



Chapter 5: The Adolescent in Society

Case Study: Teen Violence

Section 1: Understanding Adolescence

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Case Study: Teen Violence

In the United States, teens are disproportionately affected by violence. Researchers looking for the answer to why this would be have sometimes focused on media in youth culture. These observers note that the television shows and movies aimed at youth are filled with violence. Other researchers focus on drug use as a source of violence, with one study showing that teens who use drugs are twice as likely to commit violent acts. Whatever the reason for violence, it is clear that violent teens do not transition well into adulthood.

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In Red Lake, Minnesota, victims of a deadly school shooting are memorialized with crosses. Seven people were murdered at the local high school, including 15-year-old Thurlene Stillday (shown at left).

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Section 1 at a Glance

Understanding Adolescence

- Adolescence refers to a distinct stage of life that occurs between the onset of puberty and adulthood.
- In the United States, the concept of adolescence is a recent development, resulting from a combination of post-Civil War historical events.
- The five leading characteristics of adolescence are biological growth and development, an undefined status, increased decision making, increased pressures, and the search for self.

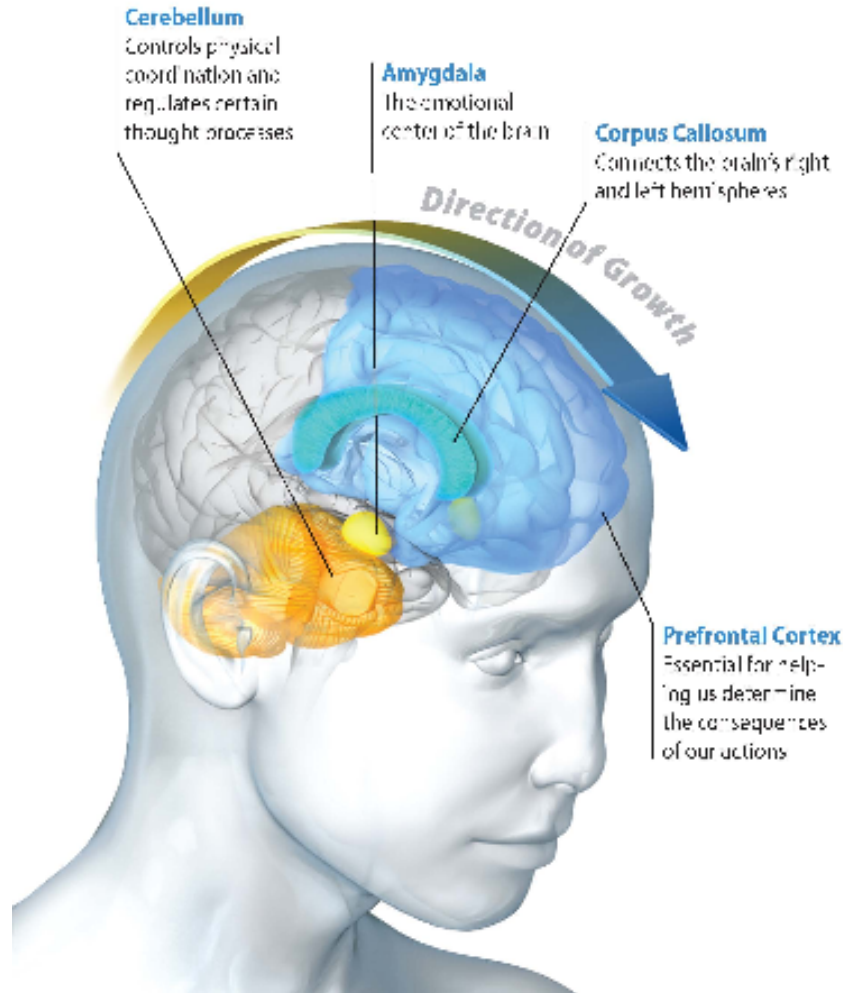
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The Adolescent Brain: A Work in Progress



How is a teenager's brain different from an adult's brain?

