

Popularity Affects Girls' Weights

Girls who think they aren't popular are at higher risk for weight gain, according to a new study.

It's long been known that being overweight can lead to social exclusion for teens, but in a study published this week in the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, researchers at Harvard University took on a slightly different question: whether a student's perceptions of her social status played a role in her weight.

To find out, the researchers recorded the body mass index of nearly 4,500 girls ages 12 to 18. The teens were also asked to rank themselves from one to 10 in the social hierarchy at their school, based on the following question:

At the top of the ladder are the people in your school with the most respect and the highest standing. At the bottom are people who no one respects and no one wants to hang around with. Where would you place yourself on the ladder?

Two years later, the researchers found, all of the girls had gained weight — no surprise, since they were all growing. But teens who had rated themselves at four or lower had gained more. In fact, girls who thought they were low in the social pecking order were at a 70 percent higher risk of gaining excess weight. The extra weight averaged about 11 pounds, or a two-point increase in BMI scores.

The researchers adjusted the data to account for a number of variables, including whether a child was overweight at the start of the study, family income, a mother's weight, age at puberty, diet, television viewing habits and numerous other factors that can affect childhood weight gain. But the link persisted between a girl's perceptions of her own popularity and her odds of gaining excess weight.

The study authors noted that efforts to promote nutrition and combat obesity could still be undermined by social variables at school. Parents concerned about a girl's weight should look not only at eating habits but also at their child's social network, encouraging relationships with friends and enrolling kids in group activities, the researchers said. And as part of other anti-obesity measures, school officials should consider implementing programs to help girls build social skills, they added.

"I think schools have a lot of influence," said lead author Adina R. Lemeshow, now a project analyst at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. "It's about fostering secure and supportive social environments in which girls feel more accepted."

Ms. Lemeshow notes that future studies may also look at the link between a girl's perceived social status and her risk for eating disorders.

New York Times

Grievances

A grievance remains on behalf of the Dearborn High staff and the new "seminar" period. The administration response was received but the DFT has not agreed and will continue.

A new grievance has been filed and it concerns an elementary school scheduling meetings during teacher prep time.

GREEN SHEET

Official Newsletter • Dearborn Federation of Teachers • AFT Local 681, AFL-CIO

15250 Mercantile Drive, Dearborn, Michigan 48120 • 313/584-5311 • FAX 313/584-3232

Membership Meetings

2007—2008 Meetings

March 2008

25 General Membership 4:00 P.M. Stout

April 2008

22 General Member 4:00 P.M. Bryant

May 2008

27 General Membership 4:00 P.M. DFT Bldg

June 2008

4 Year-End Celebration 3:00 P.M. Park Place

DFT Open House

The dft has acquired a new building off of Greenfield, south of Michigan Avenue. An open house is planned for May 14 from 3 to 6 PM. Come see the new headquarters for our hard working dft staff.

Instructional Time

Students in the United States receive more instructional time than students in the seven European countries studied by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In 1994, U.S. primary schools provided an average of 958 teaching hours per year, compared with 923 in France and 760 hours in Germany. The U.S. secondary school averages were also higher.

Qualified Teachers

Virtually all public school teachers have a bachelor's degree, and nearly half (45%) hold a master's degree. One percent have doctorates. These percentages have remained much the same since 1993–94. Two-thirds of high school teachers, 44% of middle school teachers and 22% of elementary teachers have an undergraduate or graduate major in an academic field (such as English or mathematics), rather than a major in an education field (such as general education or mathematics education). Ninety-three percent of general elementary teachers and 92% of subject-matter teachers are fully certified in the field of their main teaching assignment.

AP Exams

Between 1984 and 1997, the number of Advanced Placement (AP) exams taken by high school students nearly *tripled*, growing from 50 exams per 1,000 twelfth-grade students to 131. Since then, the numbers have continued to rise. Minority students now comprise 30% of all AP test-takers, up from 22% a decade ago (The College Board, press release, August 31, 1999). AP exams are annual tests offered in many different subject areas that give students an opportunity to demonstrate college-level achievement. Many institutions of higher education offer college credits to students who score at least a 3 on a scale of 0 to 5.

Under the influence of music?

Teenagers listen to an average of nearly 2.5 hours of music per day. Guess what they're hearing about?

One in three popular songs contains explicit references to drug or alcohol use, according to a new report in *The Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*. That means kids are receiving about 35 references to substance abuse for every hour of music they listen to, the authors determined.

