



Understanding Social Isolation: Theory, Research, and Intervention

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Study of Social Isolation: What is it?

What is *social isolation*?

- Social isolation involves **physical** separation from others
- State vs. Trait
- Isolation \neq Loneliness



Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker (2009);
Valtorta & Hanratty (2012)

Study of Social Isolation: Causes



wiseGEEK

Isolation by *others*



Isolation by the *self*



Study of Social Isolation: Development



Childhood and Adolescence



Adulthood



**Social isolation
affects nearly
1 in 5 older adults.**

Learn more about staying connected. ►



Example Study: Alcaraz et al., 2019

SOCIAL ISOLATION IS A BIGGER PROBLEM THAN YOU MAY KNOW



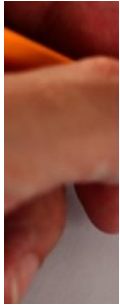
Nearly **1** in **5** adults over age 50 is at risk of social isolation



Subjective feelings of loneliness can increase risk of death from **26%** to **45%**



The health risks of prolonged isolation are equivalent to smoking **15** cigarettes a day





Study of Social Isolation: Causes



Isolation by *others*



Isolation by the *self*



Social Isolation by *Others*

13. Someone who is left out of group activities.

14. Someone you like least.

21. Someone who is hit or kicked by others.

26. Someone who is very shy.

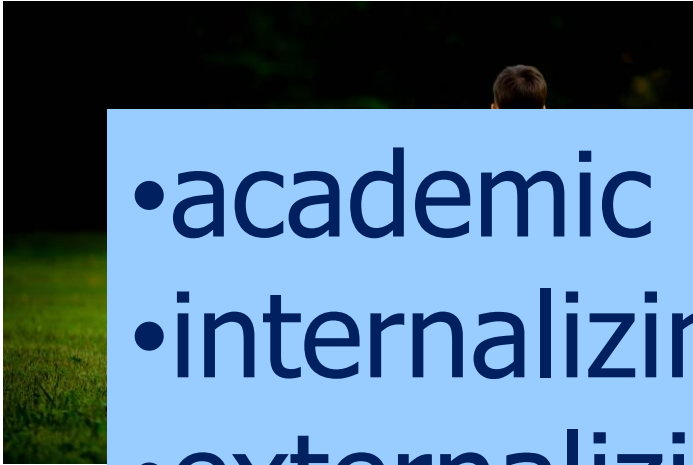
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Social Isolation by *Others*



- academic difficulties
- internalizing problems
- externalizing problems
- physical health difficulties
- social problems

Peer exclusion
•being left out of a group and

Rejection
peer



Peer victimization

- repeated peer abuse

Study of Social Isolation: Causes



Isolation by *others*



Isolation by the *self*





Social Isolation by the *Self*

Social withdrawal refers to the behavioral tendency to remove oneself from familiar and unfamiliar peers (Bowker, 2020; Rubin et al., 2009).

- due to fears and anxiety
- temperamentally-based
- relatively stable over time



Social Withdrawal Risks

Child and adolescent social withdrawal is associated with:

- depressive symptoms
- anxiety
- loneliness
- negative self-perceptions
- internal blame tendencies
- academic difficulties
- social isolation by others



e.g., Caspi et al., 1988; Chronis-Tuscano et al., 2009; Coplan et al., 2009; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003; Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004; Markovic & Bowker, 2017



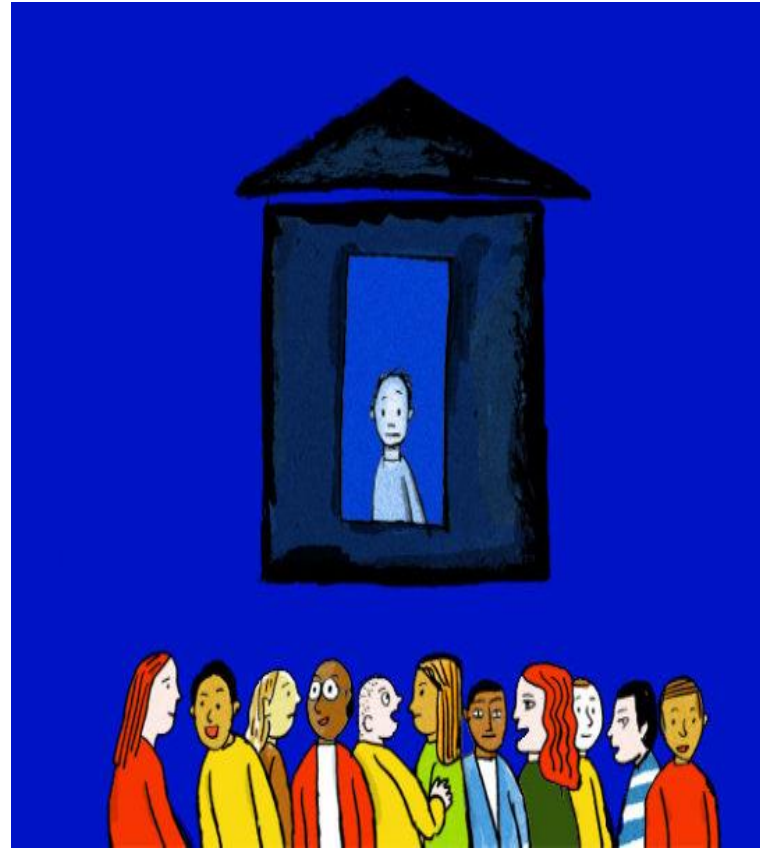
Spending too much time physically separated from others, for whatever reason, confers significant risk (Rubin, 1988; Rubin et al., 2009)