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The Concept of Adolescence

Definition

- **Adolescence** is the period between the normal onset of puberty and the beginning of adulthood.
- **Puberty** is the physical maturing that makes an individual capable of sexual reproduction.
- In the United States, it is generally from ages 12 to 19.

History

- Many societies do not include the idea of adolescence.
- Developments since the Civil War have strengthened the idea of adolescence in the United States and other industrialized nations.
- Mandatory education, exclusion from the labor force, and separate legal status encourage the idea of adolescence.

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Characteristics of Adolescence

Biological Growth and Development

Onset of adolescence marked by beginning of puberty

- Specific hormones are released
- Growth spurts, voice changes, development of sexual characteristics
- Complexion problems

Undefined Status

Unclear social expectations

- Some treated as children, some as adults
- Allowed to marry at age 16, vote at age 18, and drink at age 21
- Some adults like adolescent culture, others critical

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Increased Decision Making

- More decisions must be made by oneself.

Increased Pressure

- Parents, friends, and teachers all pressure adolescents to behave in particular ways.
- Peer pressure is the strongest.
- Many teens feel pressure to be in a relationship or find a job.

The Search for Self

- The ability to establish personal norms and priorities is important.
- Preparing for future roles is one aspect of finding oneself.
Anticipatory socialization is learning the rights, obligations, and expectations of a role to prepare for assuming that role in the future.

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Using Refusal Skills

Drinking alcohol is one of the most common and serious pressures many teens face. How can you use refusal skills to say no to peer pressure?

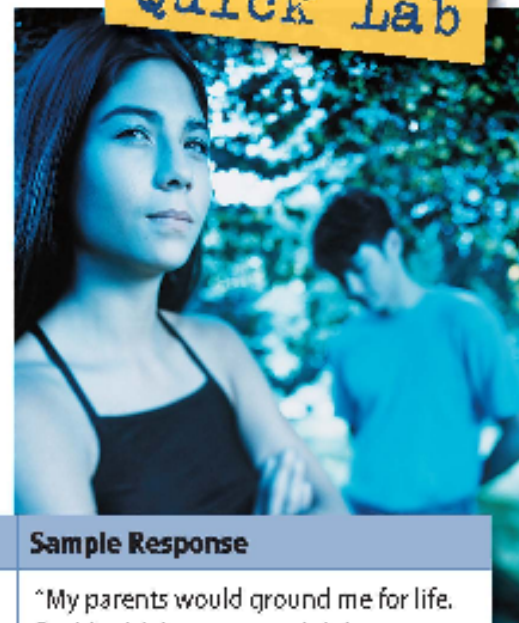
PROCEDURE

1. Read the list of refusal skills and sample responses in the table below.
2. In three groups of four students, take turns role playing a scenario in front of the class. In each group, one student will practice using refusal skills to avoid the pressure from three friends to drink alcohol, following the scenario.
3. Scenario: you have a couple of friends over to play video games. Your parents went out to dinner, so you have the house to yourselves. One friend finds beer in the refrigerator. She suggests that you and your friends drink it.

ANALYSIS

1. Discuss with your classmates how effective each student was in using refusal skills.
2. Make suggestions to each other about how to improve the use of refusal skills.

Quick Lab



Refusal Skill	Sample Response
1. Blame someone else	"My parents would ground me for life. Besides it's just not worth it."
2. Suggest something else to do	"Let's order pizza and watch a movie!"
3. Give a reason	"No, thanks, I don't think that's cool."



Cultural Diversity and Sociology

Coming of Age

Most cultures mark an adolescent's entry into adulthood with a rite of passage. Coming-of-age ceremonies are different across cultures.

- Some are informal events such as getting a driver's license.
- Some are more formal such as a high school graduation.
- Mexico: A quinceañera marks a girl's entry into adulthood
- Navajo: A Kinaalda is a four-day ceremony marking entry to adulthood
- Maasai: Boys leave to live in manyatta camps to learn male skills
- Judaism: A bar or bat mitzvah occurs after much preparation

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The reading of the Torah is traditionally a part of the Jewish bar mitzvah ceremony.



