



1991

On Being an Adolescent in Zawiya. Review of Susan S. Davis and Douglas A. Davis, *Adolescence in a Moroccan Town: Making Social Sense*


Daniel A. Wagner

University of Pennsylvania, wagner@literacy.upenn.edu

Laurel Diana Puchner

University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/literacyorg_articles

 Part of the [Child Psychology Commons](#), [Cognitive Psychology Commons](#), [Comparative Psychology Commons](#), [Developmental Psychology Commons](#), [Educational Psychology Commons](#), and the [Psychological Phenomena and Processes Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wagner, Daniel A. and Puchner, Laurel Diana, "On Being an Adolescent in Zawiya. Review of Susan S. Davis and Douglas A. Davis, *Adolescence in a Moroccan Town: Making Social Sense*" (1991). *Journal Articles (Literacy.org)*. 20.
https://repository.upenn.edu/literacyorg_articles/20

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. https://repository.upenn.edu/literacyorg_articles/20
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

On Being an Adolescent in Zawiya. Review of Susan S. Davis and Douglas A. Davis, *Adolescence in a Moroccan Town: Making Social Sense*

Abstract

Although adolescence is a well-accepted stage of life in Western society, the issue of whether it exists as a separate life stage in all cultures remains an open and important question. As part of the cross-cultural Harvard Adolescence Project directed by Beatrice and John Whiting, this book is an assessment of traditional concepts of adolescence in Morocco. Based on 11 months of intensive fieldwork, as well as multiple years of work in the same village, the authors used ethnographic observation, interviews, and psychological testing to collect a wide array of data on about 50 families including 150 children in the rural Moroccan town of Zawiya. Recurring themes in the lives of these adolescents, including maturity, self-awareness, gender, hierarchy, and ambivalence, are interwoven into a discussion of the basic social organization of Moroccan life.

Disciplines

Child Psychology | Cognitive Psychology | Comparative Psychology | Developmental Psychology | Education | Educational Psychology | Psychological Phenomena and Processes

Rorschach strategies and indices for assessing defense mechanisms such as repression, the expression and control of primary process, the construct of splitting, and differential uses of defenses among neurotic, borderline, and schizophrenic patients. Although this selection holds the greatest value for those with a psychoanalytic bent, one does not have to espouse a psychodynamic model to appreciate an innovative look at the measurement of constructs that may help to explain interpersonal interactions, development of the self, anxiety and defensive mechanisms, and the process of adaptation.

The text includes several papers that may be of interest to psychologists functioning in specialized settings and among certain cultural or diagnostic groups. Among these chapters is the Savasir and Erol summary of work performed in translating, standardizing, and validating the MMPI among Turkish men and women. Of potential interest to psychologists who render services to Turkish people, the contribution also illustrates the methods by which test translations are accomplished and tested, as well as the use of comparative strategies for cross-cultural study of factor structures. Of perhaps more practical benefit are short chapters describing the role and value of self-assessment data for predicting behavior (Osberg and Schrauger) and psychological assessment in the setting of Alcoholics Anonymous-dominated alcoholism treatment programs (Walsh, Massey, and Krone). Emphasizing the necessity of respect and consideration for the milieu in which services are delivered, this latter chapter constitutes a reminder that services are most effective when offered in a manner consistent with cultural or subgroup expectations and values. The volume also offers a comprehensive review of international work on the Strelau Temperament Inventory, a measure of the four Pavlovian-defined properties of the central nervous system and related personality temperaments, and an attempt by Clark to investigate symptom groupings within a hypothesized personality-disorder domain.

Despite a fragmented sampling of topics, this text provides a valuable compendium relevant to cross-cultural and multiethnic clinical and research endeavors. The editors have assembled several chapters that have wide appeal for psychologists, as well as included contributions of more restricted interest. Paramount among the issues raised are those related to the conceptualization and

measurement of both cultural diversity and human universals. These are domains that when addressed separately may become the focus of inappropriate polarization and thoughtless generalizations, thus provoking disagreements and stereotypes. If the scientific assessment of human qualities is sufficiently broad to regard both similarities and differences, then it may be possible to explore ethnic

and cultural uniqueness in the context of understanding personality structure and change as they exist among the varied population subsets of American society and worldwide. Readers will find this volume intellectually stimulating and practically useful, and the book is recommended to practicing clinicians and researchers in personality assessment and theory alike. ■

On Being an Adolescent in Zawiya

Susan Schaefer Davis and
Douglas A. Davis
**Adolescence in a Moroccan Town:
Making Social Sense**
New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University
Press, 1989. 217 pp.
ISBN 0-8135-1368-5. \$42.00

Review by
Daniel A. Wagner and Laurel Puchner

Susan Schaefer Davis, independent scholar and consultant, is author of Patience and Power: Women's Lives in a Moroccan Village. ■ Douglas A. Davis, professor of psychology at Haverford College (Pennsylvania), is author of the chapter "Formal Thought in a Moroccan Town" in J. Valsiner (Ed.) Cultural Context and Child Development: Towards a Culture-Inclusive Developmental Psychology. ■ Daniel A. Wagner, professor of education and director of the Literacy Research Center at the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia), is editor of The Future of Literacy in a Changing World and author of the forthcoming Becoming Literate in Morocco. ■ Laurel Puchner, graduate student and research assistant at the Literacy Research Center at the University of Pennsylvania, is a predoctoral fellow of the University of Pennsylvania's Middle East Center.

