

## **Sociological Analysis on Adolescence Problems: Stressing the Socio-Cultural Factors**

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**Abstract:** *In historical terms, the study of "youth cultures" is a relatively new of area of sociological analysis. Early studies in this area were mainly produced by Functionalist sociologists who tended to focus upon "youth" as a distinctive form of culture. From functional point of view, they consider youth from the point of functional necessity, and stated that:*

- *Youths holding norms and values that was significantly different to the norms and values held by their parents.*
- *The idea that "youth" represents a period of "ambivalence" a distinct phase in human social development that represents a transition period from childhood to full adulthood.*

*The relatively modern nature of youth culture studies is not too surprising, given the fact that most sociologists tend to agree that the idea of "youth" is itself a relatively modern phenomenon. It is one of the characteristics of advanced industrial societies with well-developed educational systems. Philip Aries, for example ("Centuries of Childhood", 1962) argues that "youth" is a relatively "modern" concept. Aries argues that it was only from the mid 17th century that "young people" started to be seen as both dependent on adults and as having special characteristics of their own ("innocence" is one idea that springs to mind here - a concept that is still fairly current in modern societies). This paper tries to focus on the issues related to adolescence problems. It will also highlight the role of society and group behaviour in coping with adolescence problems.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Adolescence defined a period "between childhood and adulthood" and G.Stanley Hall (1904,"Adolescence") provides the first 20th century discussion of the supposed relationship between adolescence and distinctive patterns of behaviour amongst young people. Hall's work focuses upon the relationship between biological and chemical changes and human behaviour and represents an attempt to understand youth culture as a form of pathological response. He relates pathology to the way in which social behaviour is related to biological development. For example, changes in body chemistry during puberty may theoretically produce behavioural changes in the individual behavioural changes that the individual is relatively powerless to prevent or control). Modern psychology and physiology (in common with sociology) view these "stresses" as social rather than physical. Under the shadow of this discussion we can explain that "Childhood" is a social concept relative in time and space."Behavioural problems" may be the result of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Tension between physical sexual maturity and social norms governing sexual activity is necessarily resulted into an "emotionally stressful" period in life. It is possible to view youth cultures as a means of managing the resultant dislocation between emotional / biological / psychological maturity and social norms.

### **II. Methodology**

The author applies Socio-psychological approach in analysing adolescence problems. The paper adopts Behavioural as well as Functionalist perspective in analyzing the adolescence problem. In this paper the discussion is made in the light of Erik Erikson's socio cultural model of stages of adolescence, GH Mead's Theory of Mind, Self and Society and C.H Cooley's theory of "Looking Glass Self". The problems of the adolescence are also studied from their involvement in group dynamics. The author finally tries to stress on the role of socio-cultural factors in coping with the adolescence problems.

#### **Objective of the Paper:**

- To find out the role of family and other social organisation in building adolescence behaviour from sociological perspectives.
- To find out the transition phases encountered by adolescents.
- To sort out the role of society and culture in coping with the problem of adolescents.

**Socio-Cultural Analysis on Adolescence:**

Erik Erikson emphasized the sociocultural (rather than sexual) determinants of development which are represented in eight stages of psychosocial conflicts that an individual must overcome or resolve in a successful manner so that they will be able to adjust well to the environment. To illustrate further, Erikson described that at each of the eight stages, the person encounters a certain crisis that contributes to his psychosocial growth. Whenever the person experiences such crisis, he is left with no choice but to face it and think of ways to resolve it. However, failure to overcome such crisis may lead to significant effects that contribute to the person's psychosocial development.

People expect teenagers to be "difficult" and act towards them accordingly. Where people associate the period of transition between "childhood" and "adulthood" with tension, emotional stress and so forth, the behaviour of "adolescents" is both interpreted within this explanatory framework and "unconsciously" (?) encouraged. Thus, the interpreter looks for evidence of emotional problems in behaviour because that is what he / she expects to find. The absence of such "problems" may itself become a "cause for concern", (as, of course, may their presence).

