

Adolescence

[Life, Adolescence](#)



Adolescence is one of the most difficult times for development. Most people experience conflict during this period of their lives. At this time the young people are changing rapidly, both physically and emotionally. Moreover, they are searching for self-identity, which cause some difficulties. As young people are growing, they are developing their own values of life that often differ from the ones of their parents. This would be explained by Erik Erikson's stage theory: identity vs. role confusion as they venture their identity, they turn to peers, television, magazine, music, and so on.

On top of this, American society has expectations for gender roles. Hence, the pressure and anxiety adolescent girls and boys encounter to be "somebody" that they are not for the sake of fitting in the society cause problems. Mary Pipher, Ph. D. in her book "Reviving Ophelia", discusses extensively the varied and difficult road that adolescent girls travel to adulthood. Pipher examines the loss of self that most girls experience in their adolescence. She brings up the fact that preadolescent girls have the ability to be androgynous, as well as an interest in nearly everything.

Gender roles are not limiting at this age, it is their time away from the female gender role. The onset of puberty changes most girls into very confused and ever changing creatures. They go from being carefree to careful of what their every move is. They turn to their false selves as they move into the broader culture. "Girls can be true to themselves and risk abandonment by their peers, or they can reject their true selves and be socially acceptable." (Pipher, p. 38) Also, American society expects girls and women to be attractive, be proper, and be lady.

As adolescent girls suffer lookism, sexism, and capitalism, they begin to suppress their true selves to be accepted as a “ norm. ” That led to being depressed or angry. They begin to withdraw, show no interest in academic, not speaking to their parents, and go inward. The behavior exhibits spiral downward. While reading the book “ Real Boys” by Dr. William Pollack, I realized that American society is holding boys to contradictory standards aiding the problems that many boys face while in adolescence.

This book introduces to numerous boys who share their feelings of shame and despair in trying to live up to the “ Boy Code. “ The Boy Code puts boys and men into a gender straitjacket that constrains not only them but everyone else, reducing us all as human beings...” (Pollack, p. 6) For example, boys should be seen as “ tough” and “ masculine” and they do not show their sensitivity side. Otherwise, they would be viewed as “ sissy” or “ weak. ” That led them to hiding behind the mask. The one acceptable emotion becomes anger. Also, mothers are encouraged by society to prematurely separating from their boys on the cycle to hardening the boys emotionally.

That arose psychosocial and emotional issues. As Garbarino explains, according to Bowlby’s attachment theory, “ Attachment is one of the crucial building blocks in the process of emotional development” (Garbarino, p. 52), the boys are prematurely separated from their mothers and taught by the society to suppress their feelings and act tough. That could arise the “ emotional retardation” which the boys can become violent (Garbarino, p.

53). Both adolescent girls and boys suffer as they try to fulfill their identity according to American society as they seek their true identity.

Abovementioned, the risks are in existence for adolescent girls and boys growing up in America. They are masked by the society's expectations along with media, peers, television, and magazine. Pipher and Pollack emphasized the importance to be aware that the ways parents can help girls and boys escape the "gender straitjacket" that is imposed upon them. "Once girls understand the effects of the culture on their lives, they can fight back... intelligent resistance keeps the true self alive." (Pipher, p. 44)