In Mexican culture, the *quinceañera* is a celebration that marks the entry of teen girls into adulthood.

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Thinking Critically

- How do these coming-of-age ceremonies differ?
- What impact do you think coming-of-age ceremonies have on society?

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Section 2 at a Glance

Teenagers and Dating

- Dating, or the meeting of people as a romantic engagement, is most commonly found in societies that allow people to select their own marriage partners.
- Before the development of dating in the United States, the courtship system was the most common means through which unmarried men and women interacted.

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SOCIOLOGY CLOSE UP



How did a story of teenage love become one of the greatest romantic tragedies of all time?

The story of Romeo and Juliet has inspired artists, poets, musicians, and writers for hundreds of years.

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Dating and Courtship

Dating is a recent phenomenon in the United States. It has become a more common form of interaction between the sexes.

Dating

- Main purpose is entertainment and amusement
- Can lead to serious relationship and/or marriage
- Most common method for selecting spouse in modern United States

Courtship

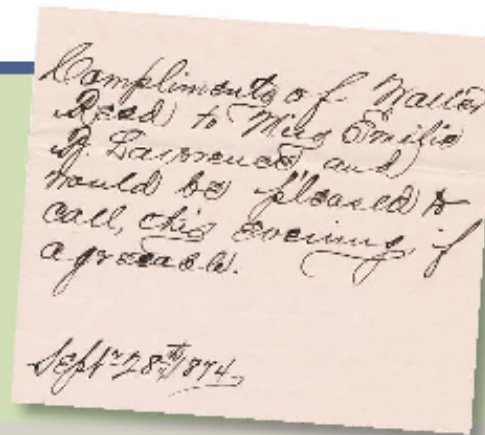
- **Courtship** is less flexible than dating
- Designed to end in marriage
- Strictly defined roles for both parties
- Couple rarely left alone

Click on the image to play the Interactive.

INTERACTIVE *

Courtship and Dating in the United States

For most of American history, young men and women socialized and selected spouses through courtship. Eventually, however, changing technologies and social patterns led to the decline of courtship and the development of dating. **How have new technologies changed dating in the United States?**



This letter from 1874 is an example of a request to visit in a formal courtship. It says "Compliments of Walter Reed to Miss Emile B. Lawrence, and would be pleased to call, this evening, if agreeable."

Early History Throughout the early history of the United States, most people were farmers, and men generally did not marry until their father gave them enough land to support a family. As a result, parents controlled the timing and circumstances of marriage.

Formal Courtship In formal courtship, roles were strictly defined, and the ultimate purpose was marriage. Young men had to ask permission to court a young woman. Couples usually met formally in the young woman's home, where they were closely supervised.

The Industrial Revolution During the Industrial Revolution, many young people left the farms and moved to cities to work. Free from their parents' economic control, young people began to interact more informally. Courtship declined, and dating began to develop.

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Interactive Feature



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Coeducational Public Schools

By the early 1900s most high schools were coeducational, which increased social interaction between young men and women through events such as school dances.

The Telephone

After World War I, telephone use increased dramatically, which allowed more opportunities for direct, informal contact between young men and women.

The Automobile

The automobile increased dating among young people. By the 1950s, young couples commonly went in cars on unsupervised dates to drive-in movie theaters and other events.

Contemporary Dating

Today, dating is more diverse than ever before. Young people have a range of new technologies that give them more flexibility to arrange informal meetings in a wide range of places.

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The Emergence of Dating

- **Before industrialization**

- Marriages were dependent on a man inheriting agricultural land.
- Families played an important role in determining spouses.

- **Changes during industrialization**

- Young adults could earn money away from land, so parents became less involved in relationships.
- The rise of free public education brought the sexes together.
- After World War I, technologies such as the automobile and telephone gave young adults greater freedom.
- The 1920s saw an increase in opportunity and equality for women.

