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# CHAPTER 16

## PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

G. Stanley Hall  
Margaret Mead  
Sigmund Freud  
Anna Freud  
Erik Erikson

### THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Research on Identity  
Relationships with Parents

Relationships with Peers  
Achieving Sexual Identity

### PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

Pregnancy  
Juvenile Delinquency

### EGO STRENGTHS OF ADOLESCENTS

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**T**here is no man, . . . however wise, who has not at some period of his youth said things, or lived a life, the memory of which is so unpleasant to him that he would gladly expunge it. And yet he ought not entirely to regret it. . . . We do not receive wisdom, we must discover wisdom for ourselves, after a journey through the wilderness which no one else can make for us, which no one can spare us, for our wisdom is the point of view from which we come at last to regard the world.

—Marcel Proust, *Within a Budding Grove*, 1919

"The trouble is," said 16-year-old Vicky to her mother after an intense argument, "that I don't know who I am. You know who you are. You're Mary Smith Johnson. You're a teacher. You're a wife. You're a mother. But who am I? You expect me to be just like you, to think just the way you do, and to do whatever you could do if you were me. But you're *not* me. I don't know who *is* me. I wish I could be myself with you, but I always feel under all this pressure not to talk about the things I think or do that I know you wouldn't approve of.

"Then when I do decide to open up a little bit of myself to you, it never seems to be a good time. I guess it's my fault. I don't pick the right times—whenever I want to talk, you always seem to be busy with something else and not to have enough time to listen to me. But if we can't talk to each other, we'll never understand each other." And, unspoken and barely thought, "And I'll never find out who I really am."

Vicky is not alone. Probably the most important task of adolescence is the search for identity, the quest to find out "who I really am." Teenagers need to develop their own values and to be sure that they are not just parroting the ideas of their parents. They have to find out what they can do and to be proud of their own accomplishments. They want to develop close relationships with both boys and girls their own age and to be liked and loved and respected for who they are and what they stand for. "The adolescent searches for his or her self-identity in many mirrors" (Sorensen, 1973, p. 37).

Adolescents pursue this search in many different ways. Vicky's high school years have been troubled by a recurring disquiet over the many changes she faces. She knows that she is no longer a child—but that she is not yet an adult. She looks at her mother, who seems to fit all her roles so easily—teacher, mother, wife, friend. Vicky cannot imagine herself filling any of these roles comfortably and well. Furthermore, she's not sure that she even wants to. Her biggest problem these days is that she doesn't know what she wants.

Jason's adolescence is quieter, less troubling both to him and to his parents. Yes, one night he came home reeking of cheap wine, and yes, he sometimes offends his parents with his language and the loud rock music he plays. By and large, though, Jason's parents are proud of their son, and they trust him to do the right thing. He accepts their confidence in him, and, within what he considers responsible limits, he does what he pleases. This works out well, since what he wants to do often fits in with what his parents want him to do—achieve in school, socialize with friends they like, and go out for sports. Still, he, too, has his doubts, his anxieties, his questions about the future.

In this chapter we continue our discussion of changes that adolescents face, focusing on social and personality development. We begin, as before, with some theoretical perspectives—those of G. Stanley Hall, Margaret Mead, Sig-

mund Freud, Anna Freud, and Erik Erikson. We then consider the broad concept of the search for identity—a search for, or an attempt to create, some personal stability and certainty amid many changes and questions. The question “Who am I?” may be broken down into component questions, such as “What do I really believe?” “What kinds of relationships do I have?” and “Who am I, sexually?” After considering some important research on adolescents’ identity, we’ll discuss three crucial aspects of identity: relationships with parents, relationships with peers, and sexual identity. The final sections of the chapter cover two serious problems of adolescence—pregnancy and juvenile delinquency—and also some of the strengths that adolescents have.

## Theoretical Perspectives

Many different theories offer explanations for the significance of adolescence and its effects on the young person. Here are some of the most important.

### G. STANLEY HALL

The first psychologist to formulate a theory of adolescence, Hall (1916) proposed that the major physical changes of adolescence cause major psychological changes as well. He believed that young people’s efforts to adjust to their changing bodies usher in a period of *Sturm und Drang*, or **storm and stress**. He also believed that adolescents can emerge from this period morally stronger, thus showing through their individual lives the overall advancement of the whole human race.

Hall’s view of adolescence as an invariably stormy period of life has been widely accepted by many observers of young people and hotly contested by others, as we note later in this chapter.

*Storm and stress* In Hall’s terminology, the idea that adolescence is necessarily a time of strong and variable emotions; the German term is “*Sturm und Drang*.”

### MARGARET MEAD

Mead, who studied adolescence in Samoa (1928) and in New Guinea (1953), pointed to the importance of cultural factors in development. When a culture provides a serene and gradual transition from childhood to adulthood, as Samoa does, there is no storm and stress, but an easy acceptance of the adult role. Mead (1928) says:

The adolescent girl in Samoa differed from her sister who had not reached puberty in one chief respect, that in the older girl certain bodily changes were present which were absent in the younger girl. There were no other great differences to set off the group passing through adolescence from the group which would become adolescent in two years or the group which had become adolescent two years before. (p. 196)

In a society that permits children to see adult sexual activity, to watch a baby being born, to become close to death, to do important work, to exhibit assertive and even dominant behavior, to engage in sex play, and to know

precisely what their adult roles will involve, adolescence is relatively free from stress, according to Mead. In societies like our own, however, which consider children very different from adults, which have completely different expectations for them, and which shelter them from much of adult life and responsibilities, the shift from childhood to adulthood is much more discontinuous and, as a result, much more stressful. Mead insisted that the way one's culture handles the physical changes of adolescence determines the nature of the transition.

Mead's work in Samoa was criticized recently by D. Freeman (1983), who charged that her research was hasty and that her findings are biased and erroneous. Freeman insists that adolescence in Samoa is indeed tumultuous and stressful and that delinquency shows up more often in adolescence than at any other time of life in Samoa as well as in a number of western countries. If these charges had come when Mead's work was first published, they might have had a great effect. But coming nearly 60 years after Mead's fieldwork, done in 1925, they are a little late to have an impact. By 1983 *Sturm und Drang* was no longer considered inevitable, even for children growing up in the United States, as we shall see.

#### SIGMUND FREUD

*Genital stage* In Sigmund Freud's terminology, the psychosexual stage of mature sexuality; it occurs during adolescence.

In Freud's (1953) psychosexual theory of development, the genital stage of mature adult sexuality is the keynote of adolescence. Puberty brings a re-awakening of the sexual urges of the earlier phallic stage, but now those urges are directed in socially approved channels—heterosexual relations with people outside the family. Freud maintained that because of the physiological changes associated with sexual maturation, adolescents can no longer repress sexuality, as they did during the latency stage; their biological needs make this impossible.

While all the infantile forms of sexuality have pure pleasure as their aim, the changes of puberty now make reproduction an important component of sexuality, said Freud, requiring certain transitions. The need to masturbate becomes more urgent in early adolescence, preparing the young person for eventual sexual release with a partner; after this is achieved, masturbatory needs diminish. Girls need to switch from the immature clitoral orgasm (obtained from masturbation) to the mature vaginal orgasm (achieved in sexual intercourse) (S. Freud, 1925, 1953).

Young adolescents typically go through a homosexual stage, which may show up in hero worship of a same-sex adult or in a close friendship with another young person, the forerunner of mature relationships with persons of the opposite sex. Before these can be achieved, young people have to free themselves from dependency on their parents.

Contemporary thinkers have challenged several aspects of Freud's theory. His explanation of the effects of puberty on the female does not hold up, for example, in the face of research showing that rather than being an artifact of childhood, the clitoral orgasm characterizes the sexual response of many normal, well-adjusted adult women (Masters & Johnson, 1966). Other research seems to contradict Freud's concept of the role of masturbation, since older

adolescents (16 to 19 years of age) and nonvirgins are more likely to masturbate than 13- to 15-year-olds and virgins (Sorensen, 1973).

## ANNA FREUD

Anna Freud (1946) considers the adolescent years more important for the formation of character than her father, Sigmund Freud, did. The glandular changes that produce physiological changes also affect psychological functioning. The **libido**, the basic energy that fuels the sex drive, is reawakened and threatens the id-ego balance that was maintained during the latency years. The resultant conflicts cause anxiety, which in turn calls forth ego defense mechanisms, such as *intellectualization* (the translation of perceptions into abstract thought) and *asceticism* (self-denial).

**Intellectualization** may be seen in the predilection of many adolescents to engage in all-night discussions of such abstract topics as religion, politics, philosophy, and the meaning of life. Although other investigators relate these "bull sessions" to an adolescent's search for identity or to an increased ability to deal with abstract thought, Anna Freud considers such intellectualization a defense because young people aren't trying to solve real problems in their intellectual speculations, but are instead using words and ideas to respond to basic instinctual needs created by their changing bodies.

She also sees a defense in **asceticism**. Because adolescents are afraid of losing control over their impulses, they may take an ascetic approach to life, whereby they overcontrol themselves. The ascetic adolescent may favor drab, shapeless clothing and may renounce many simple pleasures. Later in life, Anna Freud says, as people gain confidence in their ability to control their dangerous impulses, they tend to relax and to be less strict with themselves.

*Libido* In Sigmund Freud's terminology, the source of energy that fuels the sexual drive.

*Intellectualization* In Anna Freud's terminology, a defense mechanism characterized by engaging in abstract intellectual discussions.

*Asceticism* In Anna Freud's terminology, a defense mechanism characterized by self-denial.

## ERIK ERIKSON

most linking to adolescents - finding an identity

Adolescence is the fifth in Erikson's eight stages of life. The crisis of adolescence involves **identity versus role confusion** (1950). In the previous stage, that of *industry versus inferiority*, a child acquires the skills needed for success in the culture. Adolescents need to find a way to use these skills. Rapid physical growth and new genital maturity alert young people to their impending adulthood, and they begin to wonder about their roles in adult society.

Erikson (1950, 1965a, 1965b, 1968) sees the prime danger of this stage as identity confusion. He says that this can express itself in a young person's taking an excessively long time to reach adulthood, and he offers Hamlet's hesitations as an "exalted example." He sees the cliquishness of adolescence and teenagers' intolerance of differences as defenses against identity confusion. Adolescents may also express their confusion by regressing into childishness to avoid resolving conflicts or by committing themselves impulsively to poorly thought out courses of action. Unlike Anna Freud, however, Erikson does not claim that ideological commitment is an irrelevant defensive mechanism. During the "psychosocial moratorium" (Erikson, 1950, p. 262), or "time out" period that adolescence and youth provide, many young people's efforts are

*Identity versus role confusion* In Erikson's theory, the fifth crisis of psychosocial development, in which an adolescent must determine his or her own sense of self (identity).

*Erik Erikson sees falling in love as a powerful way by which young people seek to find themselves. As they express their most intimate thoughts and feelings to each other, adolescent sweethearts see themselves reflected in the mirror of the loved one and are better able to clarify their own identity.*



focused on a search for commitments to which they can be faithful. These commitments are both ideological and personal, and the extent to which young people can be true to them determines their ability to resolve the crisis of this stage.

