

stages of peer groups occur in the middle school (or junior high school) years (Brown & Clasen, 1986; Crockett, Losoff, & Petersen, 1984; Eder, 1985). Questions about the emergence of peer groups and growth of peer group influences cannot be answered fully unless both middle school and high school students are included in studies, or at least in reviews of studies such as this chapter. Accordingly, in this chapter, "secondary school" will be conceived as including both middle school and high school students.

These questions and insights serve to frame the scope and central mission of this chapter. I shall begin by attempting to clarify the conceptualization of adolescent peer groups and then discuss their emergence and metamorphosis across adolescence. With this background, I will then focus on current knowledge of peer group influences in the area of central importance to secondary schools: students' academic aspirations and achievement levels. Finally, from this review, several recommendations will be drawn to guide future research in this area.

CONCEPTUALIZING PEER GROUPS

Much of the confusion about peer group influences in adolescence stems from inconsistent usage of the term "peer group." Some regard information from an adolescent's association with a single agemate as evidence of peer group influence (e.g., Ide, Parkerson, Haertel, & Walberg, 1981). Others concentrate on an individual's circle of close friends as the locus of peer group influences (e.g., Berndt, 1979; Brown, Clasen, & Eichler, 1986; Cusick, 1973), and still others refer to the entire population of agemates (or all students in the same grade or same school) as a teenager's peer group (e.g., Faunce, 1984). Many researchers identify peer groups strictly on the basis of interaction patterns (Dunphy, 1963; Hallinan, 1979), whereas others insist that factors such as status, reputation, and prominent activities or personality traits figure heavily in defining peer groups (Crockett et al., 1984; Hartup, 1984; Larkin, 1979; Poveda, 1975).

For the sake of clarity, I believe it is best to group peer interactions in adolescence into three levels: dyads, cliques, and crowds. Dyads refer to pairs of friends or lovers; they are not peer groups and will not be dealt with in this chapter (instead, see Epstein, Chapter 6, this volume). Cliques are *interaction-based* peer groups, describing a small number of adolescents who "hang around" together and develop close relationships. Cliques can vary in size and density (the degree to which each person regards all other clique members as regular friends). They may be tight-knit and closed to outsiders, or they may include a central core of members and a set of marginal associates who join in clique interactions less frequently. Such variations force researchers to make some arbitrary decisions in defining or operationalizing cliques. Generally, however, adolescent cliques number from five to ten individuals, who all understand and appreciate each other better than

CHAPTER 7

The Role of Peer Groups in Adolescents' Adjustment to Secondary School

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Ask a group of young adults what they liked *least* about high school and, amidst their array of responses, one is likely to find a recurrent theme: "The cliques," "social stereotypes," "being prejudged by who you hang around with," they will say with a bemused groan or a tinge of anxiety. According to many scholars (Erikson, 1968; Hartup, 1984), peer group relations are a major factor in the developmental agenda of adolescence, so it is not surprising that they figure heavily in the lives of high school students. Because, however, adolescent peer groups bring to mind a host of undesirable images or memories for many people—conformity, clianness, stereotyping, peer pressure, delinquent gangs, and so on—peer group influences often are portrayed in unduly harsh and simplistic terms.

There is little question that peer group forces have a substantial impact on the academic interests and social development of many, if not most, high school students (J. C. Coleman, 1980; J. S. Coleman, 1961; Hartup, 1984). But there is some controversy and considerable confusion about the ways in which and the degrees to which peer groups exert their influence. Part of this stems from simple confusion about what constitutes a "peer group" or a "peer group influence." Thus, to fully appreciate the peer group's role in adolescents' adjustment to school, it seems sensible to begin with more basic issues: How should adolescent peer groups be defined or conceptualized? Why and how do they emerge during this stage of life, and how do they change over the course of the secondary school years? Once these issues are settled, it will be easier to examine the weightier issues of how peer groups exert influence, when and why adolescents are receptive to such influence, and what the consequences are for adolescents' attitudes and behaviors in school.

Attempts to address these questions, however, quickly confront a modest dilemma: Although most studies of adolescent peer groups have concentrated on high school populations, it is increasingly clear that the formative

do people outside the clique and who regard the clique as their primary base of interaction with groups of agemates.

By contrast, crowds are *reputation-based* peer groups—larger collectives of similarly stereotyped individuals who may or may not spend much time together. An adolescent's crowd affiliation denotes the primary attitudes or activities with which one is associated by peers. It can also be a commentary on one's status among peers or one's level of social skills. Crowd labels common among secondary school students reflect these characteristics: jocks, brains, druggies, populars, loners, unsociables, nerds, rogues, and so forth. Whereas clique norms develop from within, according to principles of small-group interaction (Moreland & Levine, 1982), crowd norms are imposed from outside the group, reflecting the stereotypic image that peers have of crowd members. This difference has important implications for the process of peer group influence at clique versus crowd levels.

Because, theoretically at least, crowd labels group together individuals with similar characteristics, clique members often may share the same crowd affiliation. Yet, the distinction between clique and crowd being drawn here is quite different from Dunphy's (1963), in which crowds were simply amalgams of several cliques. I suggest, instead, that cliques and crowds have different structural bases. One might conceive of cliques as the adolescent's friendship group (based on social interaction patterns) and crowds as her/his reference group (based on personal attitudes, interests, or abilities). Differentiating between dyads, cliques, and crowds helps considerably in clarifying peer group influences in adolescence.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES IN PEER GROUPS' STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

Peer groups exist and exert influence in students' lives well before adolescence. The common wisdom, however, is that both the importance and the power of influence of peer groups are far greater in adolescence than childhood (J. C. Coleman, 1980; Hartup, 1984). Undoubtedly, the intensification of peer influence is related to major structural transformations in peer groups that occur with the onset of adolescence. Subsequent changes in cliques and crowds across the secondary school years may alter the nature and extent of peer group influences. Thus, to understand peer group influences on secondary school students, it is advisable to begin with an overview of developmental changes in cliques and crowds across adolescence. Following this, I will comment on the causes of these changes and speculate on their consequences for the process of peer group influence.

Structural Transformations of Adolescent Cliques

Dunphy's (1963) classic ethnography remains the most comprehensive effort to describe structural transformations in peer groups across adolescence.

From observations of several groups of Australian teenagers, supplemented with interview and diary data, Dunphy identified five stages of peer group structure. In Dunphy's model the isolated, monosexual cliques that characterized early adolescent peer interactions begin to be drawn together as a result of the budding heterosexual interests of each clique's leaders. Opposite-gender cliques begin to meld in the third stage as members engage in "dating" relationships. Once heterosexual activities become the norm for members, the cliques seek associations with other cliques in order to form a "crowd," a loose association of cliques brought together for major social functions. This fourth stage of "fully developed crowds" continues until, toward the end of adolescence, crowds disintegrate into relatively isolated cliques reminiscent of early adolescence, except that the groups now are heterosexual.