- **Goals of dating**

- Researchers find evidence that men and women choose those of equal status to date, as a function of **homogamy**—the tendency of individuals to marry people with social characteristics similar to their own.

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Functions of Dating

- Dating serves several important functions in adolescence.
- These functions might occur at different stages of a relationship, and each may carry more or less weight at various stages.



Functions

- Entertainment
- Socialization
- Basic psychological needs such as conversation, companionship, and understanding
- Status attainment
- Spouse selection

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Dating Patterns

Traditional Dating Patterns

- Responsibility for organizing a date falls to the man
- Behavior is highly ritualized

Contemporary Dating Patterns

- Both sexes initiate and organize dates
- Relationships are based on friendship

Amish Dating Patterns

- Begin courting around age 16
- Opportunities occur at formal events
- Dating is done with marriage in mind

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TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

The Science of Attraction

Have you ever thought about why you are you attracted to someone? Using the latest technology to study the science behind attraction, scientists have discovered that most men and women prefer their partners' to have symmetrical faces. Other studies have also shown that people tend to be attracted to people who look very similar to themselves. In a study in Scotland, scientists used computer-graphic technology to morph photographs of college students' faces into the opposite sex. However, the students were not aware that they were viewing morphed photos of themselves. After viewing all of the photos of the opposite sex, most students preferred the morphed photos.

In addition to discovering that opposites do not usually attract, scientists have used technology to study other factors in attraction, such as the ability to "smell" genes. In one study, researchers gave t-shirts saturated with male sweat



These photos show a male face morphed into a female face. Scientists use this advanced computer technology to study people's reactions to appearance.

to female participants. The results astounded the researchers—the women preferred the odor of the men who shared genes similar to their own. Today, scientists continue to investigate the role of odors and certain chemicals humans may emit to attract the opposite sex. Science may one day determine whether the eyes or nose really knows who you should be attracted to.

Thinking Critically

Analyze Do you think most celebrities who are considered beautiful by society have faces that are symmetrical?

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Section 3 at a Glance

Challenges of Adolescence

- Adolescents in American society experience a number of social challenges related to sexual behavior, drugs, and suicide.
- Teenagers who engage in early sexual activity face serious health challenges, including pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

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The Adolescent in Society

SOCIOLOGY CLOSE UP



What are some of the difficult decisions that adolescents face in their lives?

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Teenage Sexual Behavior

Traditional Sexual Values

- Some modern, preindustrial traditions encourage sexual experimentation as a preparation for marriage.
- Traditional American values from the Puritans and the Victorian age confine sexual activity to marriage.



The Sexual Revolution

- During the 1960s and 1970s, the norms governing sexual behavior began to change.
- Birth control, youth counterculture, and the feminist movement encouraged changes.
- Various stages of romantic relationships are found on television and other mass media.
- Advertisers use the lure of sexuality to sell their products.

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The Rate of Teenage Sexual Activity

- In 1970, 29 percent of unmarried American females between the ages of 15 and 19 were sexually active.
- By 1995, the rate had jumped to 50 percent.
- Birthrate among American teenagers is considerably higher than that for other industrialized countries.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages **abstinence**, or voluntarily not engaging in sexual behavior. ▼

Influences on Early Sexual Activity

- Factors include: family income level, parents' marital status, religious participation
- In general, teenagers from higher-income two-parent families have lower rates of sexual activity than teenagers from low-income one-parent families.
- Teenagers whose friends engage in pre-marital sex are more likely to do so themselves.