Erikson also believes that falling in love is an attempt to define identity. By becoming intimate with another person and sharing thoughts and feelings, the adolescent offers up his or her own identity, sees it reflected in the loved one, and is better able to clarify the self.

This sequence, according to Erikson, describes males' development. He describes the female, however, as putting her identity aside as she prepares to define herself through the man she'll marry. While Erikson maintains that identity must precede intimacy (to be achieved in young adulthood, in the sixth crisis), he also says that women achieve both tasks at the same time. Erikson's scheme is, then, primarily male in orientation, as Freud's is.

Some recent research, most notably that done by James Marcia and his colleagues, which will be discussed in the next section, explores the differences between males' and females' identity development, a long-neglected area in both research and theoretical conceptualizing.

### *The Search for Identity*

The search for identity is a lifelong voyage, for which adolescence is the launching point. Erikson (1960) emphasizes that this effort to make sense of the self and the world is not "a kind of maturational malaise." It is, instead, a healthy, vital process that contributes to the ego strength of the adult. The conflicts which are involved in the process serve to spur growth and development.

## RESEARCH ON IDENTITY

### States and Statuses; Crisis and Commitment

A substantial amount of research on adolescents' identity has expanded Erikson's theory to identify several identity statuses, to correlate these statuses with other aspects of personality, and to explore the issue of differences between males' and females' identity. The most prominent researcher in this area is the psychologist James E. Marcia, who defines identity as "an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (1980, p. 159).

Marcia has taken the two elements that Erikson maintained were crucial to forming identity—crisis and commitment—and has defined four different identity states according to the presence or absence of these elements (see Table 16-1). By **crisis**, Marcia means a period of conscious decision making, and he defines **commitment** as a personal investment in an occupation or a system of beliefs (ideology). To evaluate a person's identity status, Marcia (1966) developed a 30-minute semistructured interview, as shown in Table 16-2 (page 518). On the basis of the person's answers, he or she is classified as being in one of the following four categories:

† **Crisis** A period of conscious decision making related to identity formation.

† **Commitment** A personal investment in an occupation or a system of beliefs.

- 1 **Identity achievement (crisis and commitment)**. After a crisis in which a person in this category has devoted much effort to actively searching for choices, he or she now expresses strong commitment.
- 2 **Foreclosure (commitment with no crisis)**. A person in this category has made commitments, but instead of undergoing an identity crisis, he or she has accepted other people's plans. A woman, for example, becomes a devoutly religious housewife because her mother was, or a man becomes a Republican farmer because his father was.
- 3 **Identity diffusion (no commitment, crisis uncertain)**. Uncommitted, a person in this category may be the pleasure-seeking type who actively avoids commitment or may be an aimless drifter, without goals. There may or may not have been a crisis in the past, but if there was, it ended without a decision. There is no crisis now, and the person does not seem concerned over this lack of commitment.
- 4 **Moratorium (crisis, no commitment)**. Still in crisis, a person in this category is heading for commitment and will probably achieve identity.

**Table 16-1** Criteria for Identity Statuses

IDENTITY STATUS	POSITION ON OCCUPATION AND IDEOLOGY	
	CRISIS (PERIOD OF CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES)	COMMITMENT (ADHERENCE TO A PATH OF ACTION)
Identity achievement	Present	Present
Foreclosure	Absent	Present
Identity diffusion	Present or absent	Absent
Moratorium	In crisis	Present but vague

Source: Adapted from Marcia, 1980.

**Table 16-2** *Identity-Status Interview*

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SAMPLE QUESTION ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL COMMITMENT:

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"How willing do you think you'd be to give up going into \_\_\_\_\_ if something better came along?"

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TYPICAL ANSWERS FOR THE FOUR STATUSES

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*Identity achievement.* "Well, I might, but I doubt it. I can't see what 'something better' would be for me."  
*Foreclosure.* "Not very willing. It's what I've always wanted to do. The folks are happy with it and so am I."  
*Identity diffusion.* "Oh sure. If something better came along, I'd change just like that."  
*Moratorium.* "I guess if I knew for sure I could answer that better. It would have to be something in the general area—something related. . . ."

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SAMPLE QUESTION ABOUT IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT

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"Have you ever had any doubts about your religious beliefs?"

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TYPICAL ANSWERS FOR THE FOUR STATUSES

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*Identity achievement.* "Yes, I even started wondering whether there is a god. I've pretty much resolved that now, though. The way it seems to me is . . ."  
*Foreclosure.* "No, not really; our family is pretty much in agreement on these things."  
*Identity diffusion.* "Oh, I don't know. I guess so. Everyone goes through some sort of stage like that. But it really doesn't bother me much. I figure that one religion is about as good as another!"  
*Moratorium.* "Yes, I guess I'm going through that now. I just don't see how there can be a god and still so much evil in the world or . . ."

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Source: Adapted from Marcia, 1966.

These identity statuses have been related to a number of personality characteristics, including anxiety, self-esteem, moral reasoning, and patterns of behaving with other people. The categories are not permanent, and they change as people continue to develop (Marcia, 1979).

### Gender Differences

Many years ago Sigmund Freud explained some differences between males and females with the statement, "Biology is destiny." In more recent years psychologists have added to this truism the notion that "socialization is destiny." Whatever the reasons, there are differences between the sexes in the struggle to define identity. Even early theorists like Freud and Erikson saw different paths in males' and females' identity development, but only in recent years has much research been devoted to exploring the female's quest for identity.

Gilligan (1983) has studied women in several contexts and has concluded that women define themselves less in terms of their achievement of a separate



identity and more in terms of relationships with other people. They judge themselves on their responsibilities and on their ability to care for others as well as themselves. They achieve identity less through competitive striving and more through cooperative effort.

Marcia (1979) modified his original interviews to plumb issues of female identity. One of the changes was the addition of questions about attitudes toward premarital intercourse, views on women's role, and concerns having to do with lifestyle. Then he came to a surprising conclusion: while the men in the moratorium category most closely resembled those in the identity-achievement category, the women who most closely resembled the men in the identity-achievement category were in the foreclosure category.

Marcia surmised that *stability* of identity is so important for women that it's just as adaptive for them to achieve this identity early in life without too much effort on their own part as it is for them to struggle to forge their own identity. He attributes his findings to society's pressures on women to carry on social values. Marcia also maintains that women don't wait to develop the capacity for intimacy until after they have achieved identity, as in the Eriksonian male-based pattern, but that for them identity and intimacy develop together. This seems to build on other research indicating that intimacy is more important for girls than for boys, even in grade school friendships (Cooke, 1979). It also stems from research showing that the sexual-interpersonal area is more important for defining identity in females, while ideology is more important for defining it in males (Bilsker, Schiedel, & Marcia, in press).

Part of the difference in males' and females' patterns may be due to different parental treatment of the sexes, since several studies have found different child-rearing patterns to be associated with different identity statuses (Marcia, 1980). During adolescence, parent-child relationships are undergoing a major change as young people accelerate the drive to become separate individuals.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS

Young people feel a constant conflict between wanting to break away from their parents and realizing how dependent they really are on them. The adolescent must give up the childhood identification of "the Smiths' little boy" or "the Browns' little girl" and establish a separate identity outside the family relationship, while at the same time retaining parental and family ties (Siegel, 1982).

Adolescents' ambivalent feelings are often matched by their parents' own ambivalence. Torn between wanting their children to be independent and wanting to keep them dependent, parents often find it hard to let go. As a result, the parents may give their teenage children "double messages," saying one thing but communicating just the opposite by their actions. One longitudinal study of 27 adolescent boys found that the conflict is particularly strong for the mother who finds herself losing authority and power (L. Steinberg, 1981).

As we saw in the discussion of Hall, this emotional conflict on all sides once persuaded people that *adolescent rebellion* is inevitable. Mead argued

*Adolescent rebellion*  
The storm and stress  
experienced by some, but  
not all, adolescents.

Adolescents often feel the need to make Mommy and Daddy very unhappy to achieve separation and develop their own individual identity. Once that happens, young people (to their great surprise) are apt to find themselves agreeing with their parents on many issues.

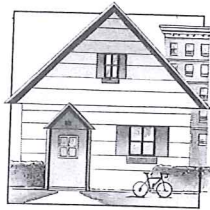


that rebellion is culturally influenced, but she did not challenge the assumption that for young Americans, adolescence is a time of storm and stress. More recent work, however, has questioned the notion that adolescent rebellion is inevitable in the United States.

One survey of the literature on parent-adolescent conflict summarized its conclusions neatly in its subtitle, “All Families Some of the Time and Some Families Most of the Time” (Montemayor, 1983). The survey reports that conflict with parents increases during early adolescence, stabilizes during middle adolescence, and then decreases after the young person is about 18 years of age. The decline in conflict may reflect the entry into adulthood or the tendency of 18-year-olds to move away from home.

This survey also noted that most studies show that the majority of arguments between parents and adolescents are about mundane matters like schoolwork, friends, chores, siblings, noise, curfews, and cleanliness. These arguments might reflect some deep quest for independence (as is often speculated), or they might be just a continuation of the parents’ effort to teach the child to conform to social rules. “This [socializing] task inescapably produces a certain amount of tension. . . . At this point it is simply not clear whether parent-adolescent conflict has a ‘deeper meaning’ than this” (Montemayor, 1983, p. 91).

## A CHILD'S WORLD . . . THE EVERYDAY WORLD



Are there "secrets" of good communication? While adolescence can be a trying period for both the people who are going through it and the people who are living with it, the home need not become a battleground if both parents and young people make special efforts to understand each other. The following guidelines may help.

### WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Give your undivided attention when your children want to talk. Don't read, watch television, or busy yourself with other tasks.
- Listen calmly and concentrate on hearing and understanding your children's point of view.
- Speak to your children as courteously and pleasantly as you would to a stranger. Your tone of voice can set the tone of a conversation.
- Understand your children's feelings even if you don't always approve of their behavior. Try not to make judgments.
- Keep the door open on any subject. Be an "askable" parent.
- Avoid belittling and humiliating your children and laughing at what may seem to you to be naive or foolish questions and statements.
- Encourage your children to "test" new ideas in conversation by not judging their ideas and opinions, but instead by listening and then offering your own views as plainly and honestly as possible. Love and mutual respect can coexist with differing points of view.
- Help your children build self-confidence by encour-

aging their participation in activities of their choice (not yours).

- Make an effort to commend your children frequently and appropriately. Too often we take the good things for granted and focus on the bad, but everyone needs to be appreciated.
- Encourage your children to participate in family decision making and to work out family concerns together with you.
- Understand that your children need to challenge your opinions and your ways of doing things to achieve the separation from you that's essential for their own adult identity.