Although adolescence is a well-accepted stage of life in Western society, the issue of whether it exists as a separate life stage in all cultures remains an open and important question. As part of the cross-cultural Harvard Adolescence Project directed by Beatrice and John Whiting, this book is an assessment of traditional concepts of adolescence in Morocco. Based on 11 months of intensive fieldwork, as well as multiple years of work in the same village, the authors used ethnographic observation, interviews, and psychological testing to collect a wide array of data on about 50 families including 150 children in the rural Moroccan town of Zawiya. Recurring themes in the lives of these adolescents, including maturity, self-awareness, gender, hierarchy, and ambivalence, are interwoven into a discussion of the basic social organization of Moroccan life.

The book begins with a revealing and intimate portrait of the daily lives of two

Moroccan teenagers, one male and one female. This is followed by a report on the authors' unsuccessful search for a Moroccan equivalent of the term *adolescence*. Next come chapters on the basic social issues of family, friendship, sexuality, courtship and marriage, as well as stress and deviance. The book concludes with a detailed analysis of what the authors term the "Zawiya individual," with a focus on issues of self-awareness, cognitive development, and adolescent aspirations.

The book is a fascinating and useful synthesis of the authors' research. The abundant use of anecdotes, vivid description, and interview excerpts are carefully tied to their theoretical analysis. They also allow one to see the adolescents' perspective and how well it fits into the conceptions of adolescence provided by Erikson, Freud, Gilligan, and others. A salient theme throughout is that of the change brought about by the influence

of Westernization and modernity. The authors delineate the differences between the lives of contemporary adolescents and those of their parents, as well as the conflict generated by what adolescents see in foreign films and books and the cultural limitations of their daily lives. Another related and crucial aspect of the adolescents' lives is formal education, which has extended the period between puberty and marriage and may have, the authors surmise, the consequence of creating a stage of adolescence wherein none existed before.

The authors' conclusion that "adolescence has been as much invented as discovered by Western philosophers and

social scientists in the last two centuries" (p. 181) appears well-founded. The authors acknowledge the influences of a rapidly changing society but claim that these do not necessitate the typical Western adolescent themes of "storm and stress," deviance, and "role confusion." Based on their detailed and authoritative analysis of such major dimensions as culture, language, and religion, the authors provide not only evidence that adolescence is a culturally based term but also one of the most revealing and in-depth portraits of youth in any developing country and the only one to date in North Africa. ■

economics, psychology, social work, and sociology. Second, the use of a life span developmental perspective frames this comprehensive undertaking and enables the reader to view and understand the complexity of life development for Black Americans in a broader context. Attempts are made in many instances to move beyond theorizing by integrating theory with practical procedures and suggestions for responding effectively to those life cycle issues and ecological realities connected with social, cultural, political, and psychological factors that create problems for Black Americans. Finally, there is a general call for future research that focuses directly on the needs of Black adolescents and adults and that informs theory development.

Black Adolescents is a welcome addition to the literature. It moves the reader beyond a piecemeal focus on this important area of scholarship. Although there has been considerable scholarship and research designed to validate Black adolescents and youths as an endangered species, that body of literature has not, in an appreciable way, provided a comprehensive overview of the unique issues and common concerns of Black adolescents. This contemporary volume on Black adolescents does provide a comprehensive view through an eclectic examination of the needs of this group from a historical, social, psychological, educational, medical, economic, and comparative perspective. The ecological realities of race, socioeconomic status, and environmental factors are addressed. The volume consists of 19 chapters, with contributions from leading scholars who are concerned with Black adolescent development. The volume is further divided into various sections: perspectives, diverse settings, physical and mental health, psychosocial development, education, career development and employment, intervention, special topics, and the legal system.

Gibb's paper is the first chapter of the volume. Not only does this chapter provide an overview detailing the numerous problems and needs confronting Black adolescents, but it also serves as a framework for the remaining chapters. More specifically, nearly half of the remaining chapters address in detail specific areas of concerns that are identified in Gibb's chapter: health care (Chapter 6), mental health (Chapter 7), education (Chapters 10 and 11), the labor market (Chapter 13), pregnancy (Chapter 16), substance abuse (Chapter 18), and the criminal justice system (Chapter 19). A useful feature

Black Adolescent and Adult Life Span Development

Reginald L. Jones (Ed.)

Black Adolescents

Berkeley, CA: Cobb & Henry, 1989.

454 pp. ISBN 0-943539-01-3

(hardcover); 0-943539-02-1

(paperback). \$36.95 hardcover; \$25.95 paperback

Reginald L. Jones (Ed.)

Black Adult Development and Aging

Berkeley, CA: Cobb & Henry, 1989.

429 pp. ISBN 0-943539-03-X

(hardcover); 0-943539-04-8

(paperback). \$36.95 hardcover; \$25.95 paperback

Review by

Sadye L. Logan

Reginald L. Jones, professor in the Department of Afro-American Studies and adjunct professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley, is editor of Sourcebooks on the Teaching of Black Psychology and of the forthcoming Black Psychology (3rd ed). ■ Sadye L. Logan, associate professor in the School of Social Welfare at the University of Kansas (Lawrence), is coeditor, with E. Freeman and R. McRoy, of Social Work Practice With Black Families: A Culturally Specific Approach.

It seems appropriate to review Jones's *Black Adolescents* and *Black Adult Development and Aging* as companion texts because both areas of study have been virtually ignored as an important focus of research and scholarship. Furthermore, the manner in which the adolescent period of the life cycle is negotiated has direct and profound impact on the later transition to the period of adulthood and aging. Theorists have described both periods as times of great upheaval and change (Bloom, 1980; Goldberg & Deutsch, 1977).

These two books are timely and represent a significant contribution to the literature on Black American adolescents and adults from a developmental perspective. They serve in a number of ways as excellent prototypes of what must be done immediately and what is yet to be done. First, the focus of both books is multidisciplinary. The message is that such critical issues cannot be examined and addressed as though human individuals grow and develop in splendid isolation. Contributing authors are from several disciplines, including education,