The adolescent, taking his / her behavioural cues from the expectations of others which could be explained in terms of role-play, development of self-consciousness, and self-awareness They begin to develop such behaviour because it fits-in with the expected behavioural patterns held by others.

Not all teenagers experience these "problems" "Thus, whilst it is clear that chemical changes do take place, the degree to which they affect social behaviour appears to be culturally determined. For example: Schooling in our society reflects supposed "biological categories" (5 -11, 11 - 16) that are actually cultural categories (that is, not all human societies define the same age categories). Though there is little sociological evidence to suggest that "adolescence", in itself, is necessarily an "emotionally stressful" period in life. However, the increasing length of adolescence may produce tensions between biological and social aspects of development.

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Approximate Age	Psycho Social Crisis
Infant-18 months	Trust Vs mistrust
18 months -3 years	Autonomy Vs Shame and doubt
3-5 years	Initiative Vs Guilt
5-13 years	Industry-inferiority
13-21 years	Identity Vs role confusion
21-39	Intimacy Vs isolation
40-65 years	Generativity Vs Stagnation
65 and older	Ego integrity Vs Despair

Source: The Psychology Notes Headquarter-[www.psychologyNotesHQ.com](http://www.psychologyNotesHQ.com)

Erik Erikson devoted his research to defining the eight stages of life. Young adulthood, according to this model, falls in the sixth stage, "intimacy vs. isolation." The developing person up until that time has been forming his identity. Now is the test to see if he "can fuse his identity with that of others. He is ready for intimacy, the capacity to commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships..." (Erikson, 1965, "Childhood and Society", pp-263). This stage can only occur after the person has successfully completed the other stages. Often, chronology of age is not the most important consideration. "Erikson's work on identity crisis singles out late adolescence and early adulthood as a potentially important period for political character formation". (Jennings and Niemi, 8).

Like Erikson, Robert Havighurst directed his attention in his studies toward young adulthood as a separate stage in the life cycle. He studied the concept of developmental tasks. Similar to Erikson, Havighurst looked at growth and development and its effect on young adults. Havighurst identified the young adult as a person between the ages of 18 and 30 (the age range used in Europe). He classified the activities in this time period as aiming toward beginning life; finding a mate, and starting a career and a family. "Havighurst is therefore, one of the early writers to locate young adulthood in the life span and to offer a systematic method of identifying its features" (Bocknek, 83). Havighurst rested his entire theory on developmental tasks. This was the source of both the strengths and the weaknesses of his study because he eliminated other avenues of research. His research was limited to one culture, the North American middle class. Developmental tasks are not universal, and could not explain cross cultural ideas and values, but his study did comprehensively define the various stages of the life span.

From the above discussion we can sort out the following problems of youth:

- Unbridled sexuality
- Rejection of parents / teachers
- Lack of concentration
- Extremes of emotion / violence

- Unpredictability.

Again adolescence involved various emotional problems that were associated with such things as:

a. The break from family life experienced by teenagers.

b. The development of independent personalities that starts to conflict with parental socialization.

In this respect, emphasis is given upon adolescence being a time of emotional "storm and stress".

### **Applications of C.H Cooley's Theory of Looking Glass Self:**

Self-esteem increases during adolescence, and then slows in young adulthood. Five personality traits openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism affect self-esteem. For this reason, understanding the trajectory of self-esteem is important to pinpointing and timing interventions that could improve people's self-esteem. There are several problems that adolescence encounters on a daily basis that is part of life and growing up. These problems can range anywhere from anger, anxiety, and attitude to sex, homosexuality, or violence. Almost everyone at some point and time of their adolescence, experience situations in their lives that are common to several others in their age range. The things that we go through during this time period help mold us into young adults. During your teenage years rules, independence, and feelings are topics that there are no way around. Throughout all these problems communication is the key to helping with common adolescence problems. If you do not know how to communicate or have no open form of communication, mishaps might arise because of the way teens tend to express themselves during this phase.

