

## Adolescence, Peers, and Schools

Crime and the Life Course  
SOC 401D

## Transition to Adolescence

- **Neuroscience: Dual-System Cognitive Processing**
  - Socioemotional system in limbic portion of the brain
  - Cognitive control system lateral prefrontal portion of brain
- **Adolescent Brain Functioning**
  - Some evidence that sensation-seeking and recklessness peaks in middle adolescence (15-17)
    - Socioemotional system : increase in dopamine activity leads to risk taking and reward seeking
    - Cognitive control system lags behind: Develops in late adolescence to adulthood
  - **Result: Middle adolescence characterized by heightened vulnerability to risk taking**
    - Compared to adults, adolescents perceive similar risks, but put more weight on rewards (excitement, fun, kicks)

## Adolescence and Peers

- Peer Influence Peaks in Adolescence
  - Between adolescence and adulthood, resistance to peer influence increases
  - Young adults develop a stronger sense of self & autonomous decision-making
- Experimental Evidence: Risk-Taking Games
  - Adolescents, college sophomores, adults
  - Compared risk taking alone versus with same-aged friends
    - Adolescents: Presence of friends increased risk taking 200%
    - College sophomores: Present of friends increased risk taking 50%
    - Adults: Presence of friends had no effect on risk taking

## Caspi, et al.: Maturation and Delinquency

- Studied a cohort of girls in Dunedin, New Zealand
- Interested in age at menarchy and delinquency
  - Examined girls in all-girls schools versus co-ed schools
  - Looked for interaction effects
- Age at menarchy has a strong negative effect on delinquency in co-ed schools
  - Early maturers commit more delinquent acts
  - But no effect in all-girls schools.
- **Causal mechanism: association with delinquent boys**
  - Early-maturing girls attract older boys, including delinquents in co-ed schools
  - Result: delinquent behavior via social learning
  - In all-girls schools, there are no boys to attract

## Schools and Delinquency

- High school graduation is associated with less delinquency and crime
- **Parent-Teacher Connections**
  - Korean-American parents: order two books, one for the child one for the parents.
  - Flow of information
- **Grade School Tracking**
  - Appears to be correlated with offending
  - Selectivity?
- **Scholastic Achievement and Delinquency**
  - Strong predictor of delinquency: GPA
  - Commitment to school
- **Student Culture and Delinquency**
  - Reproduction of class (Willis): Low SES children learn oppositional scripts in the home and use them at school
  - Suspicion of authority, insubordination, school as illegitimate
  - Leads to delinquency and negative teacher responses

## Discussion Topic: IQ and Delinquency

- IQ is negatively correlated with delinquency during primary and secondary schools.
- Why? What are some mechanisms by which IQ is inversely associated with delinquency?