Dunphy's (1963) study has never been formally replicated, and one may wonder whether or not the metamorphosis he described is still applicable 30 years later or in a society such as the United States where, unlike Australia in the late 1950s, most individuals remain in school through their late teens. In the early years of sociometric studies, researchers pointed out the complexity of clique structure in American high schools (J. S. Coleman, 1961; Gordon, 1957). The more sophisticated sociometric techniques for mapping cliques that grew out of these early studies limited the sample size to about 30 students. This was quite functional for studies of self-contained classrooms of elementary students (Lewis & Rosenblum, 1975) but not for secondary school students, who are less likely to draw their social network from one classroom of peers (Cusick, 1973). Some have been trapped by this methodological shortcoming (e.g., Hallinan, 1979), but others have provided more useful commentary on Dunphy's (1963) model.

Crockett et al. (1984) found that the percentage of middle school students who claimed to be part of a clique increased from 6th to 8th grade, suggesting that "cliquing" intensifies across early adolescence. Quite a different picture emerges from a recent sociometric study of Shrum and Cheek (1987), who mapped out the clique structure from students' listing of their closest friends in the entire school. They found a sharp decline from 6th to 12th grade in the percentage of students who were definitely clique members, and a modest increase across the same grades in the percentage who were isolates. Equally interesting was the steady increase across grades in the percentage of students whom they labeled "liaisons." These were students whose primary social ties were to peers in a variety of cliques or for whom most close associates were fellow liaisons (marginal members of a clique but with definite ties to people outside the clique).

In other words, rather than there being an increasing division of students into tight-knit cliques, the clique structure actually dissipated across the secondary school grades into a melange of more loose-knit ties. Shrum and Cheek (1987) labeled this the "degrouching" process, but it might better be regarded as evidence of an individual's emergence, in Dunphy's (1963) terms, from isolated cliques of early adolescence to middle adolescent, fully de-

veloped crowds. Dunphy's crowds represent a loose association of cliques who socialize together. Although close associates may still be drawn primarily from one's own clique, members of neighboring cliques in the crowd may become part of one's larger circle of friends. A key question is whether or not "crowdlike" boundaries can be drawn around the network of clique and liaison relationships that emerge in Shrum and Cheek's (1987) data.

The general trend toward a loosening of clique ties across adolescence does not hold true across all types of crowds, however (returning to the conceptualization of crowds as reputation-based entities). Ethnographers have found that the popular or elite crowds, for example, seem to maintain tight-knit relationships, earning members a reputation for being "cliquish" or snobbish (Eder, 1985; Larkin, 1979).

Developmental Transformations of Adolescent Crowds

It is more difficult to ascertain developmental transformations in crowds. Because these are reputation-based rather than interaction-based entities, they are difficult to observe. In some sense, they have a greater reality in adolescents' minds than in the day-to-day interaction patterns of students. At this cognitive level, there is mounting evidence of developmental shifts in adolescents' conceptions of crowds and the crowd structure. O'Brien and Bierman (1987) examined adolescents' open-ended descriptions of the identifying features and characteristic attitudes and behaviors of crowds they perceived in their school. Across the three grade levels in their sample (5th, 8th, 11th grade), conceptions of crowds became broader and focused more on dispositional characteristics and less on behavior patterns. Abstract and relative comparisons among crowds (such as arranging the crowds into a status hierarchy) were quite common among 11th graders, but rare among 5th graders.

With a more sophisticated cognitive map of the peer group system, it is not surprising that older adolescents seem better able to identify their position within the system. Brown, Clasen, and Niess (1987), for example, reported that the percentage of students who correctly identified the crowd with which they were associated most often by peers increased significantly with age. Interestingly, however, the percentage varied substantially across crowds: About 75% of jocks and druggies correctly guessed their peer-rated crowd affiliation, compared to less than 15% of those classified by peers as loners, nobodies or unpopulars. It remains to be seen in future studies whether unpopulars lack the cognitive sophistication of students in other crowds or simply prefer to ignore the undesirable label placed on them by peers.

Not all developmental patterns in adolescents' conceptions of crowds are linear changes. Using a snowball sampling technique in a study of three, overwhelmingly white, midwestern communities, Brown and Clasen (1986) identified a sample of students regarded by peers both as exemplars of the range of crowds in the school and as especially aware of the school's social

structure. In individual interviews, respondents were asked to name the major crowds they perceived in their school. Responses were coded into nine major "crowd type" categories (brains, druggies, jocks, loners, nobodies, normals, populars, toughs, or special interest groups) that had been identified in previous studies, or into a "hybrid" (a mixture of two major crowd types) or "uncodeable" category. The average number of crowds named increased across grade levels, from just under 8 among 6th graders to over 10 among 12th graders. The average number of major crowd types represented in respondents' lists also increased modestly across this grade range. More interesting, however, was that the percentage of crowds named that fit into the major crowd types (that is, that weren't coded as hybrids or uncodeable) climbed from 80% in 6th grade to 95% in 9th grade, then fell steadily through 12th grade. In addition, respondents' awareness of specific crowd types did not all follow the same grade-related trajectory. Druggie and brain crowd types, as well as hybrids, appeared more often on the lists of high school respondents than middle school respondents; toughs, noted by nearly all of the 6th and 7th graders, were rarely mentioned by high school respondents.

One possible explanation of these findings is that the range of provisional identities open to adolescents does not remain constant across adolescence. The more constricted range of crowd types (the concentration on major crowd types) visible to students in the middle of the secondary school years is noteworthy because this is the age of greatest susceptibility to peer pressure (Berndt, 1979; Costanzo & Shaw, 1966). It is subtle evidence that efforts to cut across crowds or to forge a self-concept somewhat apart from standard identity prototypes puts a student at odds with the peer group structure in the early high school years. Because, theoretically (Newman & Newman, 1976), fitting into a crowd is a major preoccupation at this age, students may decide to forgo efforts to forge a less stereotyped identity until the later high school years, when the peer group structure seems to make more room for hybrid or less orthodox crowds.

Forces Fostering the Emergence of Peer Groups

We should wonder what propels adolescents from the rather simple network of classroom-based cliques in elementary school into the complex arrangement of cliques and crowds that emerge in secondary school. Shrum and Cheek (1987) point out there has been little systematic study of the restructuring of cliques in early adolescence. The same may be said about the emergence of crowds. Nevertheless, one can hazard guesses about what triggers these changes. For example, with the transition into middle school or junior high school, students generally move from a school structure based on self-contained classrooms (in which most time is spent with the same small number of agemates) to one in which they confront a much larger, constantly shifting array of peers, many of whom they have never seen

before. Typically, the new environment is more age homogeneous, bringing together students from only two or three grades as opposed to the six or seven of elementary school. Supervision by adults is looser, as teachers and administrators move to encourage some sense of autonomy and personal responsibility among students (Eichhorn, 1980; Ianni, 1983; Rutter, 1983). Because of these factors, it is no longer easy for students to know personally all the peers with whom they interact regularly. To complicate matters further, one's familiar circle of associates from grade school may be dispersed among different classes and different activities, undermining the survival of these friendships (Eder, 1985). At the same time, peer interactions become a more central preoccupation of daily life in school (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1975).