Teenagers tend to struggle to discover who they are. Society seems to be a mirror for them, they want to act the way society perceive them. In present day world, with increasing life choices for women in our society, some people believe that identity struggle for teenage girls are more difficult than for boys. Yet the problem for girls and boys is identical. When teens push against the guidelines that parents set for them it does not mean that they are bad kids. Teens have to gain life for themselves by challenging rules and values that they discover on their own. Being allowed to make mistakes is a part of learning. Sometimes the need for parents to protect adolescence can smother them or possibly alienate them. Though many roles that are put into play are appropriate, teens may try to challenge them without actually trying to change them. These challenges are part of the self-discovery process. Taking risks, testing limits, changing self-images, and challenging rules and conventions are all part of a teenagers' search for identity. Adolescence need help trying to become someone instead of just being a child. They need to be encouraged to try things to challenge their abilities. Finding oneself is a big task at this age and the same was true regarding mastery when they compared the self-esteem of men and women.

The converging evidence on gender similarity in self-esteem is important because false beliefs in gender differences in self-esteem may carry substantial costs. For example, parents, teachers and counselors may overlook self-esteem problems in male adolescents and young men because of the widespread belief that men have higher self-esteem than women have. But in reality the situation is somewhat different.

Perceiving control or mastery over life is strongly associated with a subjects' level of self-esteem. In contrast, income did not influence the level or shape of the self-esteem trajectory in adolescence and young adulthood, as the researchers found. In particular, emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness and a sense of mastery are important predictors of the self-esteem trajectory in adolescence and young adulthood.

### **Ego Vs Expectations (The Socio-Cultural Factors) and Mead's Analysis of Mind, Self And Society**

Robert White, a theorist who did extensive clinical research with young adults. He identifies five "growth trends" of young adult development: (1) stabilizing of ego identity or feeling confident within the newly found identity and not as apt to succumb to outside pressures; (2) freeing of personal relationships in terms of dealing with problems in the "present," they are thus able to become more sensitive to another person because they are less tied with their personal history; (3) deepening of interests and the enjoyment of life which shapes a person over time and is "tied to both competence and commitment;" (4) humanizing of values distinguishing "between abstract morality of adolescence and the more functional morality of young adulthood"; and finally, (5) expansion of caring the stage of the "growth trend" closely related to Erikson's idea of "generativity" (Bocknek, 85-86).

Many of the theorists share similar views. Young adults are finally able to deal successfully with their own problems. They have the ability to think in the present, without the confusion of their personal experiences. When we discuss "humanizing of values," we can make the claim on the basis of Cooley's theory, that by the time people reach young adulthood, they have developed their own sense of morals and ideas internally. G.H Mead's theory of "Mind, Self and Society" also suggests that they can look inside themselves to know right from wrong. Mead's theory emphasizes the organization of the social act which has been imported into the organism and becomes then the mind of the individual. It still includes the attitudes of others, but now highly organized, so that they become what we call social attitudes rather than roles of separate individuals. This process of relating one's own organism to the others in the interactions that are going on, in so far as, it is

imported into the conduct of the individual with the conversation of the "I" and the "me," constitutes the self. So the self arises out of the interaction with Society. The value of this importation of the conversation of gestures into the conduct of the individual lies in the superior co-ordination gained for society as a whole, and in the increased efficiency of the individual as a member of the group. It is the difference between the process which can take place in a group of rats or ants or bees, and that which can take place in a human community. The social process with its various implications is actually taken up into the experience of the adolescence so that that which is going on takes place more effectively, because in a certain sense it has been rehearsed in the adolescent. He not only plays his part better under those conditions but he also reacts back on the organization of which he is a part. The final growth stage, the "expression of caring," represents the expansion of the young adult beyond himself, into the community and into his friends and family. In this process also his self is developed. This is a stage that is continuously evolving throughout one's life. The basis for it, however, begins during young adulthood.

