Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach

Chapter 4
Cultural Beliefs

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Chapter Overview

- Processes and outcomes of socialization
- Defining cultural beliefs
- Religious beliefs and cognitive development
- Moral development theories and critiques

Cultural Beliefs are...

(Shweder et al., 1998, p. 868)

- Rooted in Symbolic Inheritance — beliefs, “ideas and understandings, both implicit and explicit, about persons, society, nature and divinity”
- Norms and moral standards that arise from these beliefs, ideas and understandings
**Cultural Belief and Roles**

Explain these pictures as examples of possible cultural roles...

- **Gender Roles**
- **Age-related Roles**
- **Social Status Roles**

**Discussion Stop**

- Why do adolescents become increasingly aware of their cultural roles and what is expected of them?

**FLY-IN ANSWER!**

- Increasing cognitive capacities in adolescence (i.e., abstract thinking & self-reflection)
- The transition to adulthood is approaching along with the need to adapt to adult role requirements

**Socialization is...**

The process by which people acquire the behaviors and beliefs of their culture

1. **Self-regulation** – ability to comply with social norms
2. **Role preparation** – for roles in work, gender, institutions such as marriage, parenthood
3. **Cultivation of sources of meaning** – “What’s important?” “What’s to be lived for?”
### Cultural Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Collectivism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-expression</td>
<td>Conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad socialization</td>
<td>Narrow socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Western”</td>
<td>“Eastern”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Keep in Mind**
- Cultures’ belief systems are not “pure types”
- There are individual differences in any culture
- Diversity also exists within individuals

### Socialization: Sources

- Influence of friends, media, school, community, legal system increases
- Influence of family diminishes in adolescence

### Cultural Differences: Valuing Family as Residential Unit

The longer time in USA or Australia, the less the family is valued as the residential unit
Religious Beliefs are Cultural Beliefs

- Virtually all cultures have religious beliefs of some kind
- The content of cultures’ religious beliefs is diverse
- Typically contain prescriptions for socialization – roles, self-regulation, sources of meaning
- Typically specify a code for behavior

Moral Reasoning (Kohlberg)

- Kohlberg presented his participants with hypothetical moral dilemmas, asked them to make a judgment and explain their reasons for their decision.
- Whether a person judged the actions of the main character in the dilemma as right or wrong was not important. Rather, his reasoning for the judgment was key to determining stage of moral reasoning.

* Interesting Footnote:
  Kohlberg’s research began with a study of 72 boys aged 10, 13, and 16.

Moral Reasoning Stages (Kohlberg)

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<th>Level &amp; Stages</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
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| Preconventional      | Based on perceptions of likelihood of external reward or punishment | Stage 1: “He shouldn’t steal because he’ll go to jail.”  
                    |                                                  | Stage 2: “He should steal because he needs the money.”                  |
| Conventional         | Right is what agrees with rules established by tradition and authority | Stage 3: “He shouldn’t steal because good sons don’t do that.”  
                    |                                                  | Stage 4: “He shouldn’t steal because if everyone steals there will be chaos.” |
| Postconventional     | What is right is derived from universal principles | Stage 5: “He should steal because laws need to be changed to reflect peoples’ basic rights.”  
                    |                                                  | Stage 6: “He shouldn’t steal because the universal principle of ownership must be primary over an individual’s needs.” |
Gender Critique (Gilligan)

- Male (Autonomy) vs. Female (Relationship)
- Morality of Justice vs. Morality of Care

Key Chapter Ideas

- Socialization is the process by which people acquire the behaviors and beliefs of the culture they live in. Three outcomes central to this process are self-regulation, role preparation, and the cultivation of sources of meaning.
- Cultural beliefs usually tend toward either individualism or collectivism, with individualistic cultures giving priority to independence and self-expression and collectivist cultures placing a higher value on obedience and conformity.
- Broad socialization and narrow socialization are the terms for the process by which cultural members come to adopt the values and beliefs of an individualistic or collectivistic culture.
- A custom complex consists of a distinctive cultural practice and the cultural beliefs that are the basis for that practice.
- Kohlberg’s theory of moral development proposed that moral development occurs in a universal sequence regardless of culture.