While songs about drugs and excess are nothing new, the issue is getting more attention because so many children now have regular access to music out of the earshot of parents. Nearly 9 out of 10 adolescents and teens have an MP3 player or a compact disc player in their bedrooms.

Studies have long shown that media messages have a pronounced impact on childhood risk behaviors. Exposure to images of smoking in movies influences a child's risk for picking up the habit. Alcohol use in movies and promotions is also linked to actual alcohol use.

Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine studied the 279 most popular songs from 2005, based on reports from *Billboard* magazine, which tracks popular music. Whether a song contained a reference to drugs or alcohol varied by genre. Only 9 percent of pop songs had lyrics relating to drugs or alcohol. The number jumped to 14 percent for rock songs, 20 percent for R&B and hip-hop songs, 36 percent for country songs and 77 percent for rap songs.

Notably, smoking references aren't that common in music today, with only 3 percent of the songs portraying tobacco use. About 14 percent of songs spoke of marijuana use, 24 percent depicted alcohol use, and another 12

percent included reference to other substances. About 4 percent of the songs contained "anti" drug and alcohol messages.

The study authors noted that music represents a pervasive source of exposure to positive images of substance use. The average adolescent is exposed to approximately 84 references to explicit substance use per day and 591 references per week, or 30,732 references per year. The average adolescent listening only to pop would be exposed to 5 references per day, whereas the average adolescent who listens just to rap would be exposed to 251 references per day.

Whether any of this matters remains an open question. While the impact of exposure to images of smoking and alcohol in film has been well documented, less is known about the effect of music on childhood risk behaviors.

Although music lacks the visual element of film, adolescent exposure to music is much more frequent, accounting for an average of 16 hours each week for music compared with about 6 hours each week for movie images, according to the study authors. But frequency of exposure is not the only factor. Unlike visual media, music is a powerful social force that also taps into an individual's personal identity, memories and mood.

"Music is well-known to connect deeply with adolescents and to influence identity development, perhaps more than any other entertainment medium," said the study authors.

New York Times

Second Semester Count

At present, the district is down 73 students. Dearborn High School has lost 52 students and Fordson 79. Bryant middle school is up 52 and William Ford and Geer Park are over capacity. Finding from the state is based on the blended count which is 75% in the Fall and 25% in the Spring.

Low Performance on Tests Threat to Economic Future

STANFORD -- The spring 2008 issue of *Education Next* shows that the cognitive skills of a nation's students have a large impact on its economic growth. Using data from international tests administered over several decades, economists Eric A. Hanushek of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, Ludger Woessmann of the University of Munich, and their research colleagues found that increased years of schooling by the labor force boost the economy only when such schooling boosts cognitive skills, as measured by performance on math and science assessments.

In the latest international math and science test conducted by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), U.S. students again trailed the average international scores achieved by students in the 57 test-taking nations. Students from a diverse array of countries, including Canada, Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, scored significantly higher than those from the United States, with Finnish students beating those of all other countries. The United States now lags behind Poland, which raised its scores more than any other nation.

Hanushek and Woessmann's findings demonstrate how critical the quality of the education students receive is to a nation's economic performance: Had the United States joined the world leaders in math and science by 2000, as the nation's governors called for in 1989, the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would, as measured by past results, be 2 percent greater than it is today. Although this may sound small, it would amount to more than \$300 billion additional income this year. If one projects those effects into the future, the GDP could be 4.5 percentage points higher by 2015--enough to cover the full cost of the nation's K-12 education system in that year. A reform in educational outcomes begun today that moved the United States to top world standards in 20 years would yield a real GDP 25 percent higher after 75 years than were there no change in the level of cognitive skills, the researchers note.

Hanushek and Woessmann used performance on 12 standardized tests to measure the average level of cognitive skill in a given country. With this data, they were able to assess how human capital relates to differences in economic growth for 50 countries from 1960 to 2000--more countries over a longer period of time than any previous study.

Although the United States continues to do poorly on international assessments of student achievement, its GDP growth rate was higher than average during the past century. Hanushek and Woessmann note, however, that the United States has benefited from advantages apart from the quality of its schooling--freer labor and product markets, less government regulation, lower tax rates, and less powerful trade unions--that encourage investment, permit the rapid development of new products, and allow workers to adjust to new market opportunities. In addition, the United States' higher education system is a powerful engine of technological progress and economic growth.

Hoover Institution