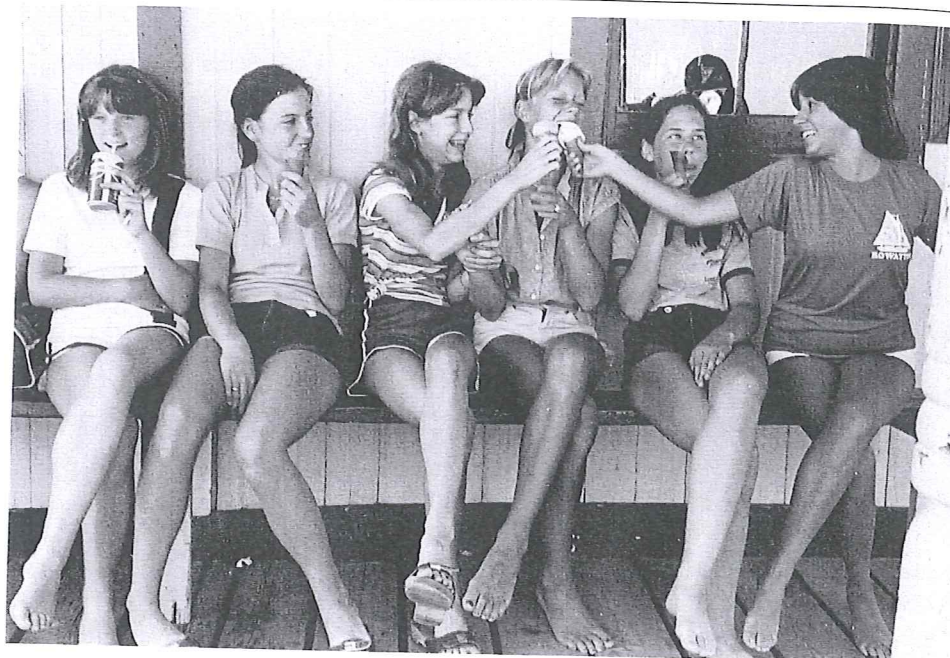
### WHAT ADOLESCENTS CAN DO

- Avoid looking at your parents as the enemy. Chances are that they love you and have your best interests in mind, even if you don't necessarily agree with their way of showing that.
- Try to understand that your parents are human beings, with their own insecurities, needs, and feelings.
- Listen to your parents with an open mind and try to see situations from their point of view.
- Share your feelings with your parents so that they can understand you better.
- Live up to your responsibilities at home and in school so that your parents will be more inclined to grant you the kind of independence you want and need.
- Bolster your criticisms of family, school, and government with suggestions for practical improvements.
- Be as courteous and considerate to your own parents as you would be to the parents of your friends.

Source: Adapted from National Institute of Mental Health, 1981.

The researcher concluded that Hall's *Sturm und Drang* view of adolescence is extreme, but that conflict is part of every relationship and that the continuation of a relationship depends on the ability to resolve disagreements. The transitions of adolescence challenge the established parent-child relationship, and a new one has to be created. Often parents and children resolve the problems to everyone's general satisfaction, but sometimes they do not. Severe and unresolved conflicts are associated with serious problem behavior in adolescence. In such cases, intervention and counseling can often help the families cope. ("The Everyday World" discusses ways to keep communication open between parent and adolescent.)

*There is no one peer group for all teens. Adolescents choose their friends by a number of different standards. They tend to pick friends whose socioeconomic backgrounds, interests, and values are similar to their own.*



(© Eric Kroll/Taurus Photos)

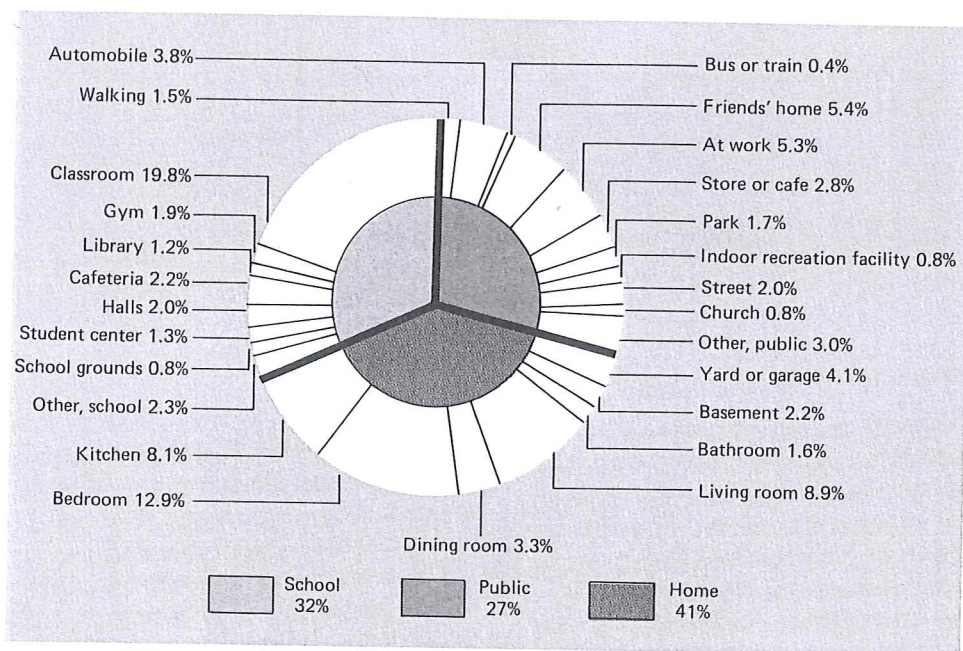
## RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS

As we enter the cafeteria of Vicky's and Jason's high school, we see a broad variety of adolescents eating, doing homework, talking, flirting, and just horsing around. The large room is divided into several "turfs," whose unmarked boundaries are recognized by all the students. At one table are the "burnouts," alienated middle-class or upper-middle-class teenagers who seem to be marking time until they can legally leave school and who spend much of their spare time misusing various drugs. At another table are the "straights," students from all socioeconomic backgrounds who work to achieve recognition within the "system"—the leaders in student government, the athletes, the honor students. At the far end of the cafeteria are black students, who stick together, exchanging private jokes and forming their own in-group. And over to the right of the room are the "greasers," boys and girls, mostly from working-class homes, who talk "tough and cool" and who may have had brushes with the law.

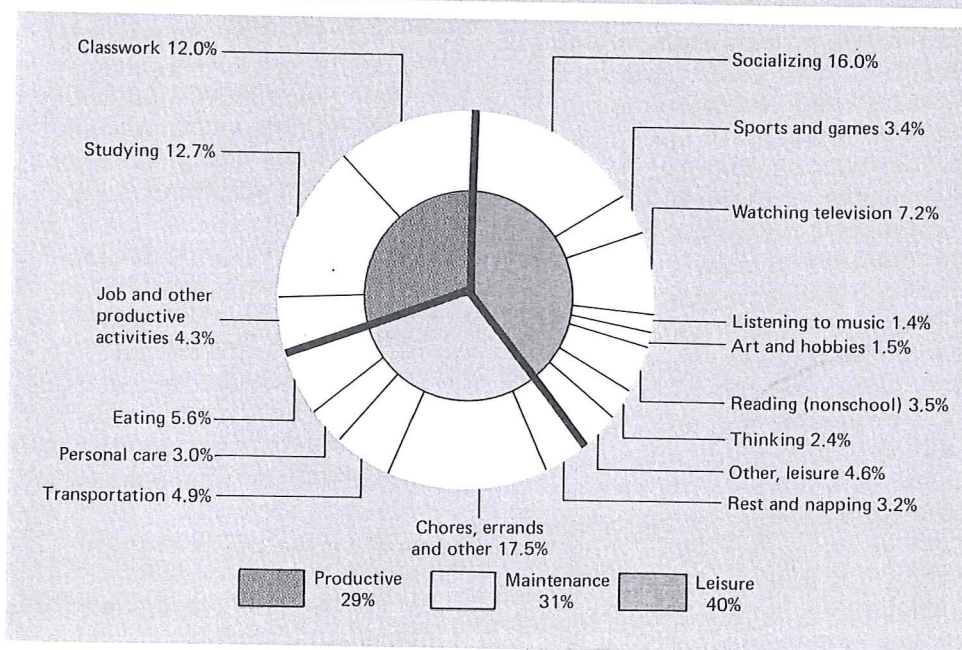
### Time Spent with Peers

What do teenagers do on a typical day? With whom do they do it? Where do they do it? And how do they feel about what they're doing? To provide answers to these questions, for 1 week 75 high school students in a suburb of Chicago carried beepers that rang at a random moment once every 2 hours during their waking hours. The average student received and responded to 69 percent of the beeper signals, yielding a total of 4489 self-reports, from which researchers described what it's like to be a modern teenager (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984).

The results (see Figures 16-1, 16-2 and 16-3) showed the importance of peer groups. The adolescents studied spent more than half their waking hours with other teenagers—friends (29 percent of the time) and classmates (23 percent)—compared with only about 5 percent of their time spent with one or both of their parents. They were also happiest when with friends. (Being with their families came in second, then being alone, and last being in class.) Teenagers have more fun with friends—joking, gossiping, and goofing around—than at home, where activities tend to be more serious and more humdrum.

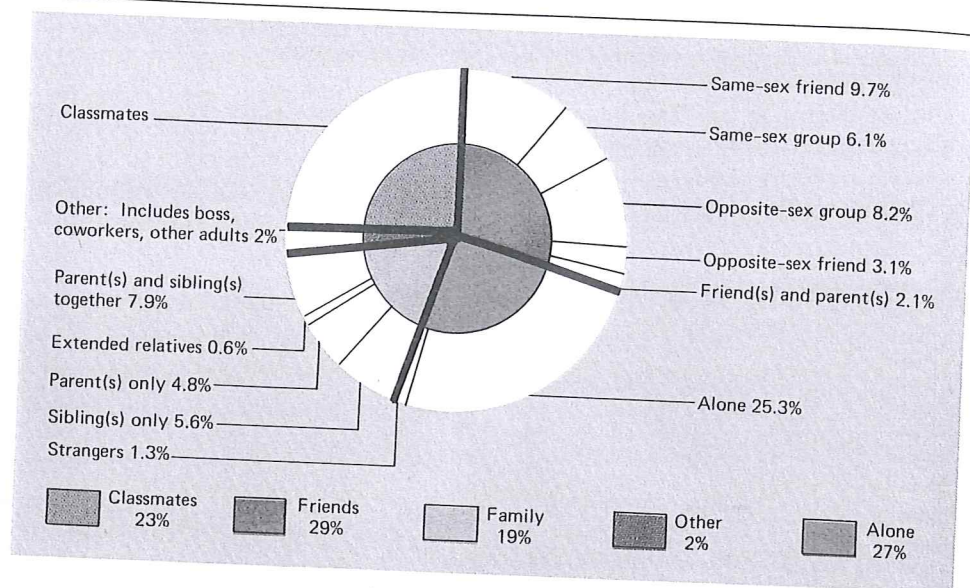


**Figure 16-1** Where adolescents spend their time. This graph shows the percentage of self-reports in each location (N = 2734). Here and in Figures 16-2 and 16-3, 1 percentage point is equivalent to approximately 1 hour per week spent in the given location or activity. (Source: Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984, p. 59.)



