



# Adolescence a State of Becoming and Not Being

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## ABSTRACT

Teenage years are the time of the stage where infancy and adulthood meet and it is relatively a new concept which is based on many factors such as the demand of educated professionals in jobs, the necessity of education, the prohibition of child labour and many more. But adolescence is increasingly becoming more distinct and prolonged. In many nations, puberty is beginning sooner due to a variety of variables, including physical, social, economic, and technical ones. Due to this parents and the society as well tend to expect more mature behaviour from a young teenager. They learn to manage many different chores all at the same time. Key social changes to adulthood are also delayed until far later than biological maturity. Young people now spend longer in school and training, and they have different expectations. As a result, young people take on adult roles and responsibilities later, such as family formation and employment and depend on their parents for different aspects for a longer time resulting in feeling of insecurity and failure, affecting their mental health.

## INTRODUCTION

Rituals of passage, or initiation ceremonies, were prevalent in the traditional cultures of the past were used to direct the individual through the essential change from one stage of life or social status to another. Funerals and weddings are two typical instances of this. To usher the young people into adulthood, a particular puberty ceremony was held around the time of ladies' menarche and boys' puberty. The youth would return as a new person, an adult with a new status and new duties, after completing this dramatic and frequently perilous ordeal that involved tests of bravery and endurance as well as separation from one's family and community. Adolescence typically did not exist in this cultural setting, and if it did, it was definitely a liminal, or limbo, stage that lasted anywhere from a few days to a few months.

Adolescence is used to describe the experience of transitioning through a stage between childhood and maturity. But is this period well defined? Are both the upper as well as lower limits of this stage clearly demarcated? Adolescence, as a stage, has undergone many changes. We need to view adolescence in relation to various contextual elements. The ideas, aspirations, career preferences and expectations of young people have changed drastically over a period of time. A lot of young people now think that they will have their

career first and then later on may be in their thirties, they'll look at having kids because options are available now. They are gradually opening up. Even the use of information and communication technology has redefined interpersonal relationships. For parents also looking after the kids is not a fulltime job as it was earlier. Joint families are replaced by nuclear families. There is a shift in the role of schools and teachers in such scenario.

## HISTORY OF ADOLESCENCE & SOCIETY

The word adolescence is a translation of the Latin term *adolescere*, which means "to mature." Since reference to growth is nonspecific, it could apply to physiological, psychological, or social growth. It is therefore necessary to agree on a more specific meaning. The Random House Dictionary defines adolescence as "the process or condition of growing up, the growing age of human beings; the period which extends from childhood to manhood or womanhood; Ordinarily considered as extending from fourteen to twenty-five in males, and from twelve to twenty-one in females." Adolescence, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is defined as the time between the onset of puberty and the age of majority, or between 10 and 19 years of age. However, in general terms, it is considered a period of transition from youth to adulthood, when teenagers go through changes after puberty but do not immediately take on the responsibilities and advantages of adulthood. The characteristics of adolescence differ greatly depending on one's age, sex, marital status, class, area, and cultural background. However, as a group, adolescents have sexual and reproductive health needs that are distinct from those of adults in significant ways and that are still underappreciated or unmet in the majority of the world. The idea of a protracted teenage development stage is somewhat new. Adolescence in English has only been a term since the fifteenth century (Kaplan 1984, 44). Puberty's extended duration is a social fabrication rather than a physiological one. Adolescence is a modern construct that did not exist in traditional societies. In the west, adolescent experiences underwent significant shift in the latter half of the 19th and early 20th century. The events listed below occurred in western society and contributed to this change:

- More jobs now require education beyond a primary level;

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- Many parents had the financial means to keep their kids in school so they could focus on their education;
- Child labour regulations limited children's employment prospects;
- Laws requiring compulsory schooling were passed;
- For minors, a distinct justice system was created.

A six-year period, from ages 13 to 18, was once thought of as adolescence. Today, this time frame has quadrupled to twelve years, including children from the age of 11 through extended adolescence to the age of 23. Finding your identity during this period of life might be challenging. Adolescence now typically starts at the age of twelve due to a number of physical, social, and technological developments. Due to better nutrition and fewer diseases than in the previous century, children now physically exhibit the indications of puberty earlier. The emergence of puberty in the average teen arrived approximately 19 months earlier in 1966 than it did in 1947. This means that the average youth of today is entering puberty almost two years prior to those of Second World War vintage ( Muuss , 1962 , p 6 ) . Girls often mature before boys, and for some girls, the start of puberty can be seen as early as age 10. The age at which we consider a child to be an adolescent is likewise falling due to cultural, parental, and societal expectations. There are "working parents with no at-home parent" in an increasing number of homes. Therefore, early adolescents are frequently expected to have higher maturity; for instance, they are expected to care for or watch over younger siblings. Additionally, school districts have created distinct middle or secondary schools for kids between the ages of 11 and 14. Compared to primary schools, these institutions have higher expectations for students' conduct and academic performance. The age at which we define an individual as an adult is rising on the other end of the adolescent range. The length of time required to complete formal schooling is extending into young people's early 20s due to our more complicated culture. Many people in their late teens and early twenties are unable to move out on their own and establish financially independent lives because of the price and obligations of school.

