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The Life Space and Socialization of the Self: Sex Differences in the Young Adolescent

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In this conclusion we examine the implications of the special issue findings for the development of the self. We discuss how well the young adolescent experiences in schoolwork, maintenance, talk, and leisure provide bases for an evolving adjustment to the adult roles of work, love, and play. Gender differences clearly emerged in the experience of daily life; children entered adolescence with differences in how time is experienced already firmly established, and by midadolescence these differences were intensifying. Our data support the three heuristics of "communion versus agency," "gender intensification," and the "public versus private dichotomy." Concern is raised as to the viability of traditional sex role socialization when adult roles may demand more egalitarian behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The life of a young adolescent differs in important ways from that of a child. Similarly, the day to day experience of a young teenage girl differs importantly from that of her male peer. This special issue has examined how children and young adolescents in two Midwestern communities spend their days and what they experience during their daily activities. Across the domains examined—schoolwork, maintenance, talk, media use, sports—one of the strongest and most consistent age trends we have seen is a shift away from doing things with the family and toward doing them alone or with friends. This shift, which is hardly surprising, reflects the increasing behavioral autonomy associated with this age period. The surprising part of our findings is the extent to which gender appears to influence this shift. Children enter adolescence with differences in how time is experienced already firmly established, and by midadolescence these differences are intensifying. The enactment of the central adolescent task of doing things on one's own or with

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friends and apart from the family is experienced quite differently by boys and girls.

In this conclusion we examine the implications of these findings for the development of the self. Increasing behavioral autonomy and the gender-specific way that it is enacted represent only the most visible tip of the intrapsychic changes marking the transition into adolescence. The move away from doing things with family signals a shifting ground of self-definition. Prior research suggests that this is an age period when a child's self-image and self-esteem are destabilized, particularly among girls (Jaquish and Savin-Williams, 1981; Offer and Howard, 1972; Simmons *et al.*, 1979; Simmons and Rosenberg, 1975). Our time-sampling data describe the daily round of experiences, the new "life space," within which a new picture of the self must be constructed. These data delineate the matrix of daily activity and subjective experience that provides the foreground for the adolescent developmental processes of self-definition and ultimately identity formation.

This special issue, then, does not simply identify the contexts that fill the majority of girls' and boys' time, but also suggests how adolescents are being socialized: what activities they are socialized to enjoy and incorporate into a sense of who they are. Do their experiences in schoolwork, maintenance, talk, and leisure provide bases for an evolving adjustment to the adult roles of work, love, and play? And how do the differences in experience between girls and boys prepare them as adult women and men?

An understanding of the life space of adolescence appears incomplete without an understanding of the social organization of gender. Our findings suggest that the sense of self developing at this time will reflect sex-specific experiences as intensely as it will those based on age-specific changes. Three fundamental heuristics from the literature on gender can be used to interpret the differences in daily experience between the boys and girls in this sample (Bush and Simmons, 1988). All three contribute to our understanding of these adolescents' socialization, but the first, the dichotomy of "communion vs. agency," illuminates the lives of the young adolescents most fully. It casts the differences between boys' and girls' daily experience in terms of contrasting social and instrumental sex role orientations. The second heuristic, the "gender intensification hypothesis," highlights the increasing divergence between boys and girls over this age period. The last heuristic, the "public vs. private" dichotomy, calls our attention to gender differences in the students' experience of and socialization to family.

COMMUNION VS. AGENCY

The oldest heuristic is the traditional dichotomy of communion vs. agency (Bakan, 1966), which asserts that women focus on relationships and intimacy while men are more preoccupied with achievements and instrumental

tasks. This has been elaborated by Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982), who describe this difference as coloring all stages of the life span. Chodorow writes that "in any given society feminine personality comes to define itself in relation and connection to other people more than masculine personality does" (1974, p. 44).

This greater capacity and need of women for close interpersonal connection is evident in our data. Girls in our study were more social *before* adolescence and became more social *with* adolescence. Although both girls and boys had higher than average affect while talking, girls entered adolescence spending more time talking than boys and this continued into adolescence (Raffaelli and Duckett, this issue). Older girls' conversations were also more people oriented than boys', just as their TV watching was more concentrated in the social drama of game shows and soap operas (Larson *et al.*, this issue). In addition to their greater time spent in the primary activity of socializing, girls spent more time than boys in situations where talk might have been a secondary activity. Girls spent more time doing homework with friends (Leone and Richards, this issue), and as they entered adolescence, they spent more time grooming in the company of friends (Duckett *et al.*, this issue).