**Figure 16-2** What adolescents spend their time doing. (Source: Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984, p. 63.)

**Figure 16-3** Whom adolescents spend their time with. (Source: Adapted from Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984, p. 71.)



### Structure of the Peer Group

There is no one peer group for all teens. The group that Vicky is drawn to depends partly on her socioeconomic status (since most adolescent cliques are class-bound), partly on the values she has picked up from home, and partly on her own personality. Once Vicky has become part of a group, she influences its other members and they influence her. As much of a nonconformist as she considers herself, she will hew closely to the habits of her chosen group. If the other girls in the group wear faded, patched jeans and running shoes, Vicky will not come to school in a plaid skirt and saddle shoes. If her friends spend their evenings hanging around the drive-in restaurant, she will not—by choice—spend hers in the library. The set that Vicky hangs out with will influence not only the way she dresses and wears her hair but also her social activities, her sexual behavior, her use or nonuse of drugs, her pursuit or nonpursuit of academic achievement, the music she listens to, and her vocational aspirations—the basic patterns of her life.

A classic study conducted in Sydney, Australia, from 1958 to 1960 determined that there are two main types of peer groups: cliques and crowds (Dunphy, 1963). **Cliques** are smaller than crowds, ranging from three to nine members (the most typical clique has six members). Cliques are characterized by closed membership, intimacy, and shared conversations, ideas, and activities. In early adolescence cliques are usually unisexual; in middle adolescence they include members of both sexes. Members of cliques tend to have similar values and interests, and they may be intolerant or contemptuous of those who are different.

**Crowds** are larger than cliques (typically, a crowd has 15 to 30 members) and may be considered groups of cliques. Membership in a clique appears to be necessary, therefore, to membership in a crowd. Typical activities of cliques and crowds differ. Crowds engage primarily in organized social activities (like parties and dances) rather than shared intimacies, and they provide a setting for the activities that accompany the transition from unisexual activities to

**Clique** A group consisting of about three to nine people who tend to think and act similarly, to be of the same sex and race, and to come from the same socioeconomic background; compare **crowd**.

**Crowd** A group composed of two or three cliques; compare **clique**.

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those engaged in by members of both sexes. In late adolescence cliques disintegrate into paired couples.

### Parents "versus" Peers

"Peer power" isn't everything in adolescence, and most teenagers still have positive ties with their parents (Hill, 1980). Parents count more than they realize, especially with regard to important issues. Two separate studies, done 15 years apart, asked teenagers to choose solutions to various common problems, depending on whether they were suggested by parents or peers. Whether parents or peers carried more weight depended on the particular situation.

When deciding how to dress, how to resolve school-related problems, and how to deal with other day-to-day concerns, peers' opinions were more influential. But when deciding long-range issues like which job to take or how to resolve a moral conflict, the students in the first study (all girls) leaned more toward their parents' opinions (Brittain, 1963). In the second study, the particular situation that a boy or girl was considering also influenced whether he or she would pay more attention to parents or peers (Emmerick, 1978). When parents and peers hold similar values, as they often do, there's no real conflict between them.

The kind of community an adolescent lives in has a major impact on whether he or she will pay more attention to adults or to other young people. The findings from a study of several hundred teenagers in several communities in New York state—a poor inner-city neighborhood with many minority-group residents, an upper-middle-class suburb, and a rural community—tell us that we can't draw sweeping conclusions about teenagers as if they were all alike.

This study found that urban teenagers faced with conflicting standards of the family, the school, and social agencies were apt to reject all these values and create their own, often in a street gang. Suburban and rural teens, however, were more likely to exhibit values very close to those held by the important adults in their lives. While teenagers need to question adults' values, they want consistent rules and standards that they can evaluate (Ianni, 1983).

We have already seen (in Chapter 15, "The Everyday World") how important parents are to their children's performance in school. The stronger the parents' interest in their adolescents' lives, the more likely the teenagers are to get high marks in school. In a similar vein, another study found that adolescents who spent more time with their friends than with their families performed less well in school (Larson, 1983).

### Friendships in Adolescence

"What *do* you talk about for so long?" Vicky's mother asks laughingly. Vicky has been on the phone for over an hour talking with the friend she had been with only 45 minutes before dialing. Sharing intimate thoughts and feelings is a vital part of friendship in adolescence, especially among girls. (Throughout life, girls and women tend to be more intimate with their friends, telling them more and counting more on their emotional support; boys and men have more people as friends, but they are rarely as close to any of them as females are to their good friends.)

The intimacy and trust in these relationships fill the void that is created



*Friends can listen to problems teenagers prefer not to discuss with their parents. The friendships of adolescence are more intimate than those of earlier years, partly because adolescents are better able to consider another person's point of view.*

when young people feel the need to separate from their parents, making friendships likely to be closer and more intense in adolescence than at any other time in the life span (Berndt, 1982).

Adolescents tend to choose friends who have similar attitudes, especially with regard to two central areas in their lives, school and teen culture. This isn't surprising, since it's easy to imagine the arguments that would take place between a teen who's a conscientious student and one who cuts classes or between one who goes out to bars on Saturday nights and another who goes to choir practice. Friends usually like the same music, dress alike, do the same things after school, and have similar drinking and drug-taking patterns.

People tend to pick friends who are already like themselves, and then they influence each other to become more alike (Berndt, 1982). Similarity is more important to friendship in adolescence than it is later in life, probably because teens are struggling to differentiate themselves from their parents and, as a result, need support from people who are like them in certain key ways (Weiss & Lowenthal, 1975).

One explanation for the fact that friendships are closer in adolescence than in earlier years rests on cognitive development. Adolescents are better able to express their thoughts and feelings and share them with friends; they're also better able to consider another person's point of view, and so they can understand their friends' thoughts and feelings more sensitively now.

## ACHIEVING SEXUAL IDENTITY

The peer group's transition from same-sex membership to membership of both boys and girls reflects one of the most profound changes in an adolescent's identity. During these years most young people move from close friendships with people of the same sex to friendships and romantic attachments with members of the other sex. This is a healthy and normal progression on the route to adulthood. Seeing oneself as a sexual being, coming to terms with one's sexual stirrings, and developing an intimate, romantic relationship are important aspects of the achievement of sexual identity.

Young people's images of themselves and their relationships with peers and parents are now bound up with their sexuality. At this age sexual activity—from casual kissing, to necking and petting, to genital contact—fulfills a number of important needs, probably the least of which is physical pleasure. More important is the ability of sexual interaction to enhance communication, to exemplify a search for new experience, to prove one's maturity, to be in tune with the peer group, to find relief from other pressures, and to investigate the mysteries of love.

### Communicating with Parents about Sex

Many parent-teen conflicts are about sex. Vicky's parents don't like her boyfriend, don't want her to see him when no adults are in the home, and don't want her to stay out so late with him. Protective of their daughter, they are somewhat uncomfortable with their own sexuality and are extremely unsure of how to handle their little girl's transformation into a sexually mature young woman.



Parents' values *are* more liberal now than they used to be. Today's parents are less likely to punish or cast out a pregnant daughter than they are to help her. Today's parents may worry about where to put their daughter's boyfriend when she brings him home from college for a weekend; 20 years ago they would not have admitted that they knew that she was sexually involved with him (and she would not have told them).

Yet communication about sex still remains a problem for most parents and young people (Coles & Stokes, 1985). Many high school students believe that their parents don't know how to talk about sex. Only a few young people say that their parents have discussed masturbation, birth control, or sexually transmitted diseases with them. Fewer than one girl out of three and one boy out of four have heard about either birth control or sexually transmitted diseases from their parents, and even fewer have been told by their parents about masturbation (Sorensen, 1973). When parents and children do discuss sex, the conversations are usually abstract rather than dealing with specifics. College students report that in childhood, their questions about sex were more likely to be answered satisfactorily than their inquiries during puberty and adolescence—when sexual curiosity and anxiety are at their peak (Shipman, 1968).

In one extensive survey of contemporary teenagers' views on, and experience with, sex, researchers interviewed 100 teenagers and distributed over 1000 detailed questionnaires. The survey found that what guidance parents do give is overwhelmingly positive. Only 3 percent of the teenagers reported being told by their parents that sex was not normal and healthy. Yet communication remains difficult, obscure, and confusing. Parents often think that they have said more than their children have actually heard. One girl, already a mother at age 15, reported, "[My mother] told me that she'd told me to come to her when it was time for me to have sex and she'd get me some birth control, but she must have said it *very softly*" (Coles & Stokes, 1985, p. 37).

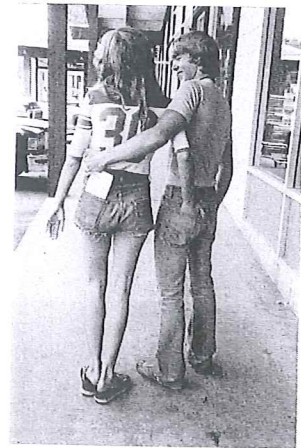
Adolescents' ever-present ambivalence can also be seen in their feelings about discussing sex with their parents. Although they say that they would like to be open and frank with their parents about their sexual behavior, they don't like to be questioned and they tend to consider their sexual activities nobody else's business. But when parents are obviously aware of their children's sexual activities and ignore them, the children sometimes become puzzled and angry. Said one 16-year-old girl:

I'm not going to pretend that I don't know what's happening. If my daughter comes in at five in the morning, her skirt backwards and wearing some guy's sweater, I'm not going to ask her, "Did you have a nice time at the movies?" . . . I don't plan to fail! (Sorensen, 1973, p. 61)

### Sexual Practices and Attitudes

The problems inherent in describing contemporary sexual practices are illustrated by what happened when a pair of researchers arrived at Vicky and Jason's high school to interview a sample of students. During his interview Jason denied ever masturbating even though, in fact, he does masturbate frequently. Then he told the interviewer that during the past month he had touched his girlfriend's breasts and genital area. He had not.

Vicky was also selected to take part in the research, but her parents were



(© Eric Kroll 1980/Taurus Photos)

*Sexuality brings a new dimension to adolescents' relationships. Most teenagers are simultaneously excited and uncertain about this new development in their lives.*

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among several who refused to grant permission for their children's participation. Every time a sample's membership strays from being perfectly random, some sort of statistical bias is introduced into the results, and so Vicky's deliberate absence matters. When Vicky's parents refused to consent to the interview, another girl, whose parents were agreeable, was interviewed instead. At least some of her answers must have differed from the ones that Vicky would have given, but since we don't know what Vicky would have said, we cannot say to what extent the results were changed.