Human biological and social clocks were once set at the same time, back when adolescence lasted a shorter duration. Teenagers were expected to become parents when they were physically prepared to do so by society. The ability of an individual to reproduce and the wisdom of the prevailing society over when to get married and start a family currently differ by around 10 years. The time between puberty and becoming an adult is growing longer. A teenager experiences sexual unemployment over this extended gap between childhood and adulthood. In actuality, social and economic variables frequently affect the stage of life at which a woman gives birth to her first child. While women pursuing professional professions are progressively deferring child bearing until their 30s to early 40s, women from lower socioeconomic homes tend to have their first kid in their early teens. Our society's rites of passage from adolescent to adulthood are murky and contradictory. There were brief formal rites of passage in traditional civilizations, which were preceded by training that lasted from a few weeks to months. Visible signs of new status included adult clothing,

tattoos, scarring, and body piercing. When a young person was getting ready for maturity, their family was frequently put on hold while adult mentors taught them the skills they would need as adults.

## LENGTHENING OF ADOLESCENT YEARS

Traditional definitions of adolescence include the time between the beginning of puberty and reaching maturity, which is generally accompanied by marriage. At the outset of the 20th century, adolescence was thought to last from the mid-teens to the early 20s. (G. S. Hall indicated in Hall 1904, Vol. 1, xix, that the age range should be between 14 and 24) By the 20th century, however, the boundaries of adolescence had grown in both directions. During the 20th century, puberty advanced gradually in the majority of Western countries before levelling off in more recent decades. The majority of girls in the West experience menarche before the age of 13, which is relatively late in the development of pubertal processes. Most Western boys and girls start going through puberty between the ages of 10 and 12, which is at least 2 years earlier than it was a century ago. Since the middle of the 20th century, the median age of marriage has risen significantly and steadily, and it is presently in the late 20s for both sexes in all Western countries. Similar changes have taken place with regard to the other demographic transitions that are usually used to trace the transition to adulthood. The median age at first birth increased through the second half of the 20th century in a trend that was almost identical to that of marriage (Arnett 2000a). The typical age at which people complete high school has been rising during the 20th century, which means that more and more young people in the West are continuing their education into their 20s. Since conventional adult transitions, such as getting married and graduating school, have gotten later and later in recent decades, today's youth experience a prolonged period in which they feel mostly adult but not totally. .

The following are at the top of the scale:

- More youth enrolled in programmes for education and training;
- Higher probability of Unemployment and low-paying, temporary jobs;
- Delaying marriage till one's late 20s (leading to an increase in cohabitation)
- Rise in average age of having first child ;
- reduction in welfare benefits for youth.

Jobs, housing, and partnerships are no longer as taken for granted or secure as they once may have been which in turn contributes to higher insecurity and risk for young people. Independence obviously refers to more than just financial security. The growth of higher education has caused movements in other directions, such as the earlier age at which many young people leave home and establish "intermediary houses" with friends. However, roughly one-third of them will return home once they can afford to do so.

Adulthood has likewise spread downhill at the other end of the range. Young people go through puberty and are more sexually active when they are younger. In terms of consumerism and lifestyle, childhood and adulthood are more similar. TV firms, who once had a clear division between adult and children's programmes, now sell to diverse age and lifestyle groups. Record labels identify a consumer niche among "tweenies," or 8–11 year old girls. Youth TV targets 16 to 24 year olds in a level that was unimaginable twenty years ago. Similar to this, marketing professionals discuss the issue of "kidultism," where toys, movies, and novels like Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, Toy Story, etc. are popular among children.

In India, the contrasts are so vivid that any attempt to generalize, needs to be tempered with a caveat. There are marked variations in the situation of adolescents, qualified by gender and setting. According to the National Family Health Survey 3 (2005-2006), 44.5% of females aged 20 to 24 were by age 18 is married. For both men and women, the average age of marriage is 2.12 years lower in rural areas than in metropolitan areas. Women between the ages of 15 and 19 are responsible for about 19 percent of India's overall fertility. Growing up as a female child carries with it the notion of inferior status and lesser privileges as compared to the male child in the patriarchal setting of the Indian home. (Dube 1988; Kakar 1979).

But it is not fair to paint a picture of pathos for Indian adolescents because some of them are dropping out of school and entering the labour market before time, and are physically stunted and tempted by drugs, violence and crime, then the other side of the canvas portrays a picture of happiness. Many of them are physically fit, educationally successful, and professionally sought after by multinational companies for their training, expertise and productivity.

