European Approaches to Adolescent Sexual Health and Behavior

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Cross-Cultural Comparisons

1. Outcomes
- Teenage birthrate
- Percent births to mothers under 20
- Teenage abortions
- Average age of first sexual intercourse
- AIDS cases
- Infant mortality
- Firearm related deaths
- Cigarette consumption
- Suicide rates
Live Birth Rate per 1,000 Women Ages 15-19

Percentage of Births to Mothers Under 20 years old

Abortions per 1,000 Women Ages 15-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Abortions per 1,000 Women</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Average Age at First Intercourse

AIDS cases per 1,000

Infant Mortality Rates per 1,000 births

Annual Firearm-Related Deaths per 100,000 Juveniles Ages 9-14

Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Cigarette Consumption per Adult

Suicide Rates per 100,000

“Unfortunately, there is no single silver bullet solution. The mass media campaigns, the public health systems and policies, have their part in the Dutch, German, and French successes. Yet success doesn’t rest on programs and services alone. It is the societal thinking - the norms - that make the Dutch, German, and French successes possible. It is the openness and acceptance that young people will have intimate sexual relationships without being married and that these relationships are natural and contribute to maturing into a sexually healthy adult. It is the refusal to brand the expression of sexuality as deviant behavior or to cast it solely in a negative light. It is the determination to present sexual expression as a balance - a normal part of growing up, and a responsibility to protect oneself and others. It is the respect these societies have for adolescents, valuing them as much for who they are as for the adults they will become.”

- James Wagoner, President, Advocates for Youth
Beyond the Silver Bullet

A framework is needed that will accommodate the adolescent's interactions with the many aspects and components of his or her environment.

1. Developmental Supports and Resilience (Werner, Benard)
2. Developmental Ecology (Bronfenbrenner)
3. Developmental Contexualism (Lerner)
Cross-Cultural Comparisons

2. Macrosystems: national economy

- Per capita GNP
- Unemployment rates
- Percent of children in poverty
- Gap between rich and poor
Per Capita GNP (1997) in U.S. $

Unemployment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
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Children in Poverty

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rich and Poor Families are Furthest Apart in the U.S.

9 year olds watching more than 5 hours of television daily

Cross-Cultural Comparisons

3. Macrosystems: cultural values

- Individual morality
- Cooperation vs. competition
- Interactive communication
- Incarceration rate
- Voter turnout
Incarceration Rate per 100,000

Voter Turnout (last election)

Netherlands: 73%
France: 71%
Germany: 82%
United States: 46%

Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Parents’ and society’s influence on the moral development component of adolescent sexuality:

1. A prohibition moral
   -or-

2. A shaping ethic

(Note that 1 precludes 2)
Cross-Cultural Comparisons

4. Exosystems

- Parents’ jobs
- Friends’ parents’ jobs
- School board
Cross-Cultural Comparisons

5. Microsystems

- Family: Time spent by children watching TV
- Friends: Stability of friendships over time
- School: Size of school
- Church: Church role and function
- Neighborhood: Stability and cohesiveness
Cross-Cultural Comparisons

School Organization

1. Neighborhood middle schools of about 700 students, fully integrated into the community, and often it’s churches and other institutions, with regular and close contacts with parents and families. Many students go home for lunch!

-or-

2. Increasingly larger middle schools of 1200 or more students, often with minimal integration into the community and little contact with parents.
Cross-Cultural Comparisons

6. Mesosystems

- Connection between school, family, community, and church
- Adolescents relationships with parents
- Adolescents relationships with teachers
- Adolescents relationships with other adults
- Adolescents relationships with peers
CONCLUSIONS

- Rights
- Respect
- Responsibilities ..... 
- and Research!
1. Respect

All adolescents deserve respect as valuable individuals

- Every adolescent is a valuable individual who deserves respect and support of family, community, and society
- Adults must view young people as assets, not as problems
- Each adolescent has a unique contribution to make
- Society demonstrates that it values young people by providing them with good quality education, economic security, and the promise of fulfilling futures.

- from Linda Berne and Barbara Huberman, 1999
2. Rights

Every young person has the right to the information and services necessary to make responsible decisions about his or her reproductive and sexual health.

- Right to complete, honest, and accurate reproductive and sexual health information
- Right to accessible, affordable, and quality health care services
- Right to privacy and confidentiality
- Right to caring and supportive relationships with parents and other adults

- from Linda Berne and Barbara Huberman, 1999
Adolescent sexual expression as:

(1) a normal part of growing up, and a responsibility to protect oneself and others;

-or-

(2) something to be suppressed, avoided, and/or hidden, and only those who do so shall be protected.
Rights: Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Communication Style

1. Parents and other adults show respect by negotiating and communicating openly (authoritative style) with youth (“we will lose youth if we don’t negotiate with them” - Janita Ravesloot)

-or-

2. Many parents and other adults appear to be either too busy (neglectful or permissive styles) or too bossy (authoritarian style) to negotiate and communicate openly with youth.
“Sexuality and the expression of sexual feelings are normal, healthy components of adolescent growth and development. Sexual feelings should not provoke shame, and information about sexuality should not provoke fear. Adolescents have questions about what is normal, and they need to learn the skills that will help them develop and sustain loving, rewarding, committed, intimate relationships over the course of their lives. Open, honest dialog about sexuality and sexual development can help U.S. teens, like their European counterparts, better prepare to create committed relationships and to protect themselves and their partners from unintended pregnancies and STDs.”

- Linda Berne and Barbara Huberman, 1999
3. Responsibilities

Rights entail responsibilities

- Families, communities, and society have the responsibility to provide young people with the support they need to create healthy, fulfilling lives.
- Adolescents in turn, have the responsibility to act upon the information and services available to them.
- The right to information and health services comes with the responsibility to protect oneself and one’s partner against unintended pregnancy and STDs, including HIV.

- from Linda Berne and Barbara Huberman, 1999
Research must dictate public policy

- Public policies that impact the health and the well being of young people should rest securely on scientific research
- Adolescents deserve sexual health strategies based upon best practices as determined by evaluation and research
- Science - not politics or religion - should drive public health programs and policies

- from Linda Berne and Barbara Huberman, 1999
For more information

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RECOMMENDED READINGS

1. Adolescent Sexuality in Europe and America


2. Resilience Research, Developmental Ecology, and Developmental Contextualism


The Healthy Kids Resilience Assessment: A Youth Development Approach

The Healthy Kids Resilience Assessment measures specific protective factors and resilience traits that make youth development work.
Healthy Kids Resilience Assessment Theoretical Framework

External Asset Clusters

**E-1. Caring Relationships**
- Adults in home
- Adults in school
- Adults in community
- Peers

**E-2. High Expectations**
- Within the home
- Within school
- Within neighborhood and community
- Within peer network

**E-3. Meaningful Participation**
- In the home
- In school
- In the community

Internal Asset Clusters

**I-1. Social Competence**
- Cooperation and communication skills
- Empathy and respect
- Problem solving skills

**I-2. Autonomy and Sense of Self**
- Personal conviction
- Self-efficacy
- Self awareness

**I-3. Sense of Meaning and Purpose**
- Optimism
- Goals and achievement motivation
Bronfenbrenner's Developmental Ecology
FIGURE 15.4 The macrosystem. The individual is part of several microsystems, and several microsystems form the mesosystem. Interactions at the mesosystem level are personal and direct. The mesosystem is embedded in the exosystem and the more general social cultural macrosystem; effects at this level are impersonal and often indirect.