We see, then, that we have to be careful about interpreting statistics about sexual practices. At the same time, we cannot simply dismiss them. Dreyer (1982) compared studies and found that in the early 1970s, 50 percent of boys and 30 percent of girls under 15 years of age said that they masturbated. Studies done in the late 1970s reported that 70 percent of boys and 45 percent of girls under the age of 15 admitted to masturbation. These figures suggest that a significant change did take place, even though we cannot be certain how much of the change was in behavior and how much was due to a willingness to speak up. Some theorists, however, insist that by the time children are 15 years old, the sexual urge is so powerful that it cannot be repressed and that masturbation is universal. The 30 percent of boys who said that they did not masturbate were, by this thesis, simply lying. Science, of course, has long been familiar with the temptation to dismiss data that contradict belief, but treating data cautiously is not to be confused with treating data with contempt. Dreyer's compilation makes it hard to claim either that masturbation is universal or that it is the practice of an oversexed few. Many people insist on one or the other of these two propositions, but they do not rely on data to support their positions.

One recent survey found that masturbation is not universal, but that by age 18 well over half of boys say that they have masturbated, although only a minority of girls admit to it. Surprisingly for this "sexually liberated" era, teenagers continue to regard masturbation as shameful, with fewer than one-third saying that they felt no guilt when they masturbated (Coles & Stokes, 1985).

This finding suggests that opinion has changed more radically among sex educators than among teenagers. Contemporary educators stress that masturbation cannot result in physical harm, that it helps people learn how to give and receive sexual pleasure, and that it provides a way to fulfill sexual desire without entering into a relationship for which the person is not emotionally ready (Barbach, 1975; Kinsey et al., 1953; LoPiccolo & Lobitz, 1972).

### Sexual Preference

It is in adolescence that a person's *sexual orientation* is usually expressed, whether that person will—as most people do—become sexually interested in members of the other sex (*heterosexual*) or in persons of the same sex (*homosexual*). Many young people have one or more homosexual experiences during their growing-up years. This usually occurs before age 15 and usually among boys (Dreyer, 1982). Few, however, go on to make this a regular pattern. One report indicated that of the adolescents studied, only 3 percent of the boys and 2 percent of the girls had ongoing homosexual relationships, even though about 15 percent of the boys and 10 percent of the girls had had such a contact

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during adolescence. Despite the fact that homosexuality is more visible today than it used to be, with more people openly declaring their sexual interest in people of the same sex, research indicates that homosexual behavior has been stable or has declined over the past 30 years (Chilman, 1980).

Teenagers, especially boys, are fairly intolerant of homosexuals. Three-quarters of teenagers consider female homosexuality "disgusting", and 84 percent say that male homosexual acts are repugnant. Neither sex is particularly liberal when it comes to the idea of having a gay friend, but half the girls say that they would remain friends with a girl who said that she was gay. Only 35 percent of boys say that they would remain friends with a boy who admitted to being gay. In interviews many boys, but no girls, voiced an irrational hatred of male homosexuals (Coles & Stokes, 1985). The reason for this hatred has long puzzled observers, but it is widely voiced and some boys even brag about it, as though having feelings of hatred and brutality toward male homosexuals were a badge of masculinity.

There are many theories about why homosexuality occurs, but not enough research has been done to support any of them. One study found that before a youth considers himself a homosexual, certain significant events have usually taken place over a period of time, including early homosexual sex play, seeking out homosexual partners in adolescence, and "coming out," or participating in the gay world (Roesler & Deisher, 1972).

The medical community has recently changed its attitude toward homosexuality. In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association (APA) voted to remove homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders. No longer classifying it as an illness, the APA now designates it as a "psychosexual disorder" but considers that definition applicable only to homosexuals who want to change their sexual orientation.

### Heterosexual Attitudes and Behaviors

From the early 1920s through the late 1970s we witnessed a sexual *evolution*, rather than a *revolution*, both in what people do sexually and in how they feel about these behaviors. There has been a steady trend toward acceptance of more sexual activity in more situations, with the two biggest changes being the approval of premarital sex in a loving relationship and a decline in, although not an end to, the double standard. Some signs may be pointing to a plateau or even a reversal of this trend, but meanwhile, like the rest of the population, today's teenagers are more sexually active and liberal than the generation before them.

**Attitudes** Attitudinal changes are even more striking than behavioral ones. In 1969, most studies showed that fewer than half of college students approved of sex before marriage (Mussen, Conger, & Kagan, 1969); by 1979, 90 percent of college men and 83 percent of college women approved (Mahoney, 1983). Today's high school students have similar attitudes: most teenage boys say that they don't want to marry a virgin, and only about half the girls want to be virgins when they marry (Coles & Stokes, 1985).

The double standard appears to be dead among teenagers, at least if what they tell researchers is true. An in-depth survey of behavior considered acceptable for boys and for girls found almost perfect agreement. There was a very small tendency to say that boys could engage in more casual sex than

girls should, but otherwise (in the cases of steady dating, love, and planning marriage) both sexes are held to the same standard. The absence of a double standard, of course, does not imply the absence of any standards. Most teens disapprove of sexual intercourse between strangers, between friends, between couples who are going together, and even between couples who are in love. Only when a couple are planning to get married did a majority of teenagers surveyed approve of their having intercourse (Coles & Stokes, 1985).

There is often a discrepancy between what people, adolescents included, say about sex and what they *do*. The same survey that found such a conservative attitude toward who should have sex also reported that 50 percent of the boys had had intercourse by age 13 and that two-thirds of the girls had by age 15 (Coles & Stokes, 1985). Another study of 3500 junior high and high school students found that many adolescents hold "values and attitudes consistent with responsible sexual conduct, but not all of them are able to translate these attitudes into personal behavior" (Zabin, Hirsch, Smith, & Hardy, 1984, p. 185). For example, 83 percent of sexually active young people give a "best age for first intercourse" older than the age at which they experienced it themselves, and 88 percent of young mothers give an older "best age for first birth" than was true for them. The researchers concluded that helping such teens act according to the values they already hold may be productive.

**Behaviors** One of the most dramatic sexual shifts in our society is the lowering of the age at first intercourse reported by adolescents. Even though most adolescents are not promiscuous and have a sexual relationship with only one person at a time, the fact that they begin their sexual careers so early means that they will, over their teenage years, have more sexual partners than their parents did.

The biggest changes in adolescents' sexual behavior have occurred among girls, who are now more sexually active than they used to be. The sexes are still not identical: girls are likely to have their first sexual intercourse with a steady boyfriend, while boys are likely to have theirs with someone they know casually; a girl's first partner is usually 3 years older than she is, while a boy's first partner tends to be about a year older (Dreyer, 1982; Zelnik, Kantner, & Ford, 1981; Zelnik & Shah, 1983).

Over the past 50 years or so, members of both sexes have shown a marked increase in their reporting of premarital sex. A slight decrease shown by college men during the 1970s, however, may be linked to the decline of the double standard. In the past, boys were more likely to have intercourse with girls they were not in love with—prostitutes or girls from lower social classes. As more girls from all social classes accepted the idea of sex within a loving relationship, many boys found that they were not ready to make such commitments, and they discovered that partners were not so available for them. Therefore, they were having less sex (Mahoney, 1983).

Earlier we pointed out adolescents' disapproval of promiscuity. Their behavior seems to be in line with their attitudes: of sexually active 15- to 19-year-olds interviewed by Hass (1979), 20 percent of the boys and 45 percent of the girls reported having had only one partner, and only 24 percent of the boys and 6 percent of the girls said that they had had more than five. In general, then, teenagers tend to enter into sexual relationships that have meaning for them, and they usually are faithful to those bonds. While teenagers seem to

be having sex earlier, few take it casually. To most adolescents, sex is important more for its emotional context than for its physical content, as it is to most adults as well.

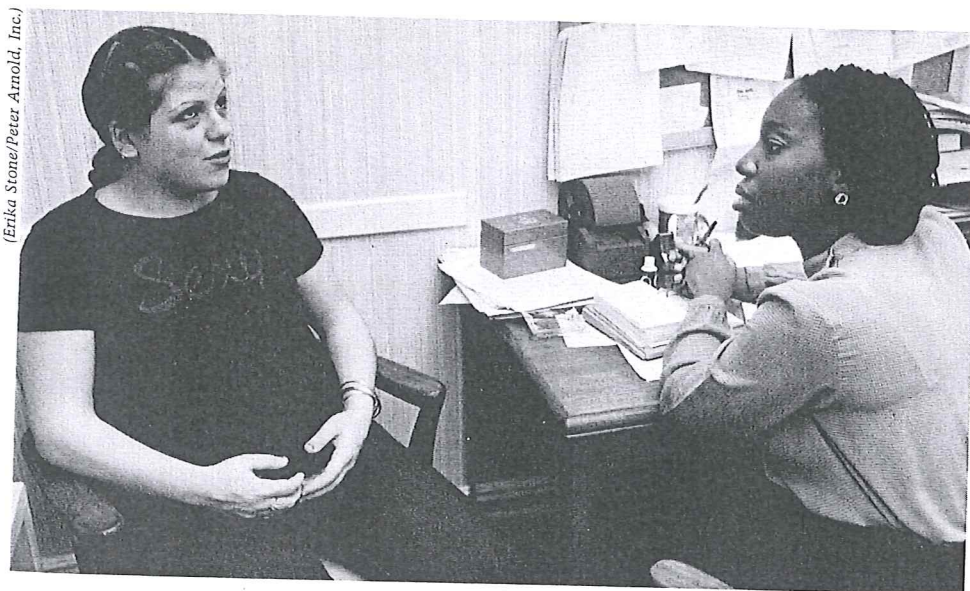
## *Problems of Adolescence*

Although most people weather adolescence well, many serious problems do make their first appearance during these years. (Several of these problems have already been discussed in previous chapters.) Some warning signs of potential trouble are dropping out of school, abusing alcohol and other drugs, and getting into trouble with the law. The inability to handle the responsibility associated with sexual behavior sometimes results in the contraction of a sexually transmitted disease (Chapter 15) or in an unplanned pregnancy. Serious emotional illness, such as depression or schizophrenia, often comes to the surface in adolescence (Chapters 2 and 13). It is important to remember that these problems are not "normal," not "typical." Instead, they are signs that a young person is in trouble and needs help. The danger in assuming that turmoil is a normal, necessary part of adolescence is that we will fail to recognize when a young person is in trouble and will fail to give that person needed help.

### PREGNANCY

#### Statistics

In Chapter 15 we saw that adolescents are sometimes slow to realize that they can now bear or sire children. The birthrate among teenagers in the United States is one of the highest in the world. If current trends are not reversed, 4 out of 10 of today's 14-year-old girls will become pregnant at least once while still in their teens, 2 out of 10 will give birth at least once in these years, and



(Erika Stone/Peter Arnold, Inc.)

*The United States is alone among the industrial nations in seeing a steady rise in teenage pregnancies. Sexual activity among teenagers is similar in various industrial nations, but education about birth control and services providing it are less widespread in the United States. Girls are at highest risk of becoming pregnant in the first few months after they begin having intercourse.*

## A CHILD'S WORLD . . . AROUND THE WORLD



Why does the United States do so badly? In the Netherlands the pregnancy rate for girls aged 15 to 19 is 14 per 1000. In the United States it is 96 per 1000. The abortion rate for the same group in the Netherlands is about 8 per 1000,

while in the United States it is over 60 per 1000. Are Dutch girls less sexually active than girls in this country? No. The two countries have similar rates of early sexual intercourse. Swedish girls are much more advanced sexually than American girls, but Sweden's pregnancy rate is also well below that of the United States: 35 pregnancies per 1000 fifteen- to nineteen-year-olds, with about 27 abortions per 1000.

