

Preface

The genesis of this book can be traced back to my personal experiences as a young college girl or an “adolescent,” a term I got more closely acquainted with in the course of my study of human development. In the second year of undergraduate study, we had a course on “Understanding One’s Own Self”, which focused on adolescence as a developmental stage. As the course unfolded, we engaged in the classic theories of human development such as the psychoanalytic and psychosocial theories. The recurrent theme of adolescence highlighted in these theories was that it was a stage fraught with tension, essentially emerging from the renewed pace of development across domains, and the adolescent’s striving for autonomy from parents. As adolescents, we were supposed to be preoccupied with our own selves, reflecting on the central question of identity, “Who am I?”

Much as I would try, it was difficult for me to experience the many psychological developments addressed in the course, nor was I troubled by the question of identity or had experienced any special turmoil in relation to myself or felt the need to seek autonomy from my parents. In fact, much of my free time was spent with family, the pleasant memories of which have stayed with me through the years. Moreover, I was often plagued with insecurities related to my parents’ health and a lurking fear of anything untoward happening to either of them.

Questions and doubts surfaced intermittently in my mind; nevertheless, given the cultural tendency to assimilate the guru’s teachings, seldom did I articulate these confusions or question the relevance of the proposed theoretical perspectives. In fact, I often found myself trying to “fit in” with the model that was highlighted in the theories. Pushing the questions away however did not make them disappear and these continued to linger. Subsequently, during my master’s research on understanding children in their ecological context, I got acquainted with the role of culture in development. Engagement with cross-cultural perspectives was a turning point in that it made the puzzle of adolescence easier to unravel. The Western experience of turmoil or strain in relationship with parents was not culturally mandated after all, nor was it a problem if one did not ponder over the question, “Who am I?”

The steadily growing scholarship in the study of development in cultural context offered much respite from the nagging questions on human development in general and adolescent development in particular, at the same time encouraging engagement with this developmental period. My scholarly interest in adolescence thus took root.

Vadodara, India

Shagufa Kapadia

Adolescence in Urban India
Cultural Construction in a Society in Transition
Kapadia, S.
2017, XXIII, 197 p. 5 illus. in color., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-81-322-3731-0