Consequences of Early Sexual Activity

Teenage pregnancy has negative consequences

- Babies have lower birth weights and are more likely to die within the first year of life
- Low high school completion rates for teen parents
- Lower lifetime earnings
- Children more likely to experience learning disabilities
- Significant emotional stress

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

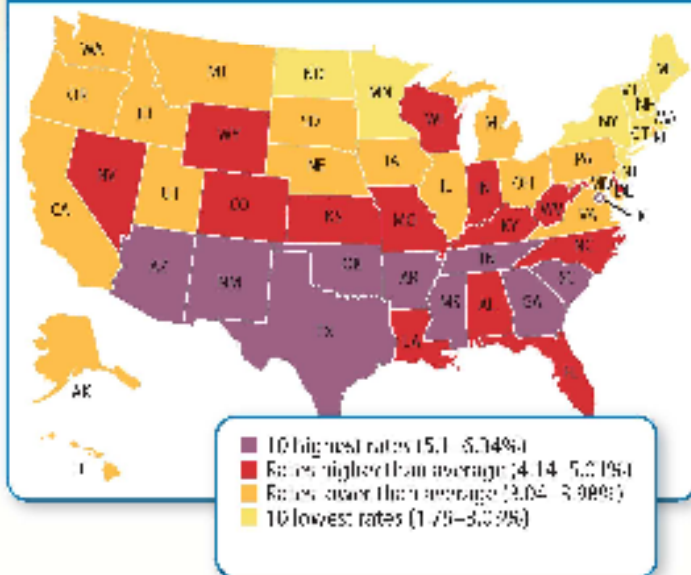
- High rates of human papillomavirus (HPV), chlamydia, genital herpes
- Exposure to syphilis, gonorrhea, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)
- Studies show teenagers are aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS and other **STDs**, yet few teenagers think that they are personally at risk.

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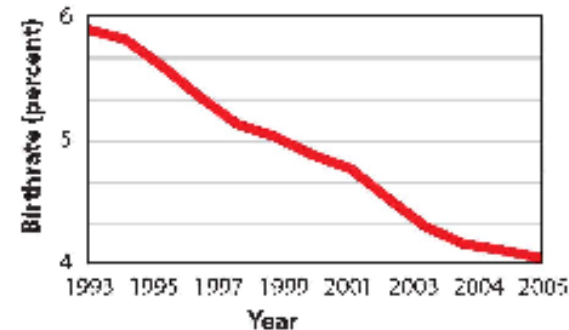
Statistically Speaking...

Teen Pregnancy Since 1991 the birthrate among 15- to 19-year-old women in the United States has dropped by 34 percent. Despite the decline in teen pregnancies nationally, however, some areas of the country have higher teen birthrates than others. In 2005 Washington, D.C. had the highest teen birthrate—6.34 percent. Texas and New Mexico also had high rates of 6.13 percent. In contrast, New Hampshire had the lowest birthrate at just 1.79 percent. Teen pregnancy varies by ethnic group as well. The birthrate among Hispanic teens is 8.17 percent—twice the national average.

BIRTHRATE AMONG U.S. WOMEN AGED 15 TO 19, BY STATE, 2005



BIRTHRATE AMONG U.S. WOMEN, AGED 15 TO 19



Source: CDC

Thinking Critically What do you think accounts for the high birthrate in Texas and New Mexico?

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Teenage Drug Use

A **drug** is any substance that changes mood, behavior, or consciousness. Some are legal while others are illegal. There are social consequences to drug use.

Drug Violence

- Drug-related crime increased during the 1980s and 1990s.
- Violence was often part of turf wars between rival gangs.
- Crack cocaine is the drug most associated with violent crime.

The Rate of Teenage Drug Use

- Marijuana is the most commonly used illegal drug among teens.
- About 70 percent of high school seniors have used alcohol.
- The United States has the highest rate of teen drug use.