Moving into this environment, early adolescents seek new strategies for negotiating the rush of new peer relationships. Securing one's place in a clique prevents students from having to confront this sea of new faces alone. Employing crowd labels to stereotype strangers and acquaintances provides a useful strategy for responding to peers outside one's own clique: Who might I befriend? Who should I avoid in order to keep in good standing with current friends? In other words, the stabilization of cliques and the classification of peers into crowds are adaptive responses to the emergence of a larger peer network.

Both of these responses, however, also reflect other developmental milestones of early adolescence. High on the agenda of this stage of life is achieving greater emotional and behavioral autonomy from parents (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). At approximately the same age, researchers report a developmental change in friendship expectations—the shift from a primary interest in friends as activity partners to insistence on loyalty and trust in friendship ties (Bigelow, 1977; Selman, 1980). It is as if early adolescents counter their psychological distancing from parents with an insistence on more stable and intimate relationships with peers.

From an Eriksonian (1968) perspective, this is quite appropriate because of the early adolescent's nascent preoccupation with developing a sense of identity. Newman and Newman (1976) conceive the "identity crisis" as a two-stage process. In the first stage, during early adolescence, the normative crisis involves struggles to achieve group identity versus alienation. That is, the central concern is becoming attached to a group of peers who can provide friendship, support, and reassurance of one's self-worth. Belonging to a clique that is not closely supervised by adults helps to wean early adolescents from psychological dependence on parents (increasing their sense of individual autonomy). Cliques that are stable, tight-knit, and fairly rigid in membership boundaries can nurture the loyal and trusting relationships (among cliques members) that foster identity testing. The obvious, sometimes rigidly enforced behavioral norms of the clique provide a provisional sense of identity, a temporary source of self-definition while members fashion a more autonomous sense of identity. Furthermore, having a set of crowds with

sharply different norms or provisional identities helps each student locate a group that fits well with her or his own dispositions and abilities. In Newman and Newman's (1976, p. 266) words, "Peer group membership involves the development of close friendship bonds among age mates and the process of personal assessment about which peers will make satisfying companions."

Of course, this system works only when students have sufficient social-cognitive sophistication to sort out the different provisional identities of crowds. Understanding the concept of a "crowd" requires an ability to deal with abstract concepts, to realize, for example, that there is more to being a "jock" than just playing sports. The jock crowd stereotype also embraces certain attitudes toward school, ways of relating to adults or members of the opposite sex, self-conceptions (a friendly sort of cockiness or egotism), and so on (Larkin, 1979; Sherif & Sherif, 1964). The fact that such conceptualizations of crowds appear initially in early adolescence (O'Brien & Bierman, 1987) certainly helps explain why crowds themselves emerge at this stage of life.

In other words, it is probably no accident that cliques become more autonomous or that a well-articulated image of crowds emerges in the minds of most young people at the beginning of adolescence. These seem to be adaptive responses to features of the social system that stem from the structure of secondary schools. Moreover, such responses appear to facilitate the psychosocial agenda of adolescence and, in turn, are facilitated by social-cognitive developments that occur at about this age.

Forces Shaping the Peer Groups That Emerge

How cliques come to incorporate structural features necessary to meet adolescents' psychological and social needs is an important and intriguing topic for future research. To date, however, investigators have been more interested in how the emerging system of adolescent peer groups is related to the adult world. Some argue that each crowd represents a different subculture that has its counterpart in adult society. This theme, appearing initially in Clark's (1962) description of the "academic," "fun," and "delinquent" teenage subcultures and continuing in later studies (Buff, 1970; Cohen, 1979), regards adolescent peer groups merely as points of entry into prototypic adult lifestyles. Others regard the adolescent peer system as wholly separate from the adult world (J. S. Coleman, 1961). Different peer groups represent different patterns of activities or value orientations within that self-contained system.

A more careful reading of information on peer groups in secondary school compels a less extreme position. Adolescent crowds do not merely mimic alternative adult life styles, nor are they impervious to influences outside the adolescent culture. Instead, a number of forces seem to influence the types of groups that emerge in secondary school, as well as the relationships among groups. First among these is the student's socioeconomic status.

Some accounts of the British school system suggest that cliques and crowds develop strictly along social class lines (Willis, 1977), partly, no doubt, because British adolescents' peer relationships spring more from neighborhood associates than school associates. Hollingshead (1949) argued that American peer groups also tend to separate the social classes, but more recent studies suggest that crowds are not so socioeconomically homogeneous (Clasen & Brown, 1985; Larkin, 1979). Crowds such as the populars or elites often are portrayed as drawing rather exclusively from students in high socioeconomic strata (Buff, 1970; Larkin, 1979); when asked what it takes to be part of these crowds, students often will say, "being from the right family" or simply, "money helps" (J. S. Coleman, 1961). Groups such as normals, loners, brains, or "special interest" (e.g., performers) crowds, however, seem to draw from more diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (Clasen & Brown).

A second influential force is the ethnic or racial composition of the school. In schools with a variety of ethnic groups or a substantial minority population, race or ethnicity itself may be the defining variable for crowds. For example, Larkin (1979) found that along with jocks, greasers, freaks, and intellectuals, blacks were an identifiable crowd in the suburban community high school he studied. In another study that compared peer and family influences among students in rural, suburban, and urban areas, Ianni (1983) discovered the standard fare of personality/activity-based crowds in the suburban school (jocks, freaks, etc.), whereas crowds in the more racially mixed urban school were endowed with ethnic labels. These two studies stand as exceptions to the predominant focus on white, middle-class populations in research on school-based peer groups in adolescence. Thus, questions about how ethnically mixed adolescent peer groups are, or under what conditions race supersedes personality/activity stereotypes as the basis for defining crowds must await further research on racially and ethnically diverse populations of secondary school students.

A community's predominant value system can influence not only the types of crowds that emerge among the community's adolescents but also the values within each crowd. J. S. Coleman (1961), for example, demonstrated that the importance of good grades in gaining membership in the elite crowd in different high schools varied in rough equivalence with the intellectual climate of each community. From my own conversations with teenagers, it appears that groups such as jocks or "bandies" enjoy more status and larger membership in schools in which athletic competitions or band concerts are community-wide events, rather than being attended primarily by friends and parents of participants.

The menagerie of adolescent peer groups also seems to shift in response to historical events. Crowd labels (e.g., the "beatniks" of the 1950s or "freaks" of the 1960s) may capture the ephemeral markings of one generation of teenagers. In other cases, the crowd may persist but undergo a metamorphosis in response to historical events. From interviews with students

and faculty, Larkin (1979) traced the transformation of one crowd, the "politicos," from a small group of radicals at the fringe of the school's peer group structure in the 1960s to a firmly rooted, high status crowd by the late 1970s. Ironically, this group, born in a rebellious spirit of seeking greater freedom of expression for fellow students, had become a conservative force, censoring students' behaviors that might invite the school administration to rescind hard-won liberties that represented the politicians' power base among students.

