

Rites of Passage

HSP 3U1

Agenda

1. Defining “Rites of Passage”
2. Group Activity
3. Coming of Age and the Three Stage Process
4. Case Studies


Learning Goals


Understand what rites of passage are and how they relate to values, norms, customs (& culture)

Understand how rites of passage differ between cultures

Understand how rites of passage differ between members of the same culture (male/female) and what that indicates about that culture



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4d NUMBER/
NUMERO **D6101 - 40706 - 60905** 1

4a ISS/DEL **2009/04/23** 4b EXP/EXP **2014/04/23**

5 DD/REF **MZ2043307** 16 HGT/HAUT. **178 cm**

15 SEX/SEXE **M**

9 CLASS/
CATEG. **G2**

12 REST/
COND. **J**

3 DOB/ODN **1966/09/05** *4980342*

D6101-40706-60905
1966/09/05



It's a



baby
Girl!

It's
a



BOY

→

FIGURE 4-4 This African woman has undergone scarification (an age-old practice in some parts of Africa where young women are deliberately scarred in elaborate patterns) as part of her rite of passage to adulthood. How do Canadian teens mark their transition to adulthood?





Rites of Passage

- A ceremony, ritual or event that marks a change in life or status
- Most cultures have ceremonies to mark birth, adolescence, marriage and death, but how they mark these occasions varies greatly
- Some rites of passage are marked by elaborate ceremonies while others are more informal

Rites of Passage

- Rites of Passage are customs which serve as a vehicle to teach members about values, norms, beliefs
- They help to foster group identity

Each culture is different...

- In Canada, funerals may last only a few hours and are attended by only close family and friends
- For the Maori of New Zealand, funerals involve the gathering of extended family for a week or more to give speeches, celebrate and mourn the deceased
- In Judaism, the spouse, siblings and children of the deceased directly observe a seven-day mourning period called *shiva*, during which mourners are not meant to work or attend school

Brainstorm

- In your individual section, brainstorm as many rites of passage as you can.
- As a group, agree upon the four most important rites of passage to you.
- Share your group's ideas with the class.

“Coming of Age”

- Reaching puberty
- Religious initiations
- Going on a first date
- Getting a driver’s licence
- Graduating high school
- Drinking alcohol
- Having the first sexual experience
- Moving from one’s parents’ home
- Graduating from a post-secondary institution
- Getting a job
- Getting married
- Buying own home
- Having children

“Adolescence”

- Most cultural anthropologists argue that adolescence is culturally constructed by Western culture.
- Adolescence is associated with puberty, it is intended to be a period of time to learn adult skills before becoming an adult.
- **Marked by:**
 - finishing school and getting a job,
 - gaining independence from parents,
 - choosing a mate/starting a family

Three Stage Process



- **Segregation:** separated from the rest of society
- **Transition (Liminal Stage):** becoming his/her new self and learning new role
- **Incorporation and Reintegration:** rejoin society in his/her new role

Case Studies

- Please get into your number groups
- Each group will receive a case study. Read, discuss and complete the worksheet
- After working with your number group, You will present your findings to the class

Case Studies

- **Slide 1:** How does the Three Stage Process apply?
- **Slide 2:** What can you posit about the values/beliefs of the culture based on their rites of passage?
- **Slide 3:** If the rite of passage involves a transition to adulthood, what does 'being an adult' mean in this context?
- **Slide 4:** What are the differences in gender roles? Why do you think that is?

Feminist Anthropology

Main Approaches:

- Look at roles of women in different cultures
- Ideas about gender and gender roles are culturally constructed and therefore vary
- Challenges traditional male-centred approach

What would a feminist anthropologist say about rites of passage? The significance of rites of passage?

How might rites of passage inform us about cultural views towards women and women's roles?

Male Rites of Passage

- Often more common than female rites
- Are sometimes more painful and traumatic especially in societies that engage in warfare regularly
- Examples include: scarification, beatings, fasting, genital mutilation, tattooing and intimidation by threats and stories
- Purpose: thought to strengthen boys to assist their transformation towards manhood

Female Rites of Passage

- Generally less common than male rites
- Transition from childhood to adulthood often revolves around first menstruation
- This is a time when they are considered to be ready for marriage and childbearing
- Examples: Instructions in responsibilities of womanhood and being a wife/mother
- In some parts of North America a debutante ball is a common rite of passage for females