Negative Reputation of Peers

“Location in or orientation toward an adult or parental context is interpretable as less problem-behavior prone than location in a peer context. There would be, in the former, more involvement with conventional norms, less exposure to models for problem behavior, and greater social control over transgression.”

– Jessor & Jessor (1977)
“From what we know, it appears that Dylan Klebold was not a killer on his own. It took his relationship with Eric Harris to make it happen.”

– Garbarino and Bedard (2001, p. 21)

“...ritualized, dramatic, self-destructive behavior among teenagers – whether it involves suicide, smoking, taking a gun to school, or fainting after drinking a harmless can of Coke – has extraordinary contagious power.”

Very Strong Influence – **Strong, But Parents Also Important** – Not So Strong
Judith R. Harris -------------- Dr. Reifman & Others --------------- Jeffrey Arnett


Parents’ Attempts to Steer Their Teens Away from – or Towards – Potential Peers/Friends

(Added Feb. 19, 2019)


See Table 2 for “Parental Management of Peers Inventory” questionnaire, and last two full paragraphs on p. 67.


See top of p. 77.
Social Influence/Conformity

Group members get individual to act a certain way (such as drink heavily) either through peer pressure or modeling of the behavior.

Have a drink!

Join us!
Individual resembles friends on key behavior (drinking level), not because of friends’ influence, but instead by selecting whom to befriend.

You look like a nice group. Where’s the party?
Social Influence and Selection

- Both result in a match between the individual and the group, but through different processes
- Evidence that both social influence and selection occur
- Arnett scenario of selection occurring first, then being accentuated by social influence: “... adolescents are similar in risk behavior before they become friends, but if they stay friends they tend to become even more similar...” (p. 238)
- Clever use of random assignment of college dormitory roommates to look at social influence, ruling out selective association
Subtypes of Social Influence
(Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Kelman, 1958)

**Normative Influence**
Conforming to avoid being rejected or shunned, or to gain approval

↓
**Compliance**
Go along in outward behavior, but disagree deep down

**Informational Influence**
Conforming because other people seem highly knowledgeable and you feel you are learning

↓
**Acceptance**
Go along and truly believe in what you’re doing

**2017 Death of Penn State Fraternity Member**
(Drunk Huge Amounts of Alcohol and Fell Down Stairs, But Nobody in the House Called the Authorities)

*Note how members who didn’t want to call authorities used both normative (force, threat) and informational influence:*

“When a brother insisted Piazza needed medical help, he was confronted and shoved into a wall, the report said. When that brother insisted again that Piazza required help, he was told others were biology and kinesiology majors so his opinion wasn't as valuable as theirs, it said.”
Peer Influence Seems to Make Adolescents Take Greater Risks

- Knoll and colleagues (2015). Social influence on risk perception during adolescence (see Figure 1 and Figure 2c).
- Larry Steinberg showing visitor Alan Alda the “Stoplight Game”
- Cited in U.S. Supreme Court ruling on constitutionality of death penalty for those who commit murder as minors (Roper v. Simmons; see especially Section 3B, “Three general differences between juveniles under 18 and adults...”)
Five Observations on Peer Influence in the 2000’s (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011)

- Domains of peer influence broader than previously thought (not just on drinking, smoking, antisocial behavior, but also...)
- Current research better delineating who we mean by peers (e.g., best friend, sibling, romantic partner, popular kids in school), plus greater awareness that dyadic relationships may be embedded within larger networks or cliques
- Newer theories emphasize influence of high-status/popular peers and what adolescents think would gain them the approval of popular others (however, some kids reject the “popular crowd” and develop alternative norms to follow)
- Not all adolescents influenced detrimentally by peers; what determines whether or not harmful influence occurs?
  - Characteristics of the target (including the target’s parents)
  - Characteristics of the influencer
  - Nature of relationship between target and influencer
  - Type of behavior in question (neutral, deviant, positive)
  - Findings show complex combinations of factors, e.g., “close friend influence effects for substance use... and roommate socialization of binge drinking... have been found for male, but not female, adolescents” (p. 172).
- Introduction of genetic and neuroscience elements to study of peer influence (one study found that, “the impact of best friends’ substance use on target adolescents’ use was most pronounced for adolescents with the highest genetic vulnerability for using tobacco and alcohol,” p. 174)
Additional Resources

*Helping Teens Navigate Peer Relationships* (U. of Minnesota)

*Friendships, Peer Influence, and Peer Pressure During the Teen Years* (U. of Nebraska)
Crowds & Cliques (Spring 2019)

Divided our class into groups to discuss crowds at their high schools; tried to give each group an even blend of students from large (e.g., thousands), medium, and small schools (e.g., 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five General Types*</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elites ➔</td>
<td>Student Council, “Rich Peeps”</td>
<td>Student Council, AP class, <strong>Boujee</strong></td>
<td>Athletes, <strong>Young Life</strong>, Drill Team</td>
<td>Student Council, “Popis”</td>
<td>Preppy, Smart, Ringleaders, SGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletes ➔</td>
<td>Different teams, Athletic scholarships</td>
<td>FB, BskB, Swim, Cheer/Dance</td>
<td>FB, Lacrosse, Track, etc.</td>
<td>Football, Soccer, Golf</td>
<td>Athletes, Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Other Organized)</td>
<td><strong>Band, Drama, Dancers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Band, Theater, Debate, Volunteer</strong></td>
<td><strong>PALS, Theater</strong></td>
<td><strong>UIL, Band, Drama, ROTC</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theater, Band</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics ➔</td>
<td>Top students (mean); Mock trial team</td>
<td>“Mathletes,” Robotics, Automotive</td>
<td>ROTC, <strong>Greens</strong></td>
<td>Robotics, “Nerds”</td>
<td>Smart kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Deviants” ➔</td>
<td>Druggies, Anime</td>
<td>Stoners, Defiant, Class-clowns, Gangs</td>
<td>Skaters, Party</td>
<td>Stoners, <strong>Cholos</strong>, Slackers, Partiers</td>
<td>Partiers, “Rednecks”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others ➔</td>
<td>Philanthropists</td>
<td>Pokemon, Loners</td>
<td>---</td>
<td><strong>Emos</strong>, Band, Kickers, No Shows</td>
<td>ROTC, Anime, Summer Camp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From *Sussman and colleagues* (2007, see Table 1); also discussed in textbook.

- Cliques are small groups (3 to 12) who know each other well. Crowds are larger, not everyone knows each other, based more on shared reputation (also clothes, music, leisure, slang; see also “Youth Culture,” Arnett, pp. 233-236).
- Distinctions based on economic classes common among our students, but not in other sources.
- “…crowds help adolescents to define their own identities and the identities of others” (Arnett, p. 223),
- Developmental changes in crowds (Arnett, pp. 225-226), become more differentiated, but fade in importance; individuals may not agree with labels applied to themselves.