Some Americans assume that our failure to keep pregnancy rates down, compared with the success of European countries, is due to the fact that the United States has an unusually large poor population, especially a large population of poor blacks. It's true that the industrial nations of Europe have no comparable level of urban impoverishment. However, the rates of pregnancies and abortions among white American teenagers are still far above the rates in European countries. (Our rate is also double that of Canada.) Many Americans believe that federal welfare programs, especially Aid to Families with Dependent Children, encourage early and frequent pregnancies, but other industrial countries are even more generous in their support of poor mothers. Yet their pregnancy rates among teenagers are much lower. Unemployment among American teenagers is also popularly cited as a reason for the high pregnancy rate, but unemployment among teenagers is a serious problem in the other countries too.

Source: E. F. Jones et al., 1985.

There are differences between the United States and these other countries that might explain our higher pregnancy rate among adolescents. One is the confidentiality of service to teenagers. In Sweden it is forbidden to inform parents that their teenage children have sought contraceptives, and in the Netherlands such information is kept from parents if teenagers request this. Another difference concerns price. Contraceptives are provided free of charge to adolescents in Britain, France, and Sweden. In the Netherlands contraceptives are provided free by family doctors or for a small charge by clinics.

Europe's industrial countries also provide extensive sex education. Sweden's compulsory curriculum includes sex education at all grade levels. Dutch schools have no special sex education programs, but the mass media and private groups provide extensive information about contraceptive techniques, and surveys show that nearly all Dutch teenagers are well informed about birth control.

The primary policy ambitions behind the various countries' decisions to encourage the use of contraceptives include a wish to prevent teenage girls from becoming pregnant and an eagerness to keep the abortion rate among teenagers from rising. This second concern has proved particularly important in persuading conservative groups to support the policy.

The programs that support the successes of European countries have all been proposed and debated in the United States. They generally fail to be implemented because of a concern that such programs might seem to endorse sexual activity among teenagers. The irony is that, as a result, we are the only industrial nation with an increasing pregnancy rate among teenagers.

more than 1 in 7 will undergo at least one abortion during adolescence (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1981).

During the 1970s the birthrate among adolescents declined, largely because of the availability of abortion. Still, teenagers account for 46 percent of all out-of-wedlock births, even though they constitute only 8 percent of sexually active fertile women. Eight in ten pregnancies among unmarried teenagers and two out of three out-of-wedlock births in this age group are unintended and unwanted.

Most unmarried teenagers choose to end their pregnancies by having an abortion; they account for one-third of all the abortions performed in this

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country. Of all pregnancies that occur among women aged 19 and younger, 38 percent are ended by abortion, 22 percent result in babies born out of wedlock, 17 percent yield babies born to young parents who have married *after* the woman became pregnant, 13 percent end in miscarriage, and 10 percent are conceived within a marriage (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1981).

More than 9 out of 10 teenagers who do carry their babies to term choose, at least at first, to keep them rather than give them up for adoption or place them in foster care. Once these young mothers discover how demanding caring for a baby is, they may leave the infant unattended for increasingly long periods. Such children often enter the state's foster care system. Years may pass before the child's final status is settled. More than 1.6 million children aged 4 and younger have mothers who were teenagers when they gave birth, and 1.3 million children have mothers who are still teenagers. More than half of these adolescent mothers are not married (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1981).

There are fewer "shotgun" weddings among teenagers than there used to be. This is just as well, since teenage parents are 2 to 3 times as likely to split up as people who marry later in life or who become parents when they're in their twenties (McCarthy & Menken, 1979). Many young girls raise their children themselves, whether they get married or not; others turn them over to their own mothers.

### Consequences

The consequences of parenthood in adolescence are enormous for the young mothers and fathers, their babies, and society at large. Teenage girls are more prone to several complications of pregnancy, including anemia, prolonged labor, and toxemia (McKenry, Walters, & Johnson, 1979). Young mothers are twice as likely to bear low-birthweight and premature babies, 2 to 3 times more likely to have babies who die in the first year, and 2.4 times more likely to bear children with neurological defects than older mothers (McKenry et al., 1979). Abundant research indicates that a major reason for the health problems of teenage mothers and their children is social, not medical. In two large-scale studies done in university hospitals, one in this country and one in Denmark, teenagers' pregnancies turned out better than those of women in any other age group, leading the researchers to conclude that "if early, regular, and high quality medical care is made available to pregnant teenagers, the likelihood is that pregnancies and deliveries in this age group will not entail any higher medical risk than those of women in their twenties" (Mednick, Baker, & Sutton-Smith, 1979, p. 17). (See also Chilman, 1982; Mednick et al., 1979; and B. Zuckerman et al., 1983.)

Even with the best care, however, and the best of physical outcomes, the fate of teenage parents and their children is often not a happy one. Eighty percent of pregnant teens aged 17 and under, and 90 percent of those aged 15 and under, never finish high school; as a result, they often become unemployable and go on welfare, beginning or continuing a cycle of dependency that saps their motivation to achieve success in their work or their personal lives (Furstenberg, 1976; Jaslow, 1982). Obviously, motherhood in adolescence can have disastrous effects on a girl's life, so much so that unmarried pregnant girls attempt suicide more often than other girls their age (McKenry et al., 1979).

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The young father's life is also affected, of course. A boy who becomes a father before the age of 18 is only two-fifths as likely to graduate from high school as a boy who postpones parenthood until a later age (Card & Wise, 1978). The children of these young parents are more likely than other children to have low IQ scores and to do poorly in school. Furthermore, when they grow up, they are more likely to become teenage parents themselves (Baldwin & Cain, 1980).

### Why Teenagers Get Pregnant

Why, in an age of improved methods of contraception, do so many girls get pregnant? Young mothers do not differ much from their classmates in their sexual practices, suggesting that they did not engage in sex because they wanted to have a baby at this time in their lives, but instead become pregnant by accident (Furstenberg, 1976).

Girls are particularly at risk for becoming pregnant in the first few months after they begin having intercourse, with half of first premarital pregnancies occurring in the first 6 months after beginning intercourse and with one out of five occurring in the first month (Zabin, Kantner, & Zelnik, 1979). Teenagers seldom seek advice about contraceptives until they have been sexually active for a year or more. The younger a girl is when she begins to have sex, the longer she waits before seeking help with contraception.

Social class affects both premarital sexual activity and the use of contraceptives. The teenage daughters of parents who did not finish high school are more likely to engage in sexual intercourse than the daughters of better-educated parents. Furthermore, they are less likely to use any kind of birth control method the first time they have intercourse and are less likely to use a birth control method regularly after that, and when they do try to prevent pregnancy, they are less likely to use a medically sound method, such as an oral contraceptive or a diaphragm (Ford, Zelnik, & Kantner, 1979).

Pregnancy among teenagers is usually the result of using no method of contraception at all. Shah, Zelnik, and Kantner (1975) asked almost 1000 sexually active teenagers about their contraceptive practices, and 4 out of 5 indicated that they had engaged in intercourse without using any means of birth control. Of these, 7 out of 10 said that they did not use a contraceptive because they thought that they could not become pregnant. Some were ignorant of the facts of reproduction, thinking that they could not conceive because they were too young, because they had sex infrequently, or because they had sex at a "safe" time during the month. Even though more than half of all teenage girls have taken courses in sex education in school, only one out of three knows the timespan during the month when she is most likely to become pregnant (Zelnik, 1979).

The personal fable (explained in Chapter 15) also plays its part. About one girl in three believes that a girl who does not want a baby will not have one (Sorensen, 1973). Said one 18-year-old:

Like when I'm having sex, I don't really connect it with getting pregnant, cause I've never been pregnant, you know, and a lot of my friends have but I just can't picture it happening to me. And like you really don't connect it, you know, until



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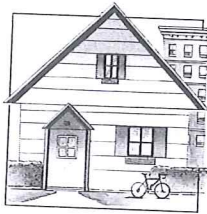
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## A CHILD'S WORLD . . . THE EVERYDAY WORLD



Because pregnancy in adolescence can be so devastating to mother, father, and baby, it's up to parents, educators, and government officials to do everything within their power to help teenagers avoid becoming children who bear children.

The following guidelines are based on findings from research studies and recommendations by those who work with adolescents:

- Parents should discuss sex with children from an early age, instilling healthy, positive attitudes and being "askable," so that their children will feel free to go to them with questions. Such children are likely to delay sexual activity until an appropriate time (Jaslow, 1982).
- Schools, churches, and the media should offer realistic sex education, including information about risks and consequences of pregnancy in adolescence, different kinds of methods of contraception, and places where teenagers can obtain family planning services (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1981).
- Counseling programs that include peers should be instituted to encourage sexually active teenage girls to use contraceptives, since research has indicated that they are more responsive to girls close to their own age than they are to nurses who act as counselors (Jay, DuRant, Shoffitt, Linder, & Litt, 1984).
- Community programs encouraging teenagers to delay sexual activity should be instituted. Such programs can help young people stand up against peer pressure urging them to be more sexually active

than they want to be, can teach adolescents ways to say "no" gracefully, and can offer guidance in problem solving (Howard, 1983).

- Adolescents' use of birth control services should be kept confidential. Young teenagers cite this as the single most important consideration in choosing a birth control clinic (Zabin & Clark, 1981). Many young people say that they would not go to a clinic that insisted on notifying their parents or obtaining consent from them (Jaslow, 1982).
- Specific messages that need to be communicated to young people include the following (S. Gordon & Everly, 1985):

If someone says to you, "If you really love me, you'll have sex with me," it's always a line.

Sex is never a test of love.

It's not romantic to have sex without using a means of birth control—it's stupid.

"No" is a perfectly good oral contraceptive.

It is perfectly normal not to have sex.

Machismo is hurting and exploiting people to make a boy feel more secure.

More than 85 percent of boys who impregnate teenage girls will eventually abandon them.

Girls who feel that they don't amount to anything unless some guy loves them won't amount to much even after they are loved—if they get that far.

The most important components of a relationship are love, respect, caring, having a sense of humor, and honest communication without violating private thoughts and experiences.

once you've been pregnant. Because when it's never happened you say, "Why should it happen?" or, "It's never happened yet," you know. You always look at the other person and say, "It happened to them, but it'll never happen to me." (Sorensen, 1973, p. 324).

Another important reason for not using a birth control method is the unavailability of contraceptives to teenage girls. In one study, about 3 out of 10 girls said that they did not know where to get contraceptives, thought that contraceptives were too expensive, did not have any contraceptives with them at the time of intercourse, or did not know about contraceptives (Shah et al., 1975).

