



Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity

James E. Cote

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Why are today's adults more like adolescents, in their dress and personal tastes, than ever before? Why do so many adults seem to drift and avoid responsibilities such as work and family? As the traditional family breaks down and marriage and child rearing are delayed, what makes a person an adult? Many people in the industrial West are simply not "growing up" in the traditional sense. Instead, they pursue personal, individual fulfillment and emerge from a vague and prolonged youth into a vague and insecure adulthood. The transition to adulthood is becoming more hazardous, and the destination is becoming more difficult to reach, if it is reached at all. Arrested Adulthood examines the variety of young people's responses to this new situation. James E. Côté shows us adults who allow the profit-driven industries of mass culture to provide the structure that is missing, as their lives become more individualistic and atomized. He also shows adults who resist anomie and build their world around their sense of personal connectedness to others. Finally, Côté provides a vision of a truly progressive society in which all members can develop their potentials apart from the influence of the market. In so doing, he gives us a clearer vision of what it means to be an adult and makes sense of the longest, but least understood period of the life course.

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