Adolescent Development

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Chapter 3: Social Transitions

Outline/overview

- Social Redefinition
- Adolescence as a Social Invention
- Changes in Status – social and legal
- Continuity and discontinuity in social transitions and how we can improve the process
- Neighborhood Influences

Social Redefinition

- In all societies adolescence is a period of social transition for the individual
- The individual comes to be recognized as an adult
- The social transition is less explicit in contemporary U.S. society than in traditional cultures
Social Redefinition and Psychosocial Development

- Identity
  - attainment of adult status causes adolescent to feel more adultlike
- Development of Autonomy
  - Adult status leads to shifts in responsibility, independence, and freedom
  - Permitted to make decisions that have long-term consequences

Social Redefinition and Psychosocial Development

- Age of majority: legal age for adult status
- Interest in intimacy, dating and marriage
- Achievement
  - Becoming a full-time employee
  - Permitted to leave school on their own volition

Adolescence as a Social Invention

- Inventionists
- Roots in the Industrial Revolution
- Young people excluded from labor force
  - Economic dependence on elders
- Formal schooling is lengthened
- New Terminology
  - Teenager
  - Youth
  - Emerging adulthood
Changes in Status

- Two-sided alteration in status
  - Given privileges/rights reserved for society’s adults
  - Increased expectations for
    - self-management
    - personal responsibility
    - social participation
- Addressed with adult titles
- Maintain new types of social relationships with
  - Parents
  - Elders
  - Younger individuals whose status has not yet changed

Changes in Legal Status

- Permission for more extensive participation in the community’s decision making
  - Voting (U.S. citizens)
  - Ceremonial life (Navajo people)
- Expected to serve their communities in emergency and train for warfare
- May own property and maintain control over their income
- Age is a prerequisite for employment in certain occupations

Changes in Legal Status

- Expected to contribute to the economic well-being of their community, i.e. pay taxes
- Ability to participate in activities typically reserved for adults
  - gambling, purchasing alcoholic beverages, and driving
- Expected to take increased responsibility for self-management and social participation
The Process of Social Redefinition
- A series of events occurring over time
- Contemporary American indicators?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.
- Extrusion/Scarification

Variations in Social Transitions: Clarity in the Past
- U.S. transition to adulthood in the early 19th century was more disorderly
  - School – viewed as children
  - Work – viewed as adults
  - Timetable depended on household/family needs
- A century ago, the passage into adulthood may have been more prolonged than today.

Variations in Social Transitions: Continuity
- Continuous transitions
  - Gradual transitions, where the adolescent assumes the roles and status of adulthood bit by bit
- Discontinuous transitions
  - Sudden transitions, where the adolescent’s entrance into adulthood is more abrupt, with little or no training
The Transition into Adulthood in Contemporary Society

Two trends are reshaping the transition

1. The transition period is getting longer
   - Puberty occurs earlier and schooling lasts longer.
2. Success in the labor force is more dependent on formal schooling

What Can Be Done to Ease the Transition?

- Encouragement to spend time in voluntary, nonmilitary service activities
  - Staffing day-care centers
  - Working with the elderly
  - Americorps, Job Corps
- Mentoring programs for at-risk adolescents, who often have few relationships with positive adult role models

Influence of Neighborhood Conditions on Development

- Poverty - important overarching factor
  - Growing up in poor neighborhood
- Mechanisms of Neighborhood Influences
  - Collective Efficacy
  - Impact of Stress
  - Limited Access to Resources