Some girls are ignorant of the most effective methods, especially the diaphragm; some are afraid that their parents will find their contraceptives. Some are reluctant to interfere with the spontaneity of the sex act by appearing too

well prepared. Some feel that using a method of contraception is too much trouble, or they forget to take adequate measures. Some feel that it is their boyfriend's responsibility. Since abortions are legal and accessible, some feel that they can use this alternative afterward.

The saying, "I'm not that kind of girl," sums up a major reason why many girls do not use a birth control method (Cassell, 1984). These girls feel that sexual intercourse is wrong and that they should not be engaging in it. They either deny to themselves that they are sexually active or keep making resolutions that "this night is going to be different." They avoid the appearance, even to themselves, of planning to have sex. They save their self-respect by considering themselves as having been so swept away by love that they could not help themselves. Unpremeditated sex is acceptable, while carefully planned sex is something that only "bad" girls engage in.

The guiltier a girl feels about having premarital sex, the less likely she is to use an effective method of contraception (Herold & Goodwin, 1981). A girl who feels guilty is embarrassed to go to a birth control clinic and to have an internal physical examination, she is less likely than one who does not feel guilty to get information about birth control by reading on her own, and she is more apt to think that oral contraceptives are hard to obtain.

Although many girls are still confused about methods of contraception, boys today are less likely to assume responsibility for preventing pregnancy than boys in previous generations. In one survey more than 60 percent of boys who had had intercourse during the preceding month said that they never used a condom (Sorensen, 1973), once the most commonly used contraceptive among young people. Some boys are afraid that if they bring up the possibility of pregnancy, the girl will change her mind about having sexual intercourse. Education directed toward adolescent boys, emphasizing their responsibility in preventing conception, is one way to stem the rising rate of pregnancy among teenagers, especially since so many boys have expressed their belief in nonexploitative relationships (Scales, 1977).

### Needs of Unmarried Teenage Parents

Any pregnant woman needs to be reassured about her ability to bear and care for a child and about her continued attractiveness. She needs to express her anxieties and to receive sympathy and reassurance. The unmarried teenager is especially vulnerable. Whatever she decides to do about the pregnancy, she has conflicting feelings. At the time a pregnant girl needs the most emotional support, she often gets the least. Her boyfriend may be frightened by the responsibility and turn away from her. Her family may be angry with her. She may be isolated from her friends by not being able to attend school. To alleviate these pressures, the pregnant teenager should be able to discuss her problems with an interested, sympathetic, and knowledgeable counselor.

Programs that help pregnant girls stay in school can help them learn about both job and parenting skills, as they proceed along the path of achieving identity. In New York City, for example, a number of high schools operate day care centers for the children of unmarried students in order to help these young women continue their schooling. They also offer courses in parenting for the mothers and occasionally for the fathers (Purnick, 1984).

The value of training young people to be parents showed up in another

program, in which 80 low-income teenage mothers received training either through a biweekly visit to their homes (by a graduate student and a teenage aide) or through paid job training as teachers' aides in the infants' nursery of a medical school. When compared with babies in a control group, the infants in both parent-training groups did better. They weighed more, had more advanced motor skills, and interacted better with their mothers. The mothers who worked as teachers' aides and their children showed the most gains. These mothers had lower rates of additional pregnancies, more of them returned to work or school, and their babies showed the best progress (T. Field, Widmayer, Greenberg, & Stoller, 1982).

While the major impact of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy is felt by the mother, a teenage father's life is often affected as well. A boy who feels emotionally committed to the girl he has impregnated also has decisions to make. He may pay for her abortion, at some financial sacrifice. Or he may take the more long-lasting step of marrying his girlfriend, a move that will affect his educational and career plans. The adolescent father also needs someone to talk to, to help him sort out his own feelings and make the best decision for himself, his sweetheart, and the new life they have conceived.

## JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

There are two kinds of juvenile delinquents. One is the *status offender*. This is the young person who has been truant, has run away from home, has been sexually active, has not abided by the parents' rules, or has done something else that is ordinarily not considered criminal—except when done by a minor. If the American folk hero Huckleberry Finn were alive and active today, he would fit perfectly in this category.

*Status offender* A juvenile charged with committing an act that would not be considered criminal if the offender were older (for example, being truant, running away from home, or engaging in sexual intercourse).

The second kind of juvenile delinquent is one who has done something that is considered a crime no matter who commits it—like robbery, rape, or murder. If the young person is under the age of 16 or 18 (depending on the state), he or she usually is treated differently from the way an adult criminal is treated. The court proceedings are likely to be secret, the offender is more likely to be seen and sentenced by a judge rather than a jury, and the punishment is usually more lenient.

### Statistics

Between 1978 and 1982, the number of arrests of people under the age of 18 dropped, especially for crimes against property, possibly reflecting a smaller number of people in this age group in the population (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1983). Still, young people in this age group are responsible for more than their share of certain kinds of crimes. Although persons under the age of 18 constitute only 28 percent of the total population, they account for a much higher percentage of such offenses as vandalism, burglary, car theft, other kinds of theft, and arson, as shown in Figure 16-4 on page 538 (Conger & Petersen, 1984). Young people living in urban and suburban areas are more likely to be arrested than those living in rural areas (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1983).

Boys are much more likely to get into trouble with the law than girls. For



**Figure 16-4** Arrests of persons under 18 years of age and between 18 and 24 years of age, as a percentage of all arrests. (Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation and Bureau of the Census.)

years, four or five boys were arrested for every girl, but in recent years the ratio has dropped to 3.5 to 1. Still, girls' crime rates are similar to boys' only for such status offenses as running away from home, incorrigibility, and engaging in sexual intercourse. Boys commit more of virtually all other delinquent offenses, especially the violent ones. The increase among girls of such behaviors as drug use and running away from home apparently leads to the kinds of activities that support them, like shoplifting, robbery, larceny, and prostitution (Conger & Petersen, 1984).

### The Delinquent's Family

Several parental characteristics are associated with juvenile delinquency. One study found that antisocial behavior in adolescents is closely related to parents' inability to keep track of their children's activities and to discipline them. The researchers concluded: "It seems that parents of delinquents are indifferent trackers of their sons' whereabouts, the kind of companions they keep, or the type of activities in which they engage" (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984, p. 1305). These investigators also found that parents of delinquent children are less likely to punish rule-breaking with anything more severe than a lecture or a threat.

These findings support the discussion earlier in this chapter about adolescent rebellion. Much of the tension may arise over the conflict between adolescents' desire for prompt gratification and parents' desire to socialize their children. When parents cannot or will not fill their socializing role, their children become more of a problem for society, not less of one.

An extensive analysis of studies of juvenile delinquency also reported that the strongest predictor of delinquency is the family's supervision and discipline of the children. Especially interesting was the finding that the poorest predictor is socioeconomic status (Loeber & Dishion, 1983).

### Personal Characteristics of Delinquents

What makes one child get into trouble, when another who lives on the same street, or even in the same family, remains law-abiding? Not surprisingly, children who get into trouble early in life are more likely to get into further trouble later on than children who do not. Stealing, lying, truancy, and poor educational achievement are all important predictors of future delinquency (Loeber & Dishion, 1983).

One study of 55 delinquents who had been patients at the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute concluded that delinquency is not a class phenomenon, but a result of emotional turmoil that affects young people from all levels of society. Delinquents from affluent families get taken to psychiatrists, while the ones from poor families are booked by the police. The study identified four different kinds of delinquents: *impulsive* delinquents, who act without thinking and have no controls; *narcissistic* delinquents, who focus only on themselves, feel that they have been hurt, and see their only way of maintaining self-esteem as getting back at the people who have hurt them; *emotionally empty* delinquents, who are passive, unfeeling, and loners; and *depressed* delinquents, who act out to relieve the pain of their internal conflicts (Offer, Ostrov, and Marohn, 1972).



*Delinquents often come from families that provide little supervision and discipline, and sometimes these young people respond well to interest shown by outsiders. The concern shown by a genuinely interested police officer or probation officer can sometimes turn a young person's life around.*

Other research has related physical causes to delinquency. One study divided the boys at a correctional school into two groups: violent offenders, who had committed assaults, rape, and murder; and less violent or nonviolent offenders, who had set fires, been in fistfights, or threatened people. The violent youths had more serious medical histories and more medical problems, had been the victims of more physical abuse, and had shown more neurological symptoms, like blacking out and falling (often symptoms of epilepsy). Furthermore, they had more psychiatric symptoms, like paranoia (an obsessive conviction that other people wanted to hurt them), illusions, and hallucinations. Identifying medical causes as contributing factors to delinquency may make it possible to treat some youthful offenders with medications such as anticonvulsants and antidepressants.

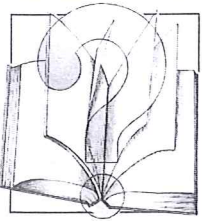
### **Impact of Juvenile Delinquency**

Dealing with juvenile delinquency involves answering two questions: "How can we help young people lead productive, law-abiding lives?" and "How can we protect society?" So far, the answers to both questions are unclear.

Many critics are unhappy with the way juvenile delinquency is handled. They believe that we would have less crime if we treated young offenders the way we treat adults, basing sentencing on the seriousness of the crime rather than the age of the offender. Others maintain that young offenders can be turned away from a life of crime by sentences that consider their youth, bolstered by social solutions such as probation and counseling. The former point of view seems to be gaining ground and probably will lead to changes in the way young offenders are dealt with (Chambers, 1975).

One longitudinal analysis of the police and court records of more than

A CHILD'S WORLD . . .  
**AND YOU**



- When teenagers complain that their parents "don't understand" them, do you think that they mean that their parents do not comprehend them or do not sympathize with them? Give reasons.
- Men used to defend the double standard of sexual morality by pointing out that only women get pregnant. Since this is still true and since pregnancy among teenagers is a national problem, should teenage girls still be urged to follow a stricter standard of behavior than teenage boys?
- Which of the following choices do you think is usually best for a teenage girl who discovers that she is pregnant: marry the father and raise the child, stay single but raise the child, give the baby to adoptive parents, or have an abortion?
- What should a judge do with a first-time juvenile offender who has committed a felony: let the offender off with a warning, investigate the offender's family background before deciding, investigate the offender's socioeconomic status before deciding, or sentence the offender to a term in a penal institution?

6000 adults in Racine, Wisconsin, showed that those adults who as juveniles, especially boys, had been punished for delinquency often got into more serious and more frequent trouble afterward and that girls didn't get worse, but that they didn't get better either. Dismayingly, the efforts of social workers and social programs didn't help decrease the seriousness of crimes committed later (L. W. Shannon, 1982).

These researchers also concluded that it was almost impossible to predict which juveniles would go on to commit crimes in adulthood, except for a relatively small "hard-core" group of serious offenders, who had persistent contacts with the police up till age 18. Through checking the records and interviewing people in their mid-twenties or early thirties, the researchers determined that more than 90 percent of the men and some 65 to 70 percent of the women had engaged in some misbehavior in adolescence. Of those who had been stopped by the police or had done things they could have been stopped for, only 5.3 percent of the older ones and 8.1 percent of the younger ones had a record for committing a felony afterward.