Finally, adults can influence the structure of peer groups through more direct and intentional behaviors. In a classic study of peer group dynamics Sherif and Sherif (1953) created a highly competitive environment in which to place groups of preadolescent boys at summer camp. As expected, the environment created strong intragroup loyalty and fierce antagonism between groups. When conditions were changed, however, so that desirable goals could be accomplished only by the groups working together, the Sherifs witnessed a sudden end to the antagonism as the groups combined to work in a remarkable spirit of cooperation. Of course, it may not be possible for adults to have such powerful influences over older adolescents or in less controllable environments. Yet, in a less conscious fashion, such behind-the-scenes manipulation of the social environment by adults may be quite routine in secondary schools. Newman and Newman (1976), for example, point out that teachers rely upon certain peer groups to accomplish particular tasks in a school. Thus, teachers have a vested interest in maintaining certain structures and patterns of association among crowds.

In sum, the growth of autonomous cliques and the emergence of crowds seem to be part of the developmental timetable of secondary school students. But the specific contours of the peer group system are much less universal. They bend to the influence of such factors as the community's size, value systems, and socioeconomic and ethnic composition. They also reflect historical forces and, to some extent, adults' efforts to mold the adolescent peer group system to meet their own needs. All of these factors undercut the autonomy or isolation from the adult world that characterizes the image of adolescent peer groups in the minds of many teenagers and adults. The subtle operation of these forces, however, allows this image to remain and, perhaps, to encourage misguided assumptions among researchers about the nature and degree of influence that peer groups exert over secondary school students.

Changes in Peer Group Membership Across Adolescence

As clique boundaries loosen and the range of crowds shifts across adolescence, it is reasonable to expect that membership in cliques and crowds also will undergo changes. Erikson (1968) implies that forging a self-concept is facilitated by "trying on" a variety of identities. This would require shifting one's crowd membership several times in order to sample a range of pro-

visional identities. Unfortunately, there is virtually no research on the stability of peer group membership in adolescence. Investigators have reported on the relatively short-term (Skorepa, Horrocks, & Thompson, 1963) and long-term stability (Epstein, 1983; Kandell, 1978) of adolescent friendship dyads. Sociometric (Hallman, 1979) and ethnographic studies (Eder, 1985) have reported on the stability of early adolescent cliques, but only among an arbitrarily fixed range of youngsters.

Studies of the stability of peer group membership in adolescence are sorely needed. For several reasons, however, I would suspect that shifts in crowd allegiance are not common. First, it must be understood that adolescents do not choose to be part of a crowd so much as they are "selected in" by their personality or behavior. The preadolescent absorbed with computers and Dungeons and Dragons is destined, in some sense, to become part of the brain crowd, just as the outgoing athlete with a fastidious eye for the latest fashion is destined for membership in the jock or popular crowd. Early adolescents do not select a crowd but are classified into one by peers, based on attitudes and interests. Even cliques do not routinely open their arms to any student who wishes to join them (Eder, 1985). Because initial clique and crowd membership is not simply a matter of free choice, subsequent group affiliation is unlikely to be a matter of free choice either.

A second constraint on shifting groups is that because crowd affiliations are reputation-based, they reflect relatively enduring personality traits or behaviors that must change *both* in the individual and in the eyes of peers before a student can consummate a shift in peer groups. Druggies who have gone through a rehabilitation program, for example, may not win easy acceptance by other crowds despite apparent changes in attitudes and behavior. They must live down their reputation and suffer the skepticism of peers in other groups—as well as their own crowd—that their conversion is only temporary.

Related to this is a third constraint: Although teenagers often are averse to discuss it, there is evidence from ethnographic (Eder, 1985; Larkin, 1979) as well as interview and survey data (Brown & Lohr, 1987; J. S. Coleman, 1961; Crockett et al., 1984) that crowds in most schools are arranged in an informal status hierarchy. In order to protect their own status ranking, crowds typically resist opening their ranks to expatriots of groups lower in status (J. S. Coleman; Eder). Crowd members also may be highly skeptical of overtures from students in higher status groups for fear that their friendliness is some kind of mockery or subterfuge. These dynamics are rich fodder for screenwriters, who delight in recounting the whimsical or tragic difficulties of relationships between friends or lovers from widely distant crowds in the adolescent hierarchy (for example, such movies as *Grease*, *Lucas*, or *Pretty in Pink*). Shifts in membership seem most probable between crowds with adjacent positions in the status hierarchy.

A final constraint, alluded to earlier, is that the range of crowds may not remain stable across adolescence (Brown et al., 1987). A member of the

normals in middle school who wishes to achieve recognition as a brain in high school may learn, much to her or his dismay, that the "brains" are not a recognized crowd in the high school. This can also work in the opposite direction, as when a student who has achieved recognition as a performer in one school transfers to a school in which performers are not a widely acknowledged group.

These constraints on shifting crowd affiliations across adolescence cast an image of adolescent peer groups as a relatively rigid system in which students find their place early in secondary school and tend to remain "locked in" to it. Certainly, for most students, this would constrict the process that Erikson (1968) described of "trying on" several provisional identities—fitting into several crowds—before settling on a more stable sense of identity. Again, however, because students' membership in crowds is more a matter of cognitive perceptions than concrete reality, the system may not be as rigid as it appears. Researchers who have attempted to classify students into crowds (Brown & Clasen, 1986; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1985) have found that only a fraction of students are associated exclusively with one crowd. Many are perceived as partially in one crowd, partially in another, or in a distinguishable crowd that represents a hybrid of two larger groups (e.g., the "party jocks" or the "preppie brains"). Still others are portrayed as floaters, drifting easily in and out of several crowds and seemingly accepted by each group. Stereotypic portrayals of crowds belie the somewhat fluid character of crowd membership (Varenne, 1982).

Although evidence about the stability of clique and crowd membership is lacking, two related factors may provide a good starting point for research in this area. First, using quite different methodologies (self-report versus projective responses) on samples of adolescents in different nations and decades, both Brown, Eicher, and Petre (1986) and J. C. Coleman (1974) found that the importance attached to belonging to a peer group peaked in early adolescence and then diminished steadily through the end of secondary school. This waning concern with fitting into a group, which is consistent with Newman and Newman's (1976) conjectures, should have an impact on students' interest in changing groups or defending the boundaries of crowds against unwelcome outsiders. In fact, it may be one explanation for a second factor: the "senior year" phenomenon noted by many ethnographers (Cusick, 1973; Larkin, 1979; Varenne, 1982). Students report that in their last year of high school there is a curious dissipation of crowd boundaries and a new sense of cohesiveness among class members. Reminiscent of the Sheriffs' (1953) work on integrating crowds through creating superordinate goals, it is as if the class draws together to confront their shared challenge of adjusting to the demands and opportunities of life beyond high school. Here, at the other end of secondary school, the early adolescent preoccupations with joining a clique, fitting into a crowd, and protecting one's social turf against others no longer have much significance in the shadow of the new developmental tasks of young adulthood. As late adolescents join forces

to face these new challenges, the peer group system they carefully crafted to negotiate now-completed tasks seems to disintegrate.