Literature of friendships during adolescence and late childhood supports the conclusion that girls are more socially oriented than boys. Compared to boys, girls develop the ability to form intimate relationships earlier (Berndt, 1982; Fisher and Narus, 1981), they form more friendships (Blyth *et al.*, 1982), they experience more friendship motivation (McAdams and Losoff, 1984), and they are more often hurt and gratified by events in the world of peers (Larson and Asmussen, 1988). The greater time they spend talking and interacting with friends, then, both reflects the importance of friendships in their lives and contributes to the development of a self grounded in relationships with others (Sullivan, 1953). The life space of young adolescent girls is a life space oriented around communion.

The social orientation of girls is also reflected in their greater concern with physical appearance. These young adolescent girls spent a much greater net amount of time grooming—nearly twice that of boys (Duckett *et al.*, this issue). Girls are taught that being attractive is intricately interwoven with pleasing and serving others, and in turn will secure others' love (Brownmiller, 1984; Striegel-Moore *et al.*, 1986). Interestingly, even though girls, especially older girls, spent more time engaged in dressing and doing their hair and make up, they felt no more motivated or happier doing it than did the boys or their younger peers (Duckett *et al.*, this issue). These attractiveness-enhancing behaviors may reflect internalized social expectations. At this age these expectations do not lead to greater emotional gratification.

While the feminine sex role draws girls into interpersonal relationships, the masculine sex role emphasizes independence and instrumentality. Thus, one might expect boys to spend more time alone and in instrumental activi-

ties. In a separate article we document the tendency of boys from this study to spend more time alone than girls in the older grades (Larson and Richards, submitted). Here this tendency is evident in the boys' greater tendency to do household tasks, homework, and watch TV in solitude.

The instrumental activities in which boys traditionally are encouraged to excel are schoolwork and sports, activities thought to prepare them for instrumental roles in adulthood (Licht and Dweck, 1984; Roberts *et al.*, 1981). Our data confirm that in 9th grade, boys were spending more time on homework than were the girls, primarily because the girls' devotion of time to schoolwork had lessened (Leone and Richards, this issue). Boys also did more homework in the company of a parent, a context associated with higher academic achievement (Leone and Richards, this issue). Sports too were a more frequent activity for boys than girls at all ages. And while engaged in sports, boys experienced greater intrinsic motivation and more choice indicating a higher level of commitment, a greater involvement of the self. In other analyses of data from the study, Kirshnit (1989) found that boys experienced sport more as an instrumental, as opposed to a leisure, activity. For boys this "play" became more like work, while for girls, sport may have become more of a social activity in which relationships, not performance, was the top priority (Borman and Kurdek, 1987).

Our data, then, indicated that the communion vs. agency split is alive and well in the socialization of youth. Girls are socialized in interpersonal activities—groomed, as it were, for Freud's task of adjustment to love. Boys are more heavily socialized into instrumental activities—for adjustment to work.

GENDER INTENSIFICATION

The next heuristic, the "gender-intensification hypothesis" (Hill and Lynch, 1983), suggests that both of these gender-specific orientations—greater sociality for girls and greater instrumentality for boys—become more salient during early adolesence. The appearance of secondary sexual characteristics at puberty and the accompanying induction into the world of dating is hypothesized to increase pressures to conform to traditional masculine and feminine sex roles. Hence, from puberty onward, behavioral, attitudinal and psychological differences between boys and girls are expected to widen.

Much prior evidence exists for the intensification of sex stereotyped behaviors during adolescence (Bush and Simmons, 1988). Boys demonstrate greater masculinity with age (Galambos *et al.*, 1990), and boys, but not girls, exhibit greater achievement attributions and expectations with age (Guttentag and Longfellow, 1977). Girls show a narrowing of occupa-

tional aspirations at this age (Best, 1983). And both boys and girls show a peak in the importance of not acting like the opposite sex during the grades when pubertal development occurs (Simmons and Blyth, 1987) and increased stereotyped sex role concepts with age during adolescence (Galambos *et al.*, 1990; Urberg, 1979).