### **The Psychoanalytical Understanding of Adolescence:**

Rudolph Wittenberg, one of the only psychoanalytic theorists asserts that "post adolescence represents a specific phase of growth in the life cycle" (Bocknek, 87). Wittenberg identifies that the adolescence faces a self image crisis, where the person alternates between responding to superego demands (parental/authority) and adhering to one's ego ideal.

In brief states of depersonalization, a person experience a loss of identity, accompanied by series of disembodiment, isolation and estrangement. End of role playing is often accompanied by depression. Awareness of time continuity is also important in the sense that the sense of time passage becomes more acute. It includes developing the ability to allocate and utilize time in one's activities, plans or defenses. Search for a partner is another important task the young adult chooses a love object for 'permanent affiliation.

The economic bind in which young adults want to pay their own way, but society keeps them from the labour force. This is social rejection, because it comes at a time when young adults are striving for autonomy. Group formation, used to personify the young adult's ego-ideal. Membership in a social, political or religious group becomes part of one's role and self definition. Evolving a Weltanschauung, or a philosophy of life, the character of this philosophy depends on the success the young adults has had in coming to terms with all the above mentioned pressure (Bocknek, 87).

All of the characteristics deal with finding an identity, independence in life style and the search for ideals. Wittenberg constantly notices the qualitative changes that occur in young adulthood. He is among the first of the group to describe adult forms of individuation and 'real object' relationships" (Bocknek, 88).

This theoretical overview, although extremely general, does convey the wide range of thought concerning young adulthood. Many other theorists, such as Freud and Mannheim, share similar ideas. Those he mentions, however, share the common theme of the young adult's search for identity and autonomy. Young adulthood is a brief period of life when many important decisions are made, both consciously and not. It is a period of tremendous growth. The growth extends to setting goals about careers, families and mates. Young adulthood is especially important because for the first time, not only are these goals set, but they have the potential to be realized.

### **Parsons' Notion of Pattern Variables in Analysing Adolescence:**

It is evident that youths most of the time does not adequately describe reality. For example, status in modern industrial societies is not simply achieved. Such factors as gender, caste play a significant role, as does social class (especially family background). Are all families characterized by the patterns Parsons' identifies? As we shall see when we look at family life, it is difficult to subscribe to this rather "romanticised" view of family life. As Ann Oakley, a major (Marxist) feminist critic of Parsons' view of family life has noted, Parsons' seems to think that the "idealized" portrait he paints of White, American, Middle-class, family life is a common experience in all families. But in reality the truth is somewhat different. The radical psychologist, R.D. Laing has also gone so far as to suggest that the family is actually the source of many of the traumas that we have as individuals in later life most people find the family such a traumatic, unhappy, experience that they cannot wait to leave it.

Again, as the Involvement of women in all spheres is increasing, as more women in modern societies come to see their primary role as wage earners rather than mothers, they too will require a "transition phase" involving youth culture. As far as it is possible to ascertain, this has not occurred (and certainly not in the form taken by male youth cultures). It says little about the form that youth cultures take. Because Functionalist theory tends to see stratification systems in terms of the concept of age set (basically the idea that social status is a function of age and sex rather than social class), differences between social classes and youth cultures are de-emphasized. The generalizations involved in this systemic theory (behaviour as a function of social structures)

also fail to explain why some teenagers do not seem to get involved in youth cultures whilst others from the same social class become heavily involved.