THE LOCUS OF PEER GROUP INFLUENCES

The numerous gaps in our understanding of how peer groups and group membership evolve across adolescence limit our understanding of just how peer groups influence teenagers' school and social behavior. Nevertheless, researchers have drawn at least a partial portrait of the process of peer group influence. Cliques exert influence through peer pressure, by offering desirable rewards to those who conform to group norms and/or undesirable sanctions to those who resist them. Newman and Newman (1976) emphasize the role of peer pressure in maintaining group cohesiveness and according some meaning to group membership, but they stop short of spelling out the specific processes by which peer pressure is exerted. Ethnographic accounts of adolescent peer group interaction imply that pressure or influence is sometimes direct and overt, as members exhort the person to do something or *not* do something, and other times much more subtle—the sudden, unspoken ostracization of a member who does not conform to group norms, for example (Cusick, 1973; Eder, 1985; Varenne, 1982). Regardless of its form, peer pressure is influential only if adolescents are willing to respond to it. Researchers have paid more attention to adolescents' general susceptibility to peer pressure than to their tendency to attend to one source of pressure over another. But to understand the locus of peer group influences among adolescents, three issues must be addressed: teenagers' susceptibility to peer influence, their perceptions of actual peer pressures, and their attentiveness to a particular source of peer influence.

Susceptibility to Peer Pressure

Adolescents are "developmentally primed" to attend to both direct and subtle pressures because their willingness to conform to peer pressures, generally, exceeds that of both children and young adults. Susceptibility to peer pressure is not a constant force across adolescence, however. It seems to reach its height in early adolescence, then steadily diminish to levels more characteristic of early childhood (Berndt, 1979; Bixenstine, DeCorte, & Bixenstine, 1976; Costanzo & Shaw, 1966). Even at the peak of susceptibility, however, adolescents seem less receptive to antisocial peer pressures than to those pressures involving more innocuous social behaviors (Berndt, 1979; Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986).

The power of peer pressure in adolescence stems not only from individuals' heightened receptiveness to peers' suggestions but also from the waning influence of parental pressures or expectations (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Susceptibility to parental pressures diminishes steadily from childhood through

adolescence (Berndt, 1979) so that, even though middle adolescents' willingness to follow peers' directives returns to the level observed in middle childhood, the impact of peer pressure on individuals' behavior does not dissipate so quickly.

Perceptions of Peer Pressure

Studies of adolescents' susceptibility to peer pressure have dealt with hypothetical or contrived pressure situations. They do not indicate just how secondary school students perceive peer pressure. A more recent set of studies has given us a better sense of students' perceptions. Brown and his colleagues (Brown, 1982; Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986; Clasen & Brown, 1985) derived a list of common adolescent peer pressures and asked samples of middle and high school students to rate the degree and direction of pressure they perceived from their friends. In their findings they emphasized four points. First, peer pressure is multidimensional: Adolescents reported notable pressures from peers in a variety of areas of their life, not just in relation to the antisocial behaviors that are often of greatest interest to adults. Second, peer pressure is multidirectional. That is, whereas some students reported that they felt pressure to use drugs, to study hard, or whatever, others reported that their friends generally discouraged such activities. A related third point is that adolescents often report feeling peer pressure toward positive, adaptive behaviors. For example, in all schools in which these investigators used their peer pressure instrument, the item receiving the highest average rating was pressure to finish high school. Pressure to "excel, to do something better than anyone else" also received a surprisingly high score, considering the common image of peer pressure as a force compelling conformity. Such findings are consistent with Newman and Newman's (1976, p. 269) argument that peer group expectations "... may be perceived by the adolescent as a force drawing him to be more than he thinks he is, to be braver, more confident, more outgoing, etc."

A final point emerging from these studies is that perceived peer pressures are not uniform across adolescents, but vary by such factors as age and crowd affiliation. Older adolescents reported significantly less pressure toward family involvement, slightly more school involvement pressures, and substantially more pressures in the misconduct area (particularly regarding sex and drinking). These age differences point out the possible role of peer pressure in moving adolescents along the developmental pathway to adulthood (relinquishing parental dependencies and practicing more adultlike behaviors).

Of course, the importance of peer pressure is not simply that it exists but that it has some influence over adolescents' attitudes or behaviors. In addition to ethnographic evidence, there is limited support for such a connection in self-report studies. Brown, Clasen, and Eicher (1986) found significant but modest associations between the strength of pressures secondary stu-

dents perceived from friends and the extent of self-reported involvement in related activities. Associations remained significant after controlling for respondents' susceptibility to peer pressure. Perceived pressures explained more of the variance in self-reported misconduct (9%) than peer involvement (frequency and importance of socializing with peers) (3%). More interesting was that the association between perceived pressures and self-reported behaviors was stronger for students who were relatively more susceptible to peer pressure.

Three limitations of these studies should be addressed in future work on peer pressure. First, there was no validation of the respondents' perceptions, no indication that students' reports of the pressures they received from friends corresponded to a more objective evaluation of such pressures. Second, self-reports are likely to yield underestimates of peer pressure because teenagers may be unaware of the subtle nature of some peer pressures, or unwilling to admit their friends would generate such pressures. Perceived pressures were stronger in the retrospective accounts of college students than Brown (1982) surveyed than among his teenage samples. Finally, and most importantly, there is little in this body of studies to indicate the specific processes by which peer pressure is expressed. How direct or indirect, how persistent and consistent are the pressures that students sense from friends? What sanctions are applied to those who violate group norms? What forms of pressure are most effective in constraining and directing adolescents' behavior? These are important issues about which we know very little.

Several strategies can help address these limitations. One way to validate perceived peer pressures is to compare an adolescent's description of pressure received from friends in a given area with his/her friends' assessment of the pressure they have exerted in that area. Such an approach requires the investigator to identify and work within well-defined friendship groups (cliques). Also, asking about peer pressure in concrete, behavioral terms (e.g., how often have your friends encouraged you to study for a class, versus how much pressure do you feel to do well in school) would help to minimize underreporting of pressure and specify processes of peer influence.

Sources of Peer Influence

The common image of peer pressure is one of a monolithic force, imposing a relatively standard set of values and behaviors with relatively equal intensity on all students in secondary schools. This notion, inspired by J. S. Coleman's (1961) classic study of the adolescent peer culture, has been disputed in a number of studies. Smith (1987) pointed out that the concept of a monolithic youth culture, especially popular in the early 1960s, was quickly modified to suggest that adolescents occupied multiple youth cultures. In a reanalysis of some of Coleman's data, Cohen (1979) concluded that there was not one (as Coleman had maintained) but three distinct value orientations among the sample's students.