Our data add to this picture of gender intensification by delineating patterns of activity and subjective experience that differed with age in sex-specific ways. In the age period prior to adolescence, girls were already spending more time in interpersonal activities and less time in instrumental activities. With adolescence these differences became accentuated. With age, young adolescents were spending more time alone and less with family, yet this pattern was more exaggerated for boys and underemphasized for girls. In addition, children were spending more time with friends, but this characterized girls more than it did boys (Larson and Richards, submitted). While living in different life spaces during 5th and 6th grade, boys and girls were experiencing very different life spaces by 9th grade.

The activity that showed the most dramatic change for young adolescent girls was talking. The amount of time girls spent talking more than doubled in frequency from the 5th and 6th grades to the 9th, while it showed only a slight increase for boys. The content of girls' conversations became more interpersonal with age, while for boys it did not. And with age, girls reported higher relative affect when talking, while boys' affect during talk declined (Raffaelli and Duckett, this issue). Clearly, interpersonal concerns were becoming a more central and more rewarding part of girls' daily lives. There also was an increase in the amount of time girls spent grooming, an increased concern with appearance to others reflecting a greater concern with the interpersonal and relational aspects of life (Duckett *et al.*, this issue).

At the same time that these socially oriented activities were expanding for girls, the amount of time devoted to schoolwork was declining, except perhaps among the high-achieving girls (Leone and Richards, this issue). This is consistent with the finding of others that the value of independence and academic achievement declines for girls (Bush *et al.*, 1978), and that academic performance also diminishes among girls at this age (Eccles and Hoffman, 1984; Parsons *et al.*, 1982). Sports participation, another achievement arena, showed a loss of interest by girls around the age of puberty for our sample as well as in other studies (Brown, 1985; Butcher, 1985). In short, with entry intro adolescence girls appeared to reduce their involvement in these instrumental activities in exchange for increased involvement in sex-typed social activities.

Gender intensification was not as clearly evident for the boys as it was for the girls. Boys spent more time alone in the older grades and no more time with friends (Larson and Richards, submitted) which suggests increas-

ing interest in autonomy. We also found it curious that with age, music listening appeared to become more agentic for boys—they may use it to charge themselves up—while for girls it became more affectively negative (Larson *et al.*, this issue). But boys were not turning more to instrumental activity—the amount of time they devoted to schoolwork was constant over this period—and like the girls, they spent less time in sports with age.

In summary, much of our findings appear best explained by old-fashioned sex typing of behavior, where patterns are established by puberty. When gender intensification occurred, the process appeared more evident for girls than for boys. For girls we saw substantial changes in their life space; for boys there was less disjuncture between the patterns of their daily lives before and after entry into adolescence. For girls socialization to communion intensified; for boys there was a continuity with the more instrumental pattern of activities in which they have participated since childhood.

PUBLIC VS. DOMESTIC

The final heuristic that can be used to examine sex differences in our findings is the public/domestic dichotomy, which identifies females as oriented to the family and males to life outside the family. Rosaldo has (1974) argued that the biological sex differences, particularly those of reproduction, have been used by all societies to establish a division in labor as well as in ideology. This universal set of expectations defines the woman's primary responsibility and identity as lying in the domestic sphere and man's as presiding in the public. The domestic sphere reflects family and all the activities and companionship that involve family, while the public involves all that is outside the family. Rosaldo goes on to suggest that "women's status will be lowest in societies where there is a firm differentiation between domestic and public spheres of activity. . ." (1974, p. 36).

This polemic suggests a clear movement out of the family or private sphere for the adolescent male, while it conveys a continuity of family or private experience for the adolescent girl. In many other cultures boys spend more time away from the family and from the home than do girls (Whiting and Whiting, 1975). If this polemic applies to our society, during adolescence the shift away from the family should be less forthright for a girl than for a boy. For the young adolescent male it may not mean less time at home, but less time with the family and less time interacting with family members.

Our data show no gender differences in the amount of time older children and young adolescents spent with the family, nor in the amount of time spent at home (Larson and Richards, submitted). Nevertheless, they provide some indication that young adolescent girls, relative to boys, engaged more

with family members. While boys spent more of their family time watching TV (Larson *et al.*, this issue), girls spent more time talking with family members (Raffaelli and Duckett, this issue). Girls spent time in chores that are based indoors and they did these chores more often with family members than did boys, who performed more outdoor and solitary chores. Girls spent over half of their maintenance time in the presence of family no matter what grade they were in; 9th grade boys spent only 18% of their time in chores with family members. Older girls also reported more motivation and choice about doing household tasks than did younger girls, while boys reported generally low levels of both subjective experiences across grades when engaged in household chores (Duckett *et al.*, this issue). As with boys' greater investment in sports (Kirshnit *et al.*, this issue), girls' experience of cleaning and cooking suggests greater personal investment and commitment to this gender-typed activity.

