

Adolescent Identity Statuses

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Abstract

Adolescence is regarded as an interpretation of multiple transformations and conditioning that occurs in that period of life. When referring to adolescence we must think about the three essential facets of the individual which are subjected to changes in this period - biological, psychological and social.

Over the years it could be observed that young people face the so-called identity crisis generated by the evolution of society, which became common nowadays compared to reports from the time of Erik Erikson. The forming of the identity, developing self-awareness, building self-acceptance towards their own individuality represents the defining stages of adolescence.

In this paper we describe some elements that define adolescence and part of the many changes related to searching and developing an identity.

Keywords: *adolescence, identity statuses, development, structure of values, beliefs and vocational lines*

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a topic of interest which is lately treated as a social subject (Clerget, 2012), often approached within the dynamic process of development of society by the authorities, non-governmental organizations, teachers, parents (Bernstein, 2000). The number of authors who have addressed the topic of adolescence is impressive; however, the subject is and will remain a particularly controversial one due to the evolution of society.

From a behavioral standpoint, the teenager oscillates between childhood and adulthood. Also the teenager is very concerned about the future lives (Csikszentmihalyi, & Schneider, 2000). With time, his mental development helps him showing interest for knowledge and to participate

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responsibly in a series of social activities. We may say that during adolescence, the search for identity is at the forefront of the concerns of adolescents (Kroger, 2006). It is known that during puberty the shaping of the identity and personality undergoes an impetuous and sinusoidal route (Offer, Ostrov, & Howard, 1981). Once they reach adolescence, young people encounter the need of maturation centered on identifying personal resources, and here we can include aptitudes, skills and nonetheless their desires, interests, aspirations and ideals. Adolescents build their own inner world, and detaching from the family tutelage and increasing their autonomy and independence there are steps that are gradually conquered (Adelson, 1975; Ştir, 2004).

II. THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

The concept of identity refers to the biological nature of the individual and his affiliation to the human species and the psychological side, through hereditary dowry. Identity is also generated by the imprint of the family and the social environment from which the individuals belong, through elements that offers specificity to the nation they are part of (Erikson, 1994). In other words, all these bio-psycho-socio-cultural dimensions help creating a unique structure, identifiable in its rights through what is common and belongs to all human beings.

Therefore, this is about a personal identity and a social one which are defined through acquisitions which give them certain specificity and also through the manifestation forms of its obligations which reside from the multitude of roles they have achieved in the social life (Bulzan & Voinea, 2004).

According to psychology dictionaries, personal identity results from a subject's own experience to feel that he exists and to recognize him through relating to another individual (Doron & Parot, 1999).

Jenkins (1996) stated that identity isn't only a specific feature of the human species. Recent studies in the field of animal behavior shows that social identity seems to be found in groups of elephants, chimpanzees (Poole, Payne, Langbauer, & Moss, 1988; Boesch, 1996; Lehmann, & Boesch, 2009).

The identity components, described by Strickland (2001), include a sense of personal continuity and one of uniqueness towards other people. In other words, people acquire a social identity based on the character of certain groups of members: families, ethnic, occupational, etc. These group identities satisfy their need for affiliation. On the other hand, people build a personal identity which satisfies their need for uniqueness (Scârneci, 2009).

Erik Erikson introduced in 1963 the term of identity, understood as a synthesis of different identifications made during the childhood, regarding parents and the social roles that they transmit (Larousse, 2006).

According to Erik Erikson, the empirical crystallizations of the identity appear during childhood, based on the identification with traits, roles and values of other people that matter to the individual. According to this theory, this means that obtaining certain identity, at the end of adolescence, is superior to any other identifications of individuals from the past: this includes all the significant identifications, but they also modify them, to obtain a whole unit which is reasonably coherent (cited by Kroger, & Marcia, 2011).

Erickson theory states that human development is a continuous lifetime process (Erikson, & Erikson, 1998). The author divided the life of a man in eight periods, each of which is associated with a problem that needs solving. Thus the fifth stage, which is specific to adolescence, is specific to the identity acquisition, in the case of a positive outcome or with otherwise confusion.

Based on Erik Erikson's theory, James Marcia conceptualizes identity as a structure of values, beliefs and vocational lines that distinguish one person from another. He considers that a person who develops mature identity is capable of having strong commitments, consciously and knowingly chosen in areas such as vocation, sexuality, religion and political ideology (Kroger, & Marcia, 2011).