Influences on Teenage Drug Use

- Having friends who regularly engage in drug use
- Having social and academic adjustment problems
- Living in a hostile and rejecting family setting



Teenage Attitudes Toward Drug Use

- Knowledge of danger of drugs has increased
- Disapproval rating of marijuana and cigarettes has increased
- Disapproval rating of LSD, cocaine, heroin, amphetamines, and barbiturates remain at 90 to 98 percent

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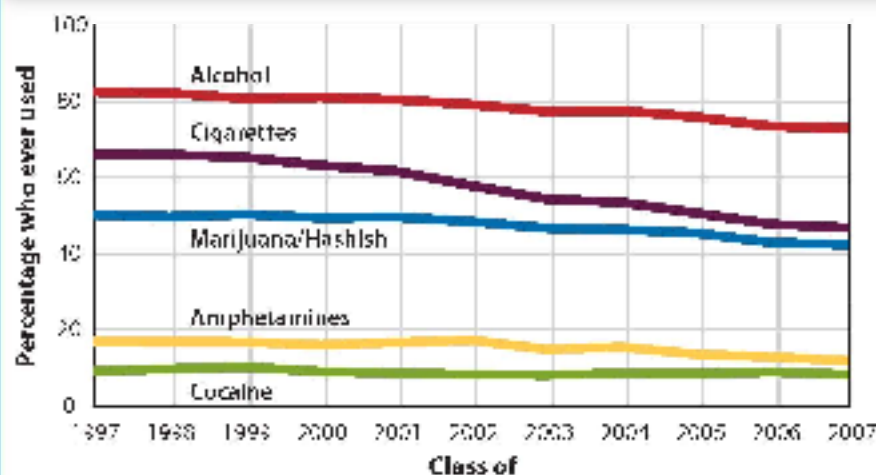
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Statistically Speaking...

Teen Drug Use According to the results of a national survey conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, the use of illegal drugs and cigarettes among twelfth graders has gradually declined between 1997 and 2007. During this 10 year period, illegal drug use by twelfth graders overall has declined from 42 to 36 percent.

DRUG USE TRENDS AMONG 12TH GRADERS



Source: The Monitoring the Future study, University of Michigan

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Teenage Suicide

The rate of teenage suicide has more than doubled in the last three decades. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for people aged 5 to 24.

The Sociological View of Suicide

- Durkheim studied social aspects of suicide.
- Groups with especially high or especially low levels of “**social integration**” are more likely to commit suicide.

Teenage Suicide

- For some teenagers, the self-doubt and confusion of adolescence are blown out of proportion and solutions to problems are obscured.
- Social isolation and weakening social bonds can lead to suicide.



Predictors of Teenage Suicide

Suicide cuts across all social categories. There are cases of teenage suicide among both sexes, every economic level, and all races, religions, and nationalities. Nevertheless, certain social factors appear to affect the rates of teenage suicide.

Alcohol or Drug Use The risk of suicide increases along with an adolescent's use of alcohol and drugs. Social scientists offer three explanations. First, teenagers who are heavy users of alcohol and drugs typically have low levels of self-control and are easily frustrated. Second, teenagers under the influence of drugs or alcohol are more likely to act on impulse. Third, teenagers often use drugs and alcohol as the method by which to commit suicide.

Triggering Events In most teenage suicides, a specific event or the anticipation of a specific event triggers the suicide attempt. Common triggers include fear of punishment, loss of or rejection by an important person, unwanted pregnancy, family crisis, poor school performance, and a fight with a friend or family member.

Age The risk of suicide increases with age. Although children under the age of 13 do commit suicide, rates are much higher for older teenagers and young adults.

Sex Females are three times more likely than males to attempt suicide. However, males are much more likely to succeed. This outcome is partially a result of the fact that teenage men often choose guns and other weapons as the means to commit suicide.

Population Density Recent studies indicate that underpopulated areas have higher rates of teenage suicide than do heavily populated areas. Researchers believe that the higher rate may be a result of social isolation, which is more likely in underpopulated areas. In addition, teenagers in underpopulated areas generally have access to fewer social services.

Family Relations Suicide rates are higher for teenagers from families in which violence, intense marital conflict, or the recent loss of a parent through divorce or death is evident. In addition, suicide is more common in those families in which parents show hostility or rejection toward their children.

Cluster Effect A teenage suicide sometimes results in other suicide attempts among adolescents in a community. This phenomenon is more likely to occur when a member of the community takes his or her life. In some instances, a well-publicized suicide can trigger "copycat" attempts in other communities as well. Mental-health officials suggest that the news of suicide acts as a fuse that ignites self-destructive behaviors in already unstable adolescents.