J. S. Coleman's (1961) contention that students were influenced most by the school's social elite, whether or not they were members of the elite, has been questioned in another reanalysis of his data by Cohen (1983). In this study, the evidence suggested that students were influenced by the value systems of peers whom they selected as friends, but not by the values of students who were not considered friends. Therefore, contrary to Coleman's assertions, the only students to be influenced heavily by the norms and value system of the elite crowd were the students who comprised this group. An ethnographic corollary comes from Cusick (1973), who was particularly struck by the tendency of the cliques he observed to simply ignore outsiders. When a nonmember attempted to enter an ongoing interaction of group members—joining a conversation between Cusick and the clique, for example, or being with the clique as part of a work group for a class assignment—the clique responded by acting as if the outsider literally was not present and did not exist. In most cases, neither the clique nor the outsider seemed to be particularly surprised or bothered by this arrangement. The tendency of cliques to ignore outsiders should seriously undermine the ability of one individual or one crowd to influence another group.

Researchers have been more attentive to—and more successful at—sketching the dynamics of influence patterns within cliques. Studies of the coalescence of cliques in summer camp settings demonstrate the tendency for dominance positions to emerge quickly and, especially at either end of the dominance hierarchy, to remain quite stable through the natural history of the group (Savin-Williams, 1987; Sherif, White, & Harvey, 1955). The power of the most dominant member to influence group opinion is readily apparent in such studies. Yet, members beyond the most dominant person also wield influence, albeit more constricted.

In some cliques the leadership role seems to be divided or to shift according to group tasks. Dunphy (1963), for example, discovered that most of the consolidated cliques in his sample had two leaders, serving very different functions. One, the gregarious sociocenter, modeled appropriate heterosexual behavior for group members while the task leader, working quietly behind the scenes, made more general decisions about group activities, membership, and enforcement of group norms. Sherif and Sherif (1964) reported on one clique in which the most dominant member temporarily relinquished his leadership role when the group played basketball. Consciously or unconsciously, the leader recognized the superior talents of another member in directing the clique's activity during this task.

With the exception of Cusick (1973), all of these studies focused on clique interactions in quite circumscribed settings. Cliques that are based on interactions in secondary school must cope with the demands of a more complex social setting, which rewards a broader range of skills. It is likely that different abilities are needed to function effectively in academic tasks, in structured extracurricular activities, in informal interactions under the loose supervision of adults (lunchroom conversation or attendance at athletic con-

tests), and in social situations without adult supervision. It may well be that leadership or dominance in cliques shifts noticeably as members move from one school task to the next. Or it may be that separate cliques emerge for each activity, so that a student is part of one clique in academic settings and another clique (probably with partial overlap in membership) in extracurricular or less structured socializing settings. This would help account for the loose-knit structuring of cliques that Shrum and Cheek (1987) found in secondary schools. At any rate, the tendency for leadership or influence to pass from one member to another may be more characteristic of adolescent cliques than we realize from existing research.

There is also evidence that attempts by clique leaders to exert influence in areas beyond their own competence can have disastrous effects for the clique. Cusick (1973) describes a fascinating case in which a male clique decided to work on a major project for Humanities Class. Jim, the most dominant member, encouraged the group's natural inclination to turn class work time into socializing time and to postpone serious work on the assignment. As the deadline drew near, other clique members began working to salvage the project, but all members ultimately received low grades on the project, and Jim's grade was the lowest. When the teacher commented to the group on their mediocre work—and Jim's poor leadership—group members voiced their resentment toward Jim with a barrage of sarcastic comments. Ultimately, Jim was displaced not only from his position of dominance but from the group altogether. Cusick lamented the teacher's ability to upset peer group relationships, but perhaps the greater lesson is that without an ability to adjust influence patterns to the multiple demands of secondary school, cliques have little opportunity to survive.

Identifying Adolescents' Reference Group

If there is some fluidity in dominance or leadership within cliques, then the pattern of peer influence within adolescent crowds also may not be as straightforward or rigid as we normally conceive it to be. J. S. Coleman's (1961) expectation that all adolescents are influenced primarily by the "leading crowd" in school may not be so much inaccurate as it is an oversimplification. Students who are content with their current clique and crowd affiliations are likely to be influenced most by the norms and pressures of these groups. But a substantial number of adolescents are only loosely associated with a peer group or aspire to membership in a group other than the one to which they belong. For these people, the peers with whom they would like to associate may be a more influential reference group than the peers with whom they really do associate. Indirect support for this possibility comes from studies of the association between peer group affiliation and adolescents' self-esteem. J. S. Coleman found that, among students who were not part of the school's elite crowd, the proportion desiring to be someone else if they could—an indication of low self-esteem—was much

higher among those who wished to be part of the elites than among those without such a desire. In a more elaborate study, Brown and Lohr (1987) compared the self-perceived and peer-rated crowd affiliations of students in one high school. Some students emerged as "outsiders," not classified by peers into any major crowd and not even recognized by most of the members of any crowd. Within this group, those who recognized they were outsiders but wished to be part of a crowd had significantly lower self-esteem than those who acknowledged their position but seemed content not to be in a group.

It is, of course, a leap of faith to presume that such differences in self-esteem are highly correlated with differences in students' reference group orientation. But the research strategies typically employed by investigators seem to work against identifying this phenomenon. Ethnographies tend to concentrate on one or two cohesive cliques whose members are quite satisfied with their group affiliation (e.g., Cusick, 1973; Eder, 1985). Survey researchers often determine peer group membership by measuring students' value systems: Adolescents whose values match the values of a particular crowd are presumed to be members of that peer group (e.g., Cohen, 1979). Because, however, crowd affiliation is determined by peer assignment, it should be measured independently of self-perceived or ideally desired crowd affiliation.

In fact, a clear understanding of sources of peer influence requires the coordination of several pieces of information from adolescents. Peer ratings can reveal how consistently a student is associated (by reputation) with one or more crowds. Sociometric data can indicate whether the student is a central or peripheral member of a given clique or crowd. Self-report responses can reveal the importance of belonging to a group, along with the student's sense of actual and desired crowd membership. This information, coupled with an understanding of the norms and pressures characteristic of each crowd, can help us understand whether or not and when students are influenced most by their membership group or their reference group. It can also shed light on the influence process among "floaters"—those students who seem to fit into several crowds and who move easily among them—as well as the large mass of students who do not seem to fit clearly into any clique or crowd (Larkin, 1979).

CONSEQUENCES OF PEER GROUP INFLUENCES

The ultimate concern of research on adolescent peer groups, of course, is the consequences that group membership or group influences have on adolescents' attitudes, behavior, or psychological well-being. One area of great interest has been how peer groups shape adolescents' academic aspirations and achievement. One could expect considerable peer influence in school-related behaviors because, as Cusick (1973) pointed out, it is rare to find a

teenager not interacting with friends during the school day. Even during classes, Cusick found that students carry on conversations with friends concurrently with their work on class assignments. On the other hand, because academically related matters rarely enter the conversation (Cusick), peer influence in this area may be minimal. Unfortunately, the debate is difficult to settle because studies in this area bear the marks of the deficits in conceptualizing peer groups or measuring group influences that I have pointed out.