Erik Erikson's theory was completed by researcher James Marcia (1966), who claims that the balance between identity and self-confusion is given by a commitment towards a particular identity. A tool was created in order to measure the identity status by dividing the identity in four different states - diffuse identity, foreclosure, moratorium or the identity crisis and the achieved identity. The instrument is focused on the areas of functionality: occupational role, beliefs and values, sexuality. It was noted that during adolescence, young people usually tend to fall into the category of the diffuse identity or the foreclosure identity type. At the same time, various researchers observed that teenagers who took a strong commitment to a particular identity had a tendency to be happier and healthier compared to those who did not do so (Côté, 2009). Thus, adolescents who showed a diffuse identity also registered a tendency of a permanent search for their role, that they cannot find their place in the world and that they are failing at obtaining an identity.

Self-identity is seen by Berzonsky (2008) as an accumulation of certain earnings at the end of adolescence, based on experiences, so the young individual can be prepared for the role of adult. According to the authors Adams and Berzonsky (2008), vocational development is related to the character, the social context, economical and also cultural related.

In a study conducted by Grosu (2014), it was found that a very large proportion of teenagers described themselves based on traits that are specific to the category of personal identity statuses (ambitious, resourceful, funny, smart, beautiful vs. lazy, vain, gullible, jealous, naive) and less through traits specific to social identity (friendly, communicative, sociable vs. lonely, silent, without friends). As for the role model chapter, adolescents, based on the answers given, are

divided in two categories: the ones who specify that their parents are the main models and the others who specify that they are guided by their own principles, as autodidacts.

III. CULTURAL IDENTITY ELEMENTS

As stated by Cristea (2001), the modeling of individual behaviors is achieved mainly through a system of values, norms and behavioral patterns and attitudes that express a synthetically and essential way the practical and spiritual experience of a community.

During the adolescence stage a confrontation occurs with self-identity issues related to cultural differences. During this stage, young people make important choices in their development as individuals, shape their own expectations, aspirations and chose their career path. According to the authors Phinney and Chavira (1995) there is a link between ethnic identity and self-esteem that interacts simultaneously, adolescents with high self-esteem showing a greater predictability to engage in the exploration of the ethnic identity.

Also, Phinney (2001) stated that adolescents develop a positive/strong ethnic identity when they are urged to learn the history, traditions and values of the group they belong and when they had the chance to interact frequently with youth who share similar experiences.

Teenagers from ethnic minority groups with assumed identities have obtained the highest scores on the independent measurement of the identity centered on the ego and psychological adjustment. Phinney also developed in 1992 Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure an instrument that measured the ethnic identity of multiple groups. This evaluation was used for a variety of ethnic groups and provides a complex global index of the ethnic identity (Phinney, & Ong, 2007). Ethnic identity was closely linked to measures regarding collaboration capacity, authority, self-esteem and optimism and is associated negatively with loneliness and depression (Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999; Avery, Tonidandel, Thomas, Johnson, & Mack, 2007).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The identity statuses model represented the origin to approximately more than 500 studies made on different variables of personality, family history and behavioral effects and development which were associated with different identity statuses (Waterman, 2008). Social and individual identity provides comfort and an existential security for us as individuals (Friedlander, 1999). Values, defined as standards of evaluating and judging objects, facts, events and human actions are those that help us build our identity (Littlejohn, & Foss, 2010). Values help the individual to act in a certain manner and through certain means, guiding him at the same time in his relations

with others and in influencing them. Values facilitate the adaptation and insertion in a particular social space (Dumitru, 2001).

Some research done up to this date revealed that adolescents shape their identity starting from language, friends, parents and clothing (Kroger, 2006; Grant, & Stephen, 2005).

Most often, adolescents present a less mature identity at the end of adolescence, identity defined as a continuous process throughout our development as an individual. For example, a review of studies in the field done by Kegan (1994) indicates that between one-half to two-thirds of the adult population seem to not have fully achieved the fourth rank of conscientiousness, the Eriksonian equivalent of achieving a sense of personal identity statuses (Kroger, & Marcia, 2011). Identity statuses are based on meanings and values that are either assigned or selected. Social constants remain a source of influence in directing the formation of identity (Eyerman, & Jamison, 1991). Identity formation process will generate confidence provided that adolescents can experience in a certain stage an inner incongruity, losing so they can be able to find inner solutions as well as interpersonal relations.

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