Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach

Chapter 9

Dating, Love, & Sexuality

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Chapter Overview

- Sexual activity and sexuality in adolescence and emerging adulthood
- Cultural standards with regard to sex before marriage
- Problems in adolescence (e.g. contraception, pregnancy, abortion, parenthood)

Prior to the Women’s Movement, dating was much more formalized and gender roles were much more sharply drawn in the West. Teens now are more likely to go out in mixed-gender groups without any specific pairing up. Boys and girls may go out simply as friends.
Teen Dating Rates

[Graph showing the percentage of teens who have ever dated, with data from Dornbusch et al. 1981]

Sternberg’s Theory of Love

- Different types of love involve combining three fundamental qualities of love in different ways.
- These three qualities are:
  1. Passion
     - Involves physical attraction and sexual desire
  2. Intimacy
     - Feelings of closeness and emotional attachment
  3. Commitment
     - The pledge to love someone over the long run

Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love

[Diagram illustrating the triangular theory of love, with different types of love involving combinations of intimacy, passion, and commitment]

(Sternberg, 1988, p. 122)
Sternberg’s Seven Forms of Love

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Love</th>
<th>Passion</th>
<th>Intimacy</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liking</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infatuation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Empty Love</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Compassionate Love</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Fatuous Love</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consummate Love</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Applying Sternberg to Adolescence

- In most adolescent love relationships, commitment is either missing or highly tentative.
- The absence of long-term commitment in adolescence means that there are two principal types of adolescent love: infatuation and romantic love.

When Love Goes Bad

- How can adolescent egocentrism and the personal fable contribute to feelings of breaking up?
Choosing a Marriage Partner

The Study: 10,000 young people in 37 countries from all over the world (Africa, Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, & North and South America)

The Findings:

Highest Ranking
Mutual attraction

Lowest Ranking:
Religious & political backgrounds

High Rankings:
Dependable character
Emotional stability & Maturity
Pleasing disposition

The sharpest cross-cultural division was on the issue of chastity

Arranged Marriages

Although romantic love is found in all cultures, it is not considered the proper basis of marriage in all cultures

Marriage has more often been seen as an alliance between two families rather than as the uniting of two individuals

The most important considerations in an arranged marriage is the other family’s status, religion and wealth

Globalization is having an effect on how young people are beginning to value individual choice and the pursuit of happiness.

Today in most Eastern cultures the “semi arranged marriage” is the most common practice
Cultural Beliefs & Adolescent Sexuality

- **Restrictive cultures:**
  - Place strong prohibitions on adolescent sexual activity before marriage
  - Strict separation of boys and girls in early childhood through adolescence
  - May include the threat of physical punishment and public shaming for premarital sex
  - Usually more restrictive for girls than boys

- **Semi-restrictive cultures:**
  - Have prohibitions but they are not strongly enforced and are easily evaded
  - If pregnancy results from premarital sex, the adolescents are often forced to marry

- **Permissive cultures:**
  - Encourage and expect adolescent sexuality
  - Sexual behavior is encouraged even in childhood and the sexuality of adolescence is simply an extension of the sex play in childhood

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Discussion Stop

- Why do most sexually active adolescents fail to use contraception consistently?

- **Think about:**
  - Infrequency of sex
  - Cognitive development
  - Personal fable
  - Embarrassment

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Contraceptive Use and Non-use

- Two types of countries have low rates of teenage pregnancy:
  - Those that are permissive about adolescent sex
  - Those that adamantly forbid adolescent sex

**Permissive Countries**
- Denmark
- Sweden
- Netherlands

**Restrictive Countries**
- Japan
- South Korea
- Morocco

- They have explicit safe sex campaigns
- Adolescents have easy access to contraception
- Adolescents are strongly discouraged from even dating
- It is rare for boys and girls to spend time alone together
Facts about the “Facts of Life”

- About 30% of pregnancies to American adolescents end in abortion
- 14% of adolescents miscarry
- Of the children who are born, only about 5% are put up for adoption

That means about 50% of adolescents raise their own children (sometimes with the help of the father but most often with the help of the adolescent mother’s own mother)

Adolescent Birth Rates

In recent years, birth rates have become highest of all among Latina adolescents. Black teens are twice as likely as White teens to get pregnant.

What about (teen) Mom?

- Twice as likely to drop out of school
- Less likely to go to college or become employed
- Less likely to get married
- More likely to get divorced if they get married

Do they catch up? (a sample of 300 mothers)

- Five years after giving birth teenage mothers still lagged behind their peers in educational, occupational and economic progress
- After 10 years
  - 25% were still on welfare
  - 20% had succeeded in making it into the middle class
  - A majority had eventually completed high school
  - 33% had completed at least some college education
What about Dad?

- Being a teenage dad is related to a variety of negative outcomes
  - More likely to become divorced
  - Lower level of education
  - Lower paying job
  - More prone to drug and alcohol use
  - More likely to violate the law
  - More feelings of anxiety and depression

Interesting Footnote:
Like adolescent mothers, the problems of adolescent fathers often began prior to parenthood

What about Baby?

- Children born to adolescent mothers face a higher likelihood of a variety of difficulties in life
  - Babies are more likely to be born premature
  - Lower birth rate
  - Premature and low birth rate are related to a variety of physical and intellectual problems
  - Greater likelihood of behavioral problems
  - School misbehaviour, delinquency and early sexual activity

It is important to note:
These problems are not just due to having an adolescent mother but also due to the fact that most adolescent mothers are not only young and unmarried but poor as well

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

- By age 24, one in three sexually active Americans has contracted an STD
- Two thirds of all STDs occur in people who are under 25 years old

- Two important characteristics of STDs
  - Asymptomatic
    - People show no symptoms of the disease
    - They are especially likely to infect others because neither they nor others realize that they are infected
  - Latency Period
    - There may be years between the time people are infected and the time they being to show symptoms
    - During this time they may be infecting others without either themselves or their partners being aware of it
Sexually Transmitted Diseases

- **Chlamydia**
  - Amongst the most common STDs
  - Highest rates among 15 to 19 year olds
  - Leading cause of female infertility

- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)**
  - Most common STD (rate of infection 20-46%)
  - Infects cells on the surface of the body
  - Two categories: asymptomatic (60% of cases); and genital warts
  - For women, increased risk of developing cervical cancer

- **Herpes Simplex**
  - Caused by a virus
  - Has two variations: herpes simplex I and herpes simplex II
  - Highly infectious (76% of persons exposed to an infected partner will become infected)
  - There is no cure for herpes

- **Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS)**
  - Strips the body of its ability to fend off infections
  - The body is highly vulnerable to a wide variety of illnesses and diseases
  - 50% of cases of HIV in the U.S. result from intercourse between homosexual or bisexual partners
  - Outside the U.S. HIV/AIDS is spread mainly between heterosexual partners
  - Has a long latency period (tends to be asymptomatic up to 8 years)
  - AIDS is the leading cause of death worldwide among persons 25 to 44 years old
  - 10 of every 11 new HIV infections worldwide come from Africa
  - The mortality rate for people who have AIDS remains extremely high

Youth and AIDS

![Percentage of 15 – 25 year olds living with AIDS in selected African countries.](chart.png)