Shortcomings of Existing Research

Ide et al. (1981) reviewed 10 major studies of peer influences on academic achievement. The method employed by most researchers was either to correlate a student's perceptions of a best friend's achievement or aspirations with self-reported standing on the same variable or to use sociometric techniques to identify friendship dyads and then correlate the two students' self-reports on the achievement variable of interest. There are three major problems with such approaches. First, the unit of analysis, conceptually and empirically, is a dyad, even though the author purports to measure peer group influence. Occasionally, students are asked to give a generalized response for their group of friends—what I would call a clique—but these data are virtually always respondents' perceptions of clique members' behavior, rather than more objective measures (see Ide et al., 1981). Reliance on such self-perceptions is a second common shortcoming with existing studies because, as Davies and Kandel (1981), among others, have shown, self-perceived measures artificially inflate the degree of similarity between self and other in studies of achievement variables.

The most serious shortcoming, however, is that whereas researchers express an interest in measuring peer group influence, they actually measure peer similarity—the simple correlation between self and other's attitudes or behavior. There is considerable evidence that the similarity between pairs of friends or acquaintances is more likely to have been a prerequisite to rather than a consequence of their relationship. Cohen (1977), for example, demonstrated that the homogeneity within peer groups is primarily a result of homophilic selection of friends, rather than a result of group conformity pressures or the departure of members whose attitudes deviate from group norms. In a later, longitudinal study that controlled for initial similarity of friendship pairs, Cohen (1983) found that peer influence was only weakly associated with students' college aspirations.

Efforts to measure peer group influences more precisely in this area are confounded by the reciprocal nature of peer influences. In examining friendship dyads, both Kandel (1978) and Epstein (1983) found that similarity is both a cause and consequence of friendship. Furthermore, both studies reported that stable, reciprocated dyads had more influence over each other's academic orientations than unreciprocated relationships or those that seemed

to dissipate over the course of a school year. Extending the logic of these findings to clique-level interactions, one would expect to find that, by dint of shared personal characteristics, like-minded students will coalesce into cliques that vary in stability and closeness and that those in more stable and closely knit cliques will show greater evidence of peer influence.

The inverse association observed between academic achievement and deviance also may be traced, in part, to a sort of reciprocal pattern of peer influence. Smith (1987) cited several British studies that indicated that poor achievement patterns propel adolescents into peer groups with a more delinquent orientation. Once there, individuals respond to group pressures to engage in delinquent activities, and participation in such activities further undermines their chances of improving academic standing. Galambos and Silbereisen (1987) also found that poor school performance predicted subsequent involvement with delinquent peers, although, in their longitudinal study, they did not see the reciprocal effect of this peer group association further diminishing the student's achievement level.

Davies and Kandel (1981) reported that girls were more likely than boys to adjust their academic aspirations in line with peer norms. This is an interesting contrast to studies showing that adolescent boys are more susceptible than girls to antisocial peer pressures (Berndt, 1979; Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986). More importantly, however, it points up the probability that peer groups are not necessarily equally successful in influencing achievement patterns of adolescents who differ on such factors as age, race, or crowd affiliation.

The Influence of Peer Group Norms

Ironically, the most compelling evidence of peer group influence on academic achievement concerns one of the most subtle influence processes—the crowd's implicit messages about what it takes to be popular. J. S. Coleman (1961) found that most students regarded "getting good grades" as well down the list of prerequisites for being part of the "leading crowd" in high school, although the salience of good grades did vary in accordance with the academic orientation of the community. To validate students' opinions, Coleman derived several sociometric ratings of students' popularity among peers (average number of nominations by classmates as someone who is popular with girls, as a friend of the respondent, or as someone with whom the respondent would like to be friends) and then compared the popularity of students regarded by peers as the best athletes to that of students regarded as the best scholars. Generally, across schools, those regarded as both outstanding scholars and athletes enjoyed the highest popularity. Students recognized only as good athletes had lower ratings on popularity but considerably higher than those recognized only as good scholars, whose ratings were only marginally higher than those of the average student. Thus, the reality of sociometric ratings matched students' perceptions that concen-

trating energies on academic achievement was not a successful strategy for achieving peer status.

Other studies, however, have not necessarily confirmed J. S. Coleman's (1961) reading of the link between peer popularity and academic achievement. In a sample of Nigerian adolescents, Eyo (1984) reported only a weak inverse association ($r = -.20$) between the need for achievement and the need to appear socially desirable among peers. Ishiyama and Chabassol (1985) found that fear of the social consequences of academic success was greater among girls than boys, and greater among middle school than high school students. This fear was due not only to the negative sanctions high achievement would engender from peers, but also because getting good grades would make one stand out among peers or would create an expectation for high achievement that would be difficult to maintain. Finally, Faunce (1984) reported a strong, positive correlation ($r = .73$) between grade point average and sociometrically determined status among peers in a sample of high school seniors. In sum, academic achievement is consistently significantly associated with peer popularity among adolescents, but not always in the same direction or to the same degree for both genders or different age groups.

Race also may be a mediating factor. Investigators have expressed concern that black students, especially in urban, lower class secondary schools, encounter strong pressure from black peers not to do too well in school. High achievement is associated with "acting white," renouncing one's cultural roots, and trying to appear better than fellow blacks. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) use this argument to explain the diligent efforts of bright students in one all-black high school to avoid being labeled a "brainiac." Students are confronted with the choice of either masking their abilities by earning less than outstanding grades or masking their achievements by being a comic or a "cut-up" in class in front of peers. Fuller (1984) reported the same phenomenon among black girls in a British school.

Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) study points up another interesting facet of peer pressure ignored by most researchers, namely, that pressures emanate from both within and beyond one's circle of friends. The tendency has been to focus on peer pressure from friends (theoretically, clique mates), appealing to principles of small-group socialization (Moreland & Levine, 1982). Yet, the norms of one's crowd also can be a source of peer pressure, in that students exerting pressure are not confined to friends. If brains are expected to be intellectual, or populars snobbish, or loners shy and socially unsophisticated, they will be approached and treated that way by members outside their crowd. These interaction styles, adopted by acquaintances outside one's clique or crowd, represent a source of peer pressure. Students who step outside the social stereotype of their crowd often are greeted with hostile responses from members of other groups—forcing them to get "back in line" with the crowd's norms (Cusick, 1973; Eder, 1985).

Placing Peer Influences in Proper Context

In examining how academic achievement relates to adolescents' actual or anticipated popularity among peers, researchers consistently have treated the peer group system as a monolithic entity—assuming that there is only one set of criteria for peer status or one status hierarchy. This approach probably obfuscates the association between achievement and group pressures concerning popularity because the peer system actually is a complex network of crowds and cliques, each having somewhat different norms (and, therefore, status criteria). Fordham and Ogbu (1986) noticed, for example, that when blacks with exceptional abilities were placed in an environment of exclusively high achievers, their anxiety about peer sanctions for doing well in school seemed to diminish dramatically.