Why did most of these people become law-abiding? Most said that they had realized that what seemed like fun in their early years was no longer appropriate. Fewer than 8 percent said that they were afraid of getting caught. It seems, then, that maturity does bring valuable reappraisals of attitudes and behavior for most people and that society must continue to explore ways to help those who cannot climb out of the morass of delinquency and alienation on their own.

### *Ego Strengths of Adolescents*

Normal adolescence for young people like Jason and Vicky is exciting: all things appear possible; one is on the threshold of love and life's work and participation in the broader society; and one is getting to know the most interesting person in the whole world, oneself. Yet few adolescents recognize and value their positive attributes.

**Table 16-3** *Categories of Adolescents' Strengths*

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*Health.* Being in general good health, promoting and maintaining health, and having energy and vitality.

*Aesthetic strengths.* The ability to enjoy and recognize beauty in nature, objects, or people.

*Special aptitudes or resources.* Special abilities or capacities such as having special skills to repair things; having the ability to make things grow, or a "green thumb"; and having ability in mathematics or music, for example.

*Employment satisfaction.* Enjoyment of work or duties, the ability to get along with coworkers, pride in work, and great satisfaction with work.

*Social strengths.* Having sufficient friends of both sexes, using humor in social relations, and having the ability to entertain others.

*Spectator sports.* Attending or being interested in football or baseball games, for example, and reading books, plays, and so forth.

*Strengths through family and others.* Getting along with brothers and sisters and parents, being able to talk over problems with the father or mother, feeling close or loyal to the family, and so forth.

*Imaginative and creative strengths.* Use of creativity and imagination in relation to school, home, or the family, and expression of creative capacity through writing, for example.

*Dependability and responsibility strengths.* Being able to keep appointments, being trusted by other people, keeping promises, and persevering in bringing a task to its conclusion.

*Spiritual strengths.* Attending church activities and meetings, being a member of a church, relying on religious beliefs, feeling close to God, and using prayer or meditation, for example.

*Organizational strengths.* Being able to lead clubs, teams, or organizations and to give or carry out orders; having long- or short-range plans; and so forth.

*Intellectual strengths.* Interest in new ideas from people, books, or other sources; enjoyment of learning; interest in the continuing development of the mind, and so forth.

*Other strengths.* The ability to take risks oneself, liking to adventure or pioneer, and the ability to grow through defeat or crisis, for example.

*Emotional strengths.* The ability to give and receive warmth, affection, or love; the capacity to "take" anger from others and to be aware of the feelings of others; the capacity for empathy; and so forth.

*Expressive arts.* Participating in plays and ballroom and other types of dancing; sculpting, or playing a musical instrument, for example.

*Relationship strengths.* Getting along well with most teachers; being patient and understanding with people; helping others; accepting people as individuals regardless of sex, beliefs, or race; being confided in by other people; and so forth.

*Education, training, and related areas.* Getting good grades and acquiring special skills, such as typing, selling, or mechanical drawing.

*Hobbies, crafts, and so forth.* Having hobbies or interests such as stamp or coin collecting, sewing or knitting, or hairstyling.

*Sports and activities.* Participation in swimming, football, tennis, or basketball, for example, and enjoyment of, or skill in these activities or outdoor activities such as camping and hiking.

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Source: Adapted from Otto & Healy, 1966.

Researchers who gave blank sheets of paper to 100 high school students and asked them to list their strengths found that out of a total of 19 categories (see Table 16-3), the average student listed only seven strengths (Otto & Healy, 1966).

## A CHILD'S WORLD . . . PROFESSIONAL VOICES



Erik Erikson talks about ego strengths.

ERIKSON: I think the potential for the development of ego strength comes out of the successful completion of all the earlier developmental processes. I would say that you could speak of a fully mature ego only after adolescence, which means, after all, becoming an adult. I've personally learned most from my work with children and with adolescents and young adults. As [August] Aichhorn has taught us in working with late adolescents it isn't enough to interpret to adolescents what went wrong in their past history. The present is too powerful for much retrospection. In fact they often use that kind of interpretation to develop a florid ideology of illness, and actually become quite proud of their neuroses. Also, if everything "goes back" into childhood, then every-

thing is somebody else's fault, and trust in one's power of taking responsibility for oneself may be undermined.

Q: Was this not satirized in the Broadway musical *West Side Story*, in the Officer Krupke song, where the ostensible juvenile delinquents were singing, "We're not responsible for our acts, social conditions are"? The poverty-stricken person says, "I'm not responsible for my poverty. It's society's fault." The delinquent says, "It's my mother's fault."

ERIKSON: That's right. In fact, *West Side Story* has another very insightful theme. I don't remember the exact words, but these young people are dancing and singing. "They say we're bums. All right, that's what we're going to be." We meet something similar in other sections of rebellious youth. They tell us, "You say we have an identity crisis. All right, an identity crisis is what we're going to have." So what we once gingerly diagnosed as sexual identity confusion is now represented almost mockingly by otherwise rather wholesome-looking young people.

Source: R. I. Evans, 1967, pp. 31-32; photo: UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos.

Otto and Healy say:

This indicates a limited self-perception of personality strengths not too markedly different from that of adults. In similar studies which have been conducted, adults have listed an average of six strengths but at the same time were able to fill one or more pages with listings of their "problems" or "weaknesses." (p. 293)

Most of the young people listed strengths in relationships, intellectual strengths, or emotional strengths; more girls listed strengths in social functioning and dependability, while more boys listed strengths in sports and other activities. Although the listings of boys and girls differed somewhat, they were more alike than dissimilar.

These researchers gave adolescents more credit for personality strengths than the young people did themselves, listing several "personality resources or strengths" of adolescents which differ qualitatively from those of adults and which appear in unique and distinctive patterns:

- 1 Adolescents have considerable energy, or drive, and vitality.
- 2 They are idealistic and have a real concern for the future of this country and the world.
- 3 They frequently exercise their ability to question contemporary values, philosophies, theologies, and institutions.
- 4 They have a heightened sensory awareness and perceptivity.



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- 5 They are courageous, able to take risks themselves or stick their necks out for others.
  - 6 They have a feeling of independence.
  - 7 They possess a strong sense of fairness and dislike intolerance.
  - 8 More often than not, they are responsible and can be relied on.
  - 9 They are flexible and adapt to change readily.
  - 10 They are usually open, frank, and honest.
  - 11 They have an above-average sense of loyalty to organizations, causes, and so forth.
  - 12 They have a sense of humor, which they often express.
  - 13 More often than not, they have an optimistic and positive outlook on life.
  - 14 They often think seriously and deeply.
  - 15 They have great sensitivity to, and are aware of, other person's feelings.
  - 16 They are engaged in a sincere and ongoing search for identity.

If we can help more young people recognize and build on their strengths as they are about to enter adult life, adolescents' search for identity can bear richer fruit for them.

## Summary

### KEY CONCEPTS

- One important theoretical dispute is about the extent of adolescent rebellion. G. Stanley Hall considered adolescence to be a period of inevitable storm and stress, marked by vacillating and contradictory emotions. Margaret Mead argued that the nature of adolescence is culturally determined and that the stage need not include emotional confusion.
- Sigmund Freud said that adolescents enter the genital stage of mature adult sexuality. The stage is biologically determined and occurs when sexual urges can no longer be repressed, as they could be during the latency period.
- Anna Freud said that the reawakened sexual drive upsets the id-ego balance of the latency period. Two defense mechanisms that adolescents use to try to preserve the balance are intellectualization and asceticism.
- Erik Erikson believes that the most important task during adolescence is the search for identity. He sees adolescence as the time of the fifth psychosocial crisis, identity versus role confusion.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Investigating Erikson's theory, James Marcia identified four categories of identity formation: identity achievement, foreclosure, diffusion, and moratorium.
- Most arguments between parents and teenagers are about mundane matters like school, chores, and friends. The disputes often reflect the continuing efforts of parents to socialize their children. Full-blown rebellion seldom characterizes parent-teenager relationships.
- Adolescents spend more than half their waking hours with other teenagers, and they are happiest in the company of their friends.
- Peer groups are often organized into crowds, which are composed of smaller cliques.

- Parents continue to have a strong influence on the development of adolescents, and the more interested they are in their children, the more positive their influence is.
- Friendships often become more intimate during adolescence.
- Although communication between parents and adolescents about sex is often obscure and confusing, what parents do express tends to be positive.
- Teenagers tend to enter into loving sexual relationships with one person rather than being promiscuous.
- Although attitudes toward sex are more liberal now than in the past and although the double standard appears to be dying, attitudes continue to be more conservative than behaviors.
- The median age at first sexual intercourse is lower than ever before recorded—13 for boys and 15 for girls.
- A major problem for adolescents today is pregnancy. If current trends persist, 4 out of 10 of today's 14-year-old girls will become pregnant during their teens.
- The strongest predictor of delinquency is the family's level of supervision and discipline. The poorest predictor is socioeconomic status.
- It is difficult to predict which juvenile delinquents will be in the "hard-core" minority who continue their criminal careers into adulthood.
- Even with its difficulties, adolescence is typically an interesting, exciting, and positive threshold to adulthood.

#### KEY APPLICATIONS

- When speaking to their children about sex, parents should make sure that their children hear what the parents think that they have said.
- Efforts to help pregnant girls stay in school include giving sympathetic counseling, operating day care centers in high schools, and offering courses in parenting.
- Parents of delinquent children may need to learn how to be better trackers of their children's whereabouts, the kinds of companions they have, and the activities in which they engage. Socialization at the family level is important in preventing adolescents from becoming serious problems for society as a whole.

### *Suggested Readings*

- Coles, R., & Stokes, G. (1985). *Sex and the American teenager*. New York: Colophon Books, Harper & Row. A detailed discussion of a survey of American teenagers' sexual behaviors and attitudes. Extensive quotations from interviews fill the book with remarks that are memorable for their candor and truth.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Larson, R. (1984). *Being adolescent: Conflict and growth in the teenage years*. New York: Basic Books. A detailed portrait of the day-to-day world of typical American middle-class teenagers: what they do, how they feel, and what they think about. This is a readable account of what it's like to be an adolescent.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton. Erikson's classic discussion of the development of identity during adolescence.
- Glenbard East Echo. (Compilers). (1984). *Teenagers themselves*. New York: Adama. Over 9000 teenagers voice their thoughts about their lives and their values. The book uses teenagers' own words to destroy the idea that teenagers are apathetic about the world beyond their private concerns.

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- Hyde, J. (1986). *Understanding human sexuality* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. An exceptionally readable textbook covering a wide range of topics in the area of sexuality: physical and hormonal factors, contraception, research on sex, variations in sexual behavior, sexual dysfunction, and sex and religion, the law, and education.
- Offer, D., Ostrov, E., & Howard, K. I. (1981). *The adolescent: A psychological self-portrait*. New York: Basic Books. A discussion of normal adolescents, focusing on their feelings about sexual relations, their families, their friends, and themselves. This book challenges the view that adolescence is a time of storm and stress.