This tendency to stay closer to the family and feel better about it with age for girls is consistent with findings from younger girls. Carpenter and Huston-Stein (1980) have reported that girls prefer high adult-structured activities, the type of activities found more often in the home than outside the home. They also report that children with high levels of adult-supplied structure exhibit more feminine social behaviors, such as compliance.

In sum, although boys and girls spent the same amount of overall time with family, girls spent more time interacting with family members, both as a primary and secondary activity. This pattern, and girls' greater motivation and choice in household activities, relays a pattern of socialization in which girls are coming to identify with household tasks and boys are not.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF

The conclusions we have drawn, of course, are only as good as our data. Although we have allowed ourselves the liberty of discussing "changes" and "shifts" in daily time use, these data are only cross-sectional and cannot tell us whether the inferred changes occur for all young adolescents or just for subgroups, nor do they illuminate the paths traversed by specific individuals. The findings are also limited to the population represented by our sample: suburban, white, working-class and middle-class Midwestern adolescents. How accurately these findings can be generalized beyond this group we do not know. Comparative study of the life spaces of rural and urban black, Hispanic, or other distinct cultural and economic groups of adolescents would be a valuable extension of this work.

Our conclusions are also only as good as our central postulate: that the time expenditure of children and adolescents readily translates into so-

cialization for adulthood. While this postulate is widely employed (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Munroe and Munroe, 1980; Whiting, 1980), it is not well substantiated. There may well be young people whose adult selves diverge radically from the pattern of daily experience they encountered as young adolescents. And yet we believe the amount and experience of time must affect the adults that these young people become. It is hard to accept as inconsequential the findings that American youth spend much less time on schooling than do youth in Japan and other Western countries (Leone and Richards, this issue). Nor are we ready to dismiss the divergence in daily experience by gender, reviewed above, as if it made no difference in the eventual adulthood of these youth.

The time patterns of our sample, consistent with other time budget studies (Medrich *et al.,* 1982; Timmer *et al.,* 1985), suggest that both girls and boys are being amply prepared for adjustment in adulthood to "play." Leisure fills half of their waking hours. Talk, sports, media use, and other leisure activities are a major part of the foreground within which young people develop a sense of who they are. Yet differences in how this leisure, as well as nonleisure, time is divided suggest differences between boys and girls in their preparation for adjustment to work and love. Given their different daily experiences, the developing sense of the self will of necessity differ for boys and girls.

The contexts in which girls spend their time are more often interpersonal ones, suggesting the evolution of a more social self-definition. Other research, in fact, confirms that a girl's sense of self is more dependent upon her relationships with others (Crockett *et al.,* 1987; Richards *et al.,* 1990). A woman's self-definition is more often based in the realm of caring and connection with others (Peck, 1986). The young adolescent girl in our study knows herself as an individual within a set of relationships. How she spends her time, with whom she spends it, and how she feels during it, all reflect the development of a personality within the realm of communion.

Boys, on the other hand, spend more time in instrumental activities—schoolwork and sports—contexts that recede for many girls in adolescence. With age, boys also spend more time alone. Their evolving self-perceptions, then, can be expected to be more centered in personal performance and private concerns. The formation of their identities can be expected to be founded in a greater sense of separateness and concern with agentic accomplishment. In contrast to girls, they are not developing a positive sense of self within the context of household maintenance; they are not having experiences that will prepare them to be coequal partners in the home. One could conclude that boys are being socialized to Freud's criteria of adjustment to work (meaning work outside the home) rather than love.

If traditional sex roles are the end point of these young adolescents' socialization, then they are being effectively socialized. However, if a more

egalitarian set of roles awaits them at adulthood, certain of their current experiences and behaviors may be misdirecting them. Predicting the future is an impossible task; this is perhaps why the future rarely leads the socialization of children. And yet as social scientists, the development of children in sex-stereotyped roles concerns us, making us wonder as to the viability of such preparation 10 to 20 years hence.

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