To achieve an accurate reading of peer group influences on students' achievement patterns, researchers must be more sensitive to a student's place in the peer group system—to the membership groups and reference groups that matter to the student. At the same time, it is important to place peer group influences in the larger context of adolescents' lives. Studies have reported quite consistently that, with regard to academic aspirations or achievement, parents appear to wield more influence over adolescents than do peers (Brittain, 1963; Davies & Kandel, 1981). Similarly, adolescents' susceptibility to antisocial peer pressures is related to family structure and the dynamics of relationships with parents (Steinberg, 1987). Ianni (1983, p. 11) cautions, "The development of an ego-syntonic value system is a dynamic interplay between modeling parents, sensitivity to peer influences, and the individual's own striving for independence." The multiple sources of influence that teenagers confront, which are probably more often mutually reinforcing than contradictory, make it unlikely that any single source of influence will dominate as a determinant of students' attitudes or behaviors.

MOVING FORWARD: CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The groans or whimsy that adults—and even teenagers—display in discussing adolescent peer groups should not be taken lightly. They are signs of the significance of cliques and crowds in adolescents' success or failure in the academic and social tasks of secondary school. As researchers continue to probe the social world of secondary school, they uncover more of the complexities of peer group influences. In pressing forward with this agenda, six factors seem helpful for researchers to keep in mind.

1. *Peer groups and group affiliations are dynamic phenomena.* The temptation to regard cliques and crowds as stable entities must be eschewed in respect for the many changing features of peer groups in adolescence. The peer group structure itself goes through a notable metamorphosis, evolu-

ing from isolated cliques into a complex array of interlocking cliques and crowds, whose diversity seems to expand through the high school years. Membership in peer groups also seems to change, if not from one clique or crowd to the next, then at least in the devotion that members display to their group and its norms. The individual's susceptibility to peer pressure and, apparently, the uniformity of peer pressures emanating from the group seem to rise and fall across the course of the secondary school years. Each of these dynamic forces contributes to the flexible and fluctuating nature of peer group influences. The task for researchers becomes charting peer group influences within the framework of these several developmental patterns.

2. *Peer groups exert influences at multiple levels.* Dyads, cliques, and crowds do not describe equivalent patterns of peer interaction, nor do they display equivalent patterns of peer influence. Pairs of friends can exert influence on each other in direct and individualistic terms. Influences stemming from one's crowd affiliation are more difficult to observe because they involve pressures from students outside as well as within the group. Students' motivations to respond to peer influences also may differ among these forms of peer relations. The concern in responding to pressures from a single friend may be primarily to maintain the dyadic relationship, whereas efforts to conform to crowd norms reveal an interest in maintaining one's image or "identity" among peers as a whole. Measuring influence at one level, as has been the tendency of researchers (the friendship dyad), does not provide a comprehensive portrait of peer influences. More attention must be directed at clique- and crowd-level influences, as well as to the ways in which patterns of influence at each level tend to complement and reinforce each other.

3. *Not all peer group influences emanate from the membership group.* Peer group affiliation is not always a matter of personal choice. Some students happily stay with the same group of friends and the same crowd affiliation throughout high school. Others transfer groups naturally as their personality and interests grow in new directions. Still others express a discontentment strong enough to prompt them to reach out to other crowds for acceptance. The common assumption that teenagers are influenced exclusively by their own friends or their own crowd is a tenuous one. The fluid nature of peer group ties compels researchers to consider the possibility that adolescents' primary reference group is not necessarily their membership group. In more concrete terms, efforts to measure crowd influences must consider the student's subjective and desired crowd affiliation as well as objective (peer-rated) crowd affiliation. In cases where objective, subjective, and desired crowd affiliations coincide, crowd-related influences should be relatively clear-cut. In cases where the affiliations differ, crowd influences should vary with the strength of the student's ties to the different reference groups and the "social distance" or degree of normative discrepancies among them.

4. *Peer group influences are not strictly a matter of coercion.* Researchers now recognize that charting the similarity between self and peers is not an adequate measure of peer influence. As the search for more meaningful measurement strategies continues, it is important not to limit conceptions of peer group influence to acts of pressure or coercion. A substantial portion of peer group influences may be by example of group members, such as the efforts Dunphy (1963) noted of crowd leaders to model appropriate heterosexual behavior for less socially advanced group members. The more cooperative effort of group members to establish group norms also can engender shifts in members' beliefs or activities. Even the efforts of group members to offer assistance to an individual can become a significant source of influence. When group members routinely offer a student help with homework or with sharpening some sports skills, or when such offers are never made, the actions serve as a subtle message about what is important and what is not. Although no pressure is involved, such actions as modeling, offering assistance, or inviting cooperation for defining group norms, may comprise a powerful source of influence. This influence may be especially strong because more unilateral and coercive tactics violate the spirit of friendship that supposedly forms the basis of adolescent peer associations (Davies & Kandel, 1981).

5. *Studies should employ multiple methods to examine peer group influences.* The more subtle, indirect, noncoercive strategies that comprise a healthy proportion of peer influences are difficult to ascertain through reliance on adolescents' perceptions of peer group influences. Yet, the ethnographic techniques that reveal such strategies more clearly are costly and time-consuming. The solution, I think, is to integrate multiple methodologies into future studies of the structure and influence processes of adolescent peer groups. Self-report surveys are efficient means of discerning the importance students attach to peer group affiliations, their willingness to attend to peer pressure in general, and which crowds serve as their primary reference groups. Interviews help tap the social-cognitive dynamics of peer groups: students' understanding of the peer group system and the rules that govern an individual's placement and movement within it. Ethnographic observations reveal specific processes by which groups try to shape and maintain members' behavior. Traditionally, each of these avenues of investigation has been pursued independently. It is time to begin combining them in more elaborate studies that can tease out the range of peer influences to which adolescents are submitted.

6. *Peer groups should be evaluated in the larger context of the adolescents' social world.* In the past, researchers have been absorbed with the relation between peer groups and parents, or adults in general, in the lives of adolescents. Are parents or peers a stronger source of influence (Brittain, 1963)? Do adolescent peer groups exist independently of adults or simply mimic the range of life styles available to students as they move into the

adult world (Cohen, 1979; J. S. Coleman, 1961)? These questions are too basic to continue pursuing, but they do point up the need to place peer groups in the larger context of the social world of secondary students. This world consists not only of peer groups, but also of parents and families, teachers and school personnel, and the rules of social interaction in the larger society. Each of these entities exerts some influence over adolescents, and the challenge to researchers is to identify the processes by which these separate forces reinforce, complement, or supplant each other.

The probable conclusion to emerge from studies following these guidelines—that peer group influences are conditional and modest—may disappoint many individuals. Our memories of peer pressure and cliquishness and social stereotyping may be more vivid and vicious than the realities we experienced in secondary school. Yet, this does not diminish the integral role that peer groups play in adolescents' adjustment to secondary school. It simply humbles us to be fascinated with the subtle complexities of peer relations amidst the broad range of psychological and social forces that shape individual lives during adolescence.

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