# Middle school's "cool kids" may stumble afterward

**Group Blue**



In this April 18, 2014, photo, Annette Wells (right) leads a discussion in her seventh-eighth grade language arts class at Komachin Middle School in Lacey, Washington. Photo: AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

Kids who were meek in middle school will grow up to rule. Or, at least, they’ll live healthier and more productive lives than the "cool" kids will.

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as*

*I read:*

A new study looked at 13-year-olds who engaged in “pseudomature” behavior — such as minor shoplifting and early romantic relationships — and were seen as the “cool kids.” It found that they tended to develop problems with drugs and relationships by their early 20s.

The study, published on Thursday, tracked nearly 200 13-year-olds for 10 years. A variety of factors were considered. Among them were how much students valued their popularity, how important appearance was in seeking out friends, and if students used drugs or had romantic relationships.

**Acting Your Age Makes Sense**

The researchers found that young teens who acted old for their age by forming early romantic relationships, shoplifting and basing friendships on appearance were seen by peers as popular. But as these “pseudomature” teens matured, things changed: Their behavior was no longer linked with popularity.

Instead, they were thought to be less socially skilled by their peers, said Joseph Allen, who led the study. They also had more problems with drugs and alcohol.

Allen said the average “cool” teen, by age 22, compared poorly with the average teen in the study. They had a 45 percent greater rate of problems due to drugs and alcohol. They also had a 22 percent greater rate of criminal behavior.

Teens are impressed by these kids, and parents are impressed too "because they think that these pseudomature kids are on the fast track,” Allen said. “These kids are on the fast track, but it’s really to a dead end."

He added, “They are gaining the appearance of maturity, but they are not gaining actual maturity.”

**Nothing Wrong With Hanging Out At Home**

Researchers suggest that these kids are failing to develop important life skills. They spend so much time trying to seem cool, they don’t develop the skills needed for meaningful friendships.

The study followed 86 male and 98 female middle school students for a 10-year period beginning in 1998. There were some surprises, Allen said.

In particular, the study notes that “pseudomature” behavior is an excellent predictor of future drug and alcohol abuse. In fact, it is a better predictor than drug and alcohol use in middle school.

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as*

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Researchers are still following the students — now in their mid- to late 20s — to see how they fare later in life.

One conclusion of the study will be welcome: Parents shouldn’t worry too much if their young teens don't seem that popular. If a kid prefers to spend Saturday nights at home watching a movie or reading instead of going out with friends, Allen said, that is not a cause for concern.

Many "uncool" teenagers, he said, do much better later on than the popular kids do.

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. All of the following characterize "pseudomature" behavior in kids EXCEPT:

A. shoplifting

B. watching movies

C. romantic relationships

D. focusing on appearance

2.Why are most teens impressed with kids showing "pseudomature" behavior?

A. They are more popular among peers.

B. They have many romantic relationships.

C. They are good at making friends.

D. They develop life skills easily.

3.Read the sentence from the article.

In fact, it is a better predictor than drug and alcohol use in middle school.

What is the synonym for the word "predictor" as used in the above sentence?

1. Indicator
2. Interpreter
3. Medium
4. Narrator

4. Read the sentence from the article.

One conclusion of the study will be welcome: Parents shouldn't worry too much if their young teens don't seem that popular.

What is a synonym for the word "popular" as it is used in the above sentence?

A. Widespread

B. admired

C. in-demand

D. talkative