Skills Focus INTERPRETING CHARTS

How do social scientists explain the correlation between teen suicide and alcohol and drug use?

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Warning Words

Recognizing the warning signs of suicide in yourself or in others could help save your life or someone else's life. If you notice yourself or another person making the following statements, talk to a parent or trusted adult.

"I wish I were dead."

"I just want to go to sleep and never wake up."

"I won't be a problem for you much longer."

"I can't take it anymore."

"This pain will be over soon."

"Nothing matters."

Getting Help from Society

- Suicide is not the answer to a temporary problem.
- Learning to cope and manage pain and sadness is an important part of human development.
- Ask for help.
- Do not ignore the problem.
- Anyone who is suicidal needs professional help.
- Most cities have a variety of health organizations that offer services to people in need.



Sociology in Today's World

Bullying

Bullying is an intentional behavior that is meant to hurt and dominate another person. It includes verbal and physical abuse, as well as cyberbullying—using electronic means to torment, threaten, harass, humiliate, embarrass, or otherwise target another.

- Some Web sites have measures in place to prevent cyberbullying.
- Cyberbullying allows bullies to send harassing messages and pictures that can reach victims at home and at any time.
- Bullying leads to a decline in social standards of behavior.
- Many schools hold a “Bully Awareness Week” to help victims identify bullying.
- There are media campaigns to stop bullying.
- Parents and teens are becoming more aware of and reporting the problem.

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THE STATS ON BULLYING

The #1 most common form of violence is bullying.

28% of 12- to 18-year-olds reported being bullied in 2005, which is up from 5% in 1999.

Nearly 160,000 young people miss school every day because of fear of attack or intimidation by other students.

9% of 10- to 17-year-olds say they were abused at least once by "cyber bullies."

Source: Center for Disease Control (CDC);
National Center for Education Statistics

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Thinking Critically

- How is bullying more than teasing?
- What else do you think school officials should do to prevent bullying?

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Lab: Applying What You've Learned

Creating a Drug Awareness Campaign

What is the best way to educate adolescents about the dangers of drug use?

1. Introduction

- In this lab you will create a drug awareness campaign.
- Work in groups to research a particular drug.

2. Writing a Drug Profile

- As a group, write a description of your assigned drug. Include the following information: name(s), method of taking, short and long term effects and dangers, statistical trends, and a chart.

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TEENAGE DRUG USE, 2007*

Grade	Marijuana	Methamphetamines	Ecstasy (MDMA)	Cocaine	Crack Cocaine	Heroin	Steroids	Cigarettes	Smokeless Tobacco	Alcohol
8th	14.2%	1.8%	2.3%	3.1%	2.1%	1.3%	1.5%	22.1%	9.1%	38.9%
10th	31 %	2.8%	5.2%	5.3%	2.3%	1.5%	1.8%	34.6%	15.1%	61.7%
12th	41.8%	3.0%	6.5%	7.8%	3.2%	1.5%	2.2%	46.2%	15.1%	72.2%

*Percentage of teenagers who have tried a drug at least once in their lifetime.

Source: Monitoring the Future: Overview of Key Findings 2007, National Institute on Drug Abuse, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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The Adolescent in Society



This poster from the Montana Meth Project uses powerful imagery and a strong statement to warn people about the dangers of meth.

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3. The Anti-Drug Poster

- Work with your group to design a poster that illustrates the danger of your assigned drug.
- Include a description or illustration that reveals the dangers of the drug.



4. Presenting Your Poster

- Give an overview of what your group has learned about your assigned drug.
- Present your poster to the class.



5. Discussion

- **What did you learn from this lab? As a group, discuss the following:**
- How successful was the class at creating posters?
- Which elements from each group were most effective?
- Which drugs present the greatest challenge to teens?
- What other media could be used to warn teens of the dangers of drugs?

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