Why? Theory

- Miss out on important opportunities for the development of social-cognitive and social skills
(Piaget, 1932; Rubin et al., 2009)



- Social needs for acceptance, intimacy, and belonging may not be met
(Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Sullivan, 1953)



Intervention

Isolation by *Others*

- social skills training (Asher, Parker, & Walker, 1996; Bierman & Furman, 1984; Ladd, 1981; Lochman et al., 1993)

- anti-bullying programming (e.g., KiVa; Salmivalli et al., 2009; Salmivalli et al., 2011)

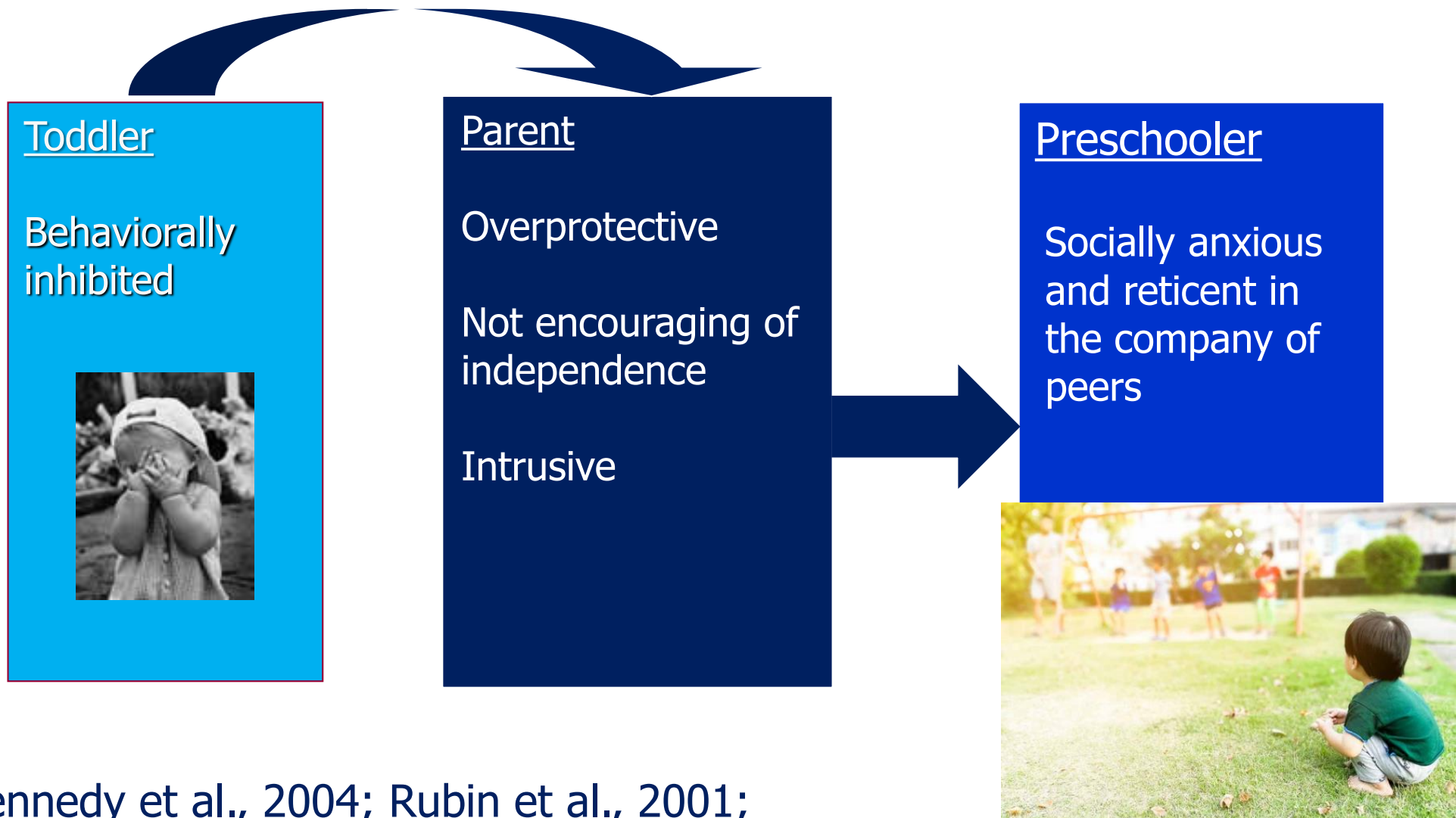
Isolation by *Self*

- parent intervention (e.g., “Cool Little Kids”: Rapee et al., 2010; “Turtle” program: Chronis-Tuscano et al., 2015)



Isolation by the *self*

Influence of Parents



Kennedy et al., 2004; Rubin et al., 2001;
Rubin et al., 2002



Study of Social Isolation: COVID-19?

