

Adolescent Development and Family Disruption

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Forensic Psychiatry Service Goals

- **Develop multidisciplinary team**
- **Train students in ethical and procedural considerations**
- **Offer relatively low cost evaluations for legal purposes**

Types of Cases

- **Child Custody Evaluations**
- **Parental Competency Evaluations**
- **Psychiatric/Psychological Evaluations**
- **Personal Injury Cases**
- **Adoption cases**
- **Psychiatric/psychological second opinions**

Physical Development

- Females
- Growth Spurt
 - At 10 years
- Sequence of Changes
 - Breast development
 - Pubic/underarm hair
 - Onset of menses
- Males
- Growth Spurt
 - At 12 years
- Sequence of Changes
 - Testes enlarge
 - Pubic hair
 - Penis enlarges
 - Sperm production begins

Brain Development

- At birth – majority of cells are in adult locations
- Inter-cellular connection density varies during development
- Myelination continues until early adulthood

Brain Development

- Gray matter (neurons) increases then decreases during first three years of life
- 2nd increase in gray matter prior to adolescence and during adolescence
- Frontal lobes – areas of prefrontal cortex are particularly late to reach adult level of thickness in certain regions

Prefrontal Cortex

■ FUNCTION

- Planning/execution of sequences of action
- Maintenance of information “on-line” during short temporal delays
- Inhibition of response sets appropriate in one context but not another

Prefrontal Cortex

■ DEVELOPMENT

- Connections with other regions not all myelinated until end of puberty
- Synaptic density changes proceed into teenage years
- Increasing thickness of gray matter through puberty

Cognitive Development

- Piaget's Theory - Four Stages
 - Sensorimotor: 0 – 2 Years
 - Preoperational: 2 – 7 Years
 - Concrete Operational: 7 – 11 Years
 - Formal Operational: 11 and up

Preoperational stage (2-7)

■ FEATURES

- Increase in representational ability
- Pretend play
- Egocentrism

Concrete Operational (7-11)

■ FEATURES

- Reasoning more flexible/logical/organized
- Manipulation of mental representations possible
- Unable to perform these operations with abstract ideas

Formal operational (11 up)

■ FEATURES

- Reasoning with abstract possibilities
- Hypothetical deductive reasoning
- Propositional thought
- Meta-cognition

Stages of Social Development

FREUD	AGE	ERIKSON
Oral	0-1	Trust
Anal	1-3	Autonomy
Phallic	3-6	Initiative
Latency Stage	6-12	Industry
Genital Stage	12+	Identity

Identity

- **Sense of own values, beliefs, goals, expect.**
- **Autonomy in relationships**
- **Establish intimacy**
- **Establish comfort with own sexuality**
- **Achievement**

The 4 Questions

- Who am I?
- Am I normal?
- Am I competent?
- Am I lovable and loving?

Adolescent Needs

- Warmth and mutual respect
- Serious and lasting interest of their parents and other adults
- Parental and adult attention to their changes
- Clear standards regarding discipline and close supervision

Needs, continued

- Communication of high expectations for achievement and ethical behavior
- Democratic and helpful ways of dealing with conflict

Today's teens - death

Mortality

- Age 10-14 = 21.5 per 100K
- Age 15-19 = 69.5 per 100K
- Age 20-24 = 92.7 per 100K
- Motor vehicle crashes
- Homicide
- Suicide

Today's teens - substances

- Tobacco use by 9th -12th graders = 40%
- Age 12-17
 - 8.3% past month use of mj
 - 7.7% past month episode of binge drinking

Today's teens - sex

- Age 15-17 68 pregnancies per 1000
- Age 13-24 16K new HIV diagnoses
- Chlamydia infections in STD clinic
 - Females 15-24 12.2%
 - Males 15-24 15.7%

Marital Conflict and Child Adjustment

- **Threshold for effect not clear**
- **Strong association with child adjustment**
- **Frequency of conflict**
- **Intensity of conflict**
- **Violence**
- **Content of conflict**
- **Resolution**

Divorce and Child Adjustment



"Your wife's also asking that you rot in hell for eternity, but I think that's negotiable."

First 2 Years: “Crisis Period or “Diminished Parenting”

- **Domestic chaos**
- **Economic hardship**
- **Emotional changes**
- **Social relationship changes**
- **Vulnerability to illness**
- **Changing concept of self**

Stressors of Divorce

- **Lack of information about separation**
- **Parent conflict**
- **Diminished parenting**
- **Loss of relationships**
- **Economic change**
- **Step-parenting, blended families**

Common Age Related Reactions to Divorce

- **Preschoolers - regression, anxiety**
- **Latency age - immobilization, sadness**
- **Adolescents - acting out, anger**

Research on Effects of Divorce and Children

- **Increasing sophistication**
- **Matched samples of non-divorced and divorced children**
- **National survey studies which control for background**
- **Few families with father as primary custodian**

Most Common Post Divorce Adjustment Patterns

- **3/4 of children within normal range**
- **Competent - opportunist**
- **Competent - caring**
- **Competent at a cost**
- **Good enough ~ 50%**
- **Aggressive - insecure**

Post Divorce Factors and Child Adjustment

- **Adjustment of the custodial parent**
- **Parenting of custodial parent**
- **Parentification**
- **High conflict divorce**
- **Access to non-residential parent**
- **Sibling relationships**
- **Relationships outside family**
- **Individual factors**
- **Pre-divorce parental conflict level**

Divorce and Child Outcomes

- Much overlap between divorced and non-divorced children
- Increased aggressiveness, impulsiveness, and antisocial behaviors
- Increased risk for depression
- Increased rates of alcohol and drug abuse
- Higher teen pregnancy rates (2x in one study)
- Lower academic achievement

High Conflict Divorce

Developmental Task

- **Preschool Initiative**
- **School-age Industry**

Impact on Development

- **Issues with guilt, failure and punishment**
- **Poor peer relations, gender identity disrupted**
- **Splitting of self and parents**
- **Low self-esteem**
- **Poor achievement**

High Conflict Divorce

- Developmental Task

- **Adolescence Identity**

- Impact on Development

- **Identity confusion**

- **Depressed/withdrawn or acting out behaviors**

High Conflict Divorce

Developmental Task

■ **Young Adult Intimacy**

■ **Adult Generativity**

Impact on Development

- **Adolescence protracted**
- **Lower rate of marriage**
- **Higher divorce rate**
- **Passivity**

- **Decision not to have children**
- **Less protective of children if divorced**
- **Less care of aging parents**

Table by Helen T. Brantley

Custodial Arrangements

- **Definitions**
- **Trends**
- **Arguments for and against**
- **Meta-analysis (Bauserman 2002)**

Considerations in Plans for Adolescents

- Extracurricular activities
- Social relationships
- Work
- Adolescent preferences

Interventions for Divorcing Families

- **Court ordered in some cases or jurisdictions**
- **Divorce education programs**
- **Mediation for custodial issues**
- **Divorce groups in schools for children**
- **Civil guardian ad litem**
- **Parent coordinator or special master**
- **Child custody evaluation**

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