture”
Today’s Youth: A generation of firsts

- The first to understand terrorism as a domestic issue;
- The first to fully compete in a global economy;
- The first to experience instantaneous communication with the world;
- The first to grow up with the majority living a portion of childhood in a single parent household;
- The first to live their entire lives in the shadow of AIDS;
- The first to witness and experience the translocation of an entire American city.
In 1990 we believed gender specific behaviors were predominantly the result of social learning…
…today we know that neuroendocrine differences have a significant impact on gender differences related to processing, learning and behavior.
In 1990 we had a risk or deficit model as the predominant framework for youth programs…

…today we have a *positive youth development* model that incorporates protective as well as risk factors.
In 1990 we had an invariate, stage-based conceptualization of adolescent development… …today we have an ecological model that grounds development with in the contexts of a young person’s life.
In 1990 we believed that parental influence diminished as peer influence increased in adolescence...

...today, we understand that parents are as critical during adolescence as they were in childhood, even as peer influence increases.
Adolescence is an age of opportunity

- *Pubertal development* brings new capacities, a new body image and a new sense of self;
- *Cognitive development* brings with it the capacity to look at a problem from multiple perspectives and to explore competing options to its solution;
Adolescence is an age of opportunity

- **Social development** brings with it a broader set of influences than just family: peers, teachers, religious leaders;
- **Moral development** brings with it idealism, social engagement, and volunteerism.
To tap the potential as well as to address the problems of youth, we need to view the adolescent nested in a wide set of social contexts and we need to understand how they influence both health and morbidity.
An Ecological Model of Adolescent Health & Development
A Model of Youth Risk and Protection

**Macrolevel Environment**
- Political Realities
- Youth Laws/Policies
- Macrolevel Economics
- Historical Events
A Model of Youth Risk and Protection

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Community Environment

Risk
- arrests by age, type
- community fertility rates by age
- poverty
- single parent
- female head of household
- age of migration
- exposure to violent media
- exposure to youth-oriented advertising
- access to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, firearms

Protection
- educational attainment by age
- school enrollment for 16-19
- health care facilities
- health care utilization
- employment rates of adults
- informal supports of categories
- religious institution
- access to role models
- pro-social media
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**Community Environment**
- Risk
- Protection

**Family**
- **Risk**
  - low parental education
  - family mental illness
  - maternal stress
  - large family size
  - overcrowding
  - poverty
  - access to weapons
  - engaging in health compromising behaviors
  - authoritarian parenting style
  - exposure to family violence
- **Protection**
  - connectedness
  - parental presence
  - parental values
    - towards school
    - toward risk behavior
  - two parents
  - fewer siblings
  - family cohesion
  - authoritative parenting style
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Peers
- Risk
  - prejudice from peers
  - perception of threat
  - social isolation
  - participation in deviant culture
- Protection
  - being treated fairly by peers
  - having low-risk friends
  - peers with pro-social norms

Risk
Protection
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Community Environment

Risk

Protection

School
- Risk
  - Retention
  - Size of school
  - Absenteeism
  - Suspension
  - Abusive teachers
- Protection
  - Connectedness to school
  - Improved academic performance
  - Consistency of schools attended

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- Protection
  - Connectedness
  - Parental presence
  - Parental values
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    - Toward risk behavior
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School
- Risk
- Protection

Family
- Risk
- Protection

Peers
- Risk
- Protection

Individual
- Risk
- Protection

- biological vulnerability
- intellectual impairment
- dyssynchronous maturation
- aggressive temperament
- impulsivity
- affective disorder
- ADHD
- aggressive behavior
- stress reactivity

- spirituality/religiosity
- social skills
- average intelligence
- late maturation
- positive self-image
- positive self-efficacy
- perceived importance of parents