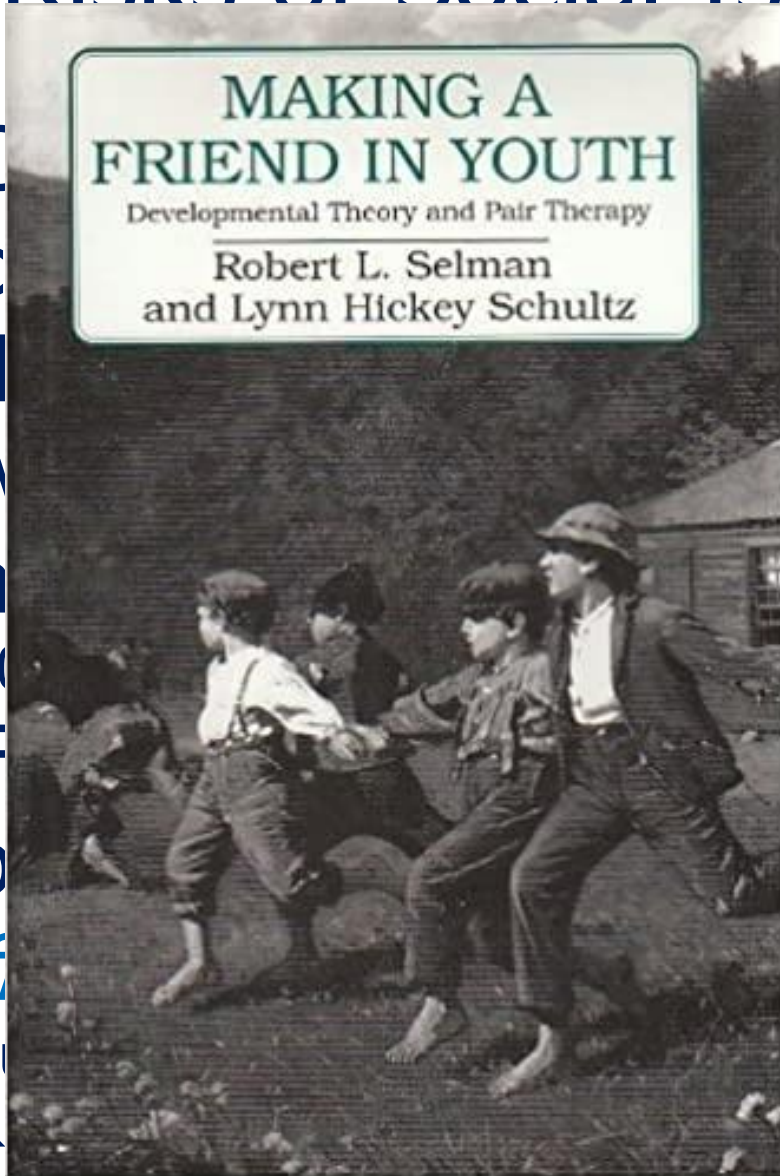


Isolation by the *self*



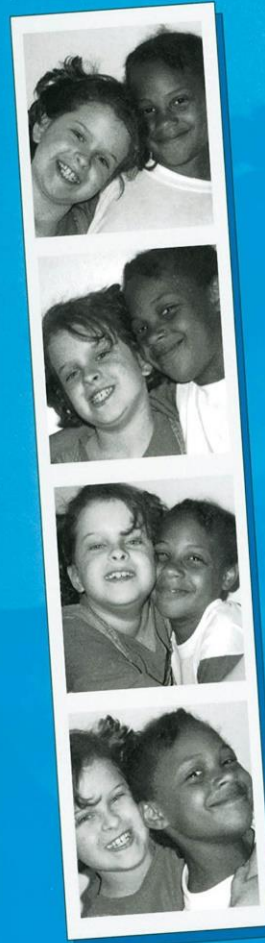
Risks of Social Isolation

- Children who are socially isolated are at a higher risk for the development of mental health problems (Fergusson & Horwood, 2009)
- Foster parents are not trained to deal with children who have mental health problems (Fergusson & Horwood, 2009)
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FOSTERING FRIENDSHIP

Pair Therapy for Treatment and Prevention



*Robert L. Selman
Caroline L. Watts
Lynn Hickey Schultz*
EDITORS





Thank you!

Any questions?



Development of Social Withdrawal



Infancy

Toddlerhood

Preschool

Childhood,
Adolescence,
and Young
Adulthood