#### **Coping with Adolescence Problem:**

Writers such as Talcott Parsons ("Essays in Sociological Theory", 1964) and Eisenstadt ("From Generation to Generation", 1956) begin with the fundamental assertion that the family is the primary unit of socialization in society. They contrast the characteristics of the family:

Emotional closeness

- Affection,
- Traditional relationships
- Sharing relationships, with the characteristics of wider society (especially the world of work)
- Self-interest
- Emotional coldness
- Judgments made about others on the basis of social status

The argument, in this respect, is that people develop patterns of behaviour (in effect, choices that we make in our relationships with one another. Most importantly from the Structural functionalist viewpoint, these "choices" are specified for us by the culture within which we live. The structure of society "pressurizes" us into following these patterns. As we move from one pattern of behaviour to another (from the family to work, for example) the concept of anomie comes into play because the movement from one institution governed by one type of pattern variables (family life) to an institution governed by another type (the workplace) would result in feelings of unhappiness, isolation and loneliness, we would not know how to behave properly in the new institution since we would be experiencing an "anomic situation". However, since Functionalists argue that society is a form of "living organism", it is forced to create ways of easing such transitions, to make them less traumatic and thereby eliminate the possible causes of anomie.

The function of youth culture, therefore, is to provide a "period of transition" "between the family and work, for example. This is an elegant form of theorising because it seems to explain so much. For example:

#### **The "Modern" Phenomenon of Youth Culture:**

Pre-industrial societies did not have the functional requirement of a period of transition between childhood and adulthood because: the family was centre of economic production. People were not geographically mobile. An education system was not required. But now, youth encounter a period of transition, as the function of family, religion, and education has changed.

#### **The Involvement of Boys Rather Than Girls:**

To some extent, this theory explains the apparent "invisibility of women" in relation to youth culture on the basis that it is generally men who experience the marked transition between the family and work. For women, the norm is the swapping of one set of affective relationships (their parents' family) for another (their own). This is, of course, a highly debatable idea, one we will look at more closely in a moment. Right now girls are also facing a marked transition between the family and work, as their social status and role are gradually changing.

#### **The Transient (Temporary) Nature of Youth Culture:**

Youth cultures are a "passing phase" not because people get fed-up with them, for example, but because as the teenager moves into adulthood (learns the norms, responsibilities and so forth associated with this new social status), youth cultures lose their function for that individual. Once the transition period is complete, youth cultures are no-longer functionally necessary and they simply disappear.

#### **Youth Cultures as a "Normal" Aspect of Modern Society:**

"Moral panics" about youth are essentially misconceived, according to this point-of-view since youth cultures represent no threat to social stability. On the contrary, youth cultures must occur in a "healthy" society because they are functionally necessary. If youth cultures were suppressed, for example, wider social problems would be created (ones that really did threaten social stability). This idea of "functional necessity" (or functional prerequisite as it's sometimes called) is an important one in Functionalist theory that appears time after time in the analysis of social systems.

### **III. Conclusion:**

Several studies of the academic literature confirm the role of parental pattern in socialization and the importance of positive family climate. The well-functioning intimate relationships based on family have a prominent role in adult mental and physical health, in healthy adaptation and personal development because the

family is the major institute of social support system. The family is an important source of identity, self-evaluation and psychological well-being. In the present paper also we analysed how adolescents are brought up in the family and in due course develop their self. In addition, we could prove that parental social support, respecting of values, high-quality parent-child relationships and parental control and monitoring have beneficial effects for adolescents. Both in substance use and in mental health, family cohesion ensures a protective effect. Thus, we need to emphasize the protective effects of parenting, in order to underline the health benefits as well as mental well being to the next generations. It is important to make parents aware of this kind of protection. Again a strong correlation exists between the religious, spiritual views and problem behavior. Having a religious and spiritual inclination in most of the cases will help in choosing the right path and also restricts the conscience from doing any a wrong things. Therefore, the future emphasis should also be given on imposing a sense of religious and spiritual tolerance and inclination which will work in long run in setting most of the problems in their lives. In relation to religion and spirituality we aimed to reveal from where do religious and spiritual values come. Examining the process of religious socialization it is clearly stated that family values are a crucial part of the process of religious socialization. A very strong correlation is found in the religious values of parents and their children. This correlation along with a family which helps them to chose to adopt behaviours and values pertain to society will go a long way in coping with adolescent's problems.

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