There is a new breed of super cool rock stars or celebrity stars from glamour world that are redefining adulthood and looking fabulous at 40. This phenomenon looks like it's here to stay, as 40 year olds look, talk, act and dress like 20 year olds, heralding the arrival of a generation that never wants to grow up. This also hints at the end of the generation gap. Is it popular culture that's pushing the 40 somethings to get a younger makeover? Subconsciously influenced by the blitz of young and good-looking faces and bods from the media, many of today's over 40s are tapping the fountain of youth. Many are even adopting a lifestyle they never enjoyed when they were 20. The exposure, the expectations and the sheer exuberance that living such a lifestyle affords, keep them youthful. Sociologically "The 40 going-on 20 is like a status symbol". We are witnessing a change in generational beliefs and culture. The mantra is 'shape up or ship out'. Popular culture pays a lot of attention to attractiveness, youth and sexual experimentation. That's because they want to feel attractive even after they've children. There's a new dynamic, which is defying the hand-me-down model of adulthood.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AGE

social and global changes have influenced the lives of adolescents and these changes are likely to have an impact

on them going forward. The tools that allow modern youth to communicate with their friends and family are the most direct effects of the expanding information infrastructure. More and various types of interpersonal contact are now possible thanks to personal computers and mobile devices. Additionally, new opportunities for leisure, commerce, and employment have emerged. The ease with which fresh knowledge can be accessed is perhaps the most notable. Young users of this technology are being forced to deal with new ethical and legal dilemmas as a result of all these new opportunities provided by information technology that is fast developing. Children are drawn to new opportunities for cheating, plagiarism, and access to private, personal information. and unless new educational strategies and materials emerge, the life styles of the younger generations may subvert the ethics and values of past generations. Teenagers are unavoidably drawn to adult entertainment, and the Internet makes it much easier for them to participate in activities like gambling and sex. Violent material frequently predominates in the category of computer and Internet games. Neither family nor educational institutions are prepared to adequately restrict access of youth to such adult oriented materials that many find objectionable, particularly without adult supervision. For these reasons, socializing children in responsible use of technology is an important challenge for social policy. Socializing youth in responsible behavior with technology is critical to society from the standpoint of reducing the potential damage that they can create by releasing computer viruses or by disrupting information systems in other ways. While there have been few young people who commit computer crime, in some cases the damage has been very costly and painful. In the future, as computer networking becomes dramatically more powerful and people more dependent on it, the risks will be far greater and the damages more devastating for social institutions. The biological, cell-based computing devices of the more distance future will magnify such potential destruction many fold. New forms of both technical and social control for criminal deterrence will be needed to curtail devastating consequences of irresponsible behavior with technology.

Technology has also made adolescents more economically more reliant on the parents than during the agrarian era. modern youth is exposed to more access to knowledge and cultural options than in the past periods. This provides them with culturally diverse choices, which cannot be easily exercised due to economic dependence. The extended family system, the smaller, more intimate community, whether it be a village or a religious community, the uniform culture in the small circle of living, conventional ways of thinking, and behaviour with little need to exercise personal choice are just a few examples of built-in social buffers that are no longer available to today's adolescents. Teenagers in this scenario are under a great deal of stress. Since the "person" rather than the "system" is acknowledged as the fundamental building block of society, it is crucial to support young people in developing innate abilities to manage a range of choices, transitions, and pressures. The talents of the individual, which would enable him or her to be stable amidst rapid transition, must be enhanced in order to support the values of a stable community and the family.

## CONCLUSION

It is very clear that the conventional bridges into adulthood have moved. Where once the probability of having a stable, independent income, moving away from home to get married and being a parent made the adjustment easier, for many, today a combination of factors, for many mean that both the upward extension of the "youth period" between childhood and adulthood and the downward extension into childhood. The shifts toward a more flexible labour market have also had an impact on this extension.

Many factors combined to lengthen the period of time called adolescence in resulting in the formation of a pre-adult class (Cobb 1998, 26; Bakan 71). These factors are (i) Puberty has been occurring earlier; (ii) Marriage is coming later; (iii) Child labor laws were enacted. (iv) Compulsory Education laws were introduced; (v) The establishment of the juvenile justice system was a reaction to the notion that teenagers were not aided if they were punished on the same scale as adults. This new volitional adolescence, as Youniss and Ruth point out, shifts the role of parents and others who want to assist youth to that of providing support and guidance - in helping them to marshal resources to find their way in the labyrinth. The role of parents for the new adolescence is that of managers, who find information, make contacts and help in structuring choices, and provide guidance that helps youth avoid pitfalls and work their way through the myriad of choices (Furstenberg et al., 1999). The development of society and the individual should be in synchrony, otherwise, it will produce frustration for both the individual & society. In effect transitions experienced during adolescence will be more difficult.

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