

Movie review on the movie "thirteen"

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



The pressure of being a single parent dealing with an adolescent daughter or son can be a handful. In most cases, the father-daughter, mother-son relationships are quite more compatible, as the father has a soft spot for his daughter, and the mother, has for her son. But, when a single mother has to deal with her growing daughter, who is attached to her father, the implications can be volatile, as seen in the change in Traci's attitude in the movie, *Thirteen*. Right at the start of the movie, Traci is seen asking, looking at the camera, and asking to be hit! To the audience, who are caught unaware, the girls command comes as a shock. This scene gets the story rolling. Traci, like many girls in their adolescence, wanted freedom, and do things they wanted without supervision, and when she befriended Evie, she ran into bad company. The movie traces the disintegration of a teenage girl, who without proper parental supervision, degenerates into a rebellious adolescent. Traci, who was once a smart straight-A student, befriends Evie by winning her admiration in the most unethical manner; she robs an unsuspecting woman of her purse with loads of money, and spends a part of the money to buy shoes and dresses for Evie and herself.

The movie deals with topics such as drug and alcohol abuse, underage sexual behavior and self-harm; seen in schools in the U. S today. In the company of Evie, Traci smokes, drinks, uses abusive language, and indulges in sexual flings to alleviate the emotional pain she suffers from having a broken home. The after-effects of drug abuse by indulging in self-abuse are also filmed. Melanie is divorced, and as a single mother running a family with two adolescents, she had to concentrate on her small-time, hair-dressing business from home. She also had Brady, a jobless man for company. With

the responsibility of earning a living for the family, and spending her free time with Brady, Melanie is too preoccupied to notice Traci's behavioural changes. In not spending quality time with her daughter Traci, Melanie was ignorant of her daughter's needs. With passing days, Traci's behavior goes from bad to worse, and Melanie realizes her mistake, and sees her daughter's disintegration rather late. Melanie was found wanting on two counts; one; she didn't question Evie's presence in the house, and two; she didn't show her authority by checking on Traci. She would cook, drop and pick her up from school, and ask her once in a while about her studies. Without her mother's personal love and care, Traci chose to look elsewhere for love. And when she connected with Evie, she found love. Melanie should have spend more time with Traci; enquiring about how her day went at school, about her friends, helping her with her studies and so on, so that, Traci wouldn't have missed the love she desperately sought. In addition to these, Brady's stay-in relationship with her, led Traci to believe that Melanie didn't care for her. Her indulgence in stealing for thrill and pleasure, self-harm to understand pain, taking drugs and indulging in sexual acts for self-identity, and use of abusive language and physical force to show authority, and her low grades in class shows how Melanie's parenting flaws Traci's physical, cognitive, social and moral development.

According to Erikson, Adolescents enter a phase where they seek boundaries for themselves, and at times end up doing things that they shouldn't in a potentially hostile environment. Because they find themselves committed to portray a particular identity role during this period, they end up having an identity crisis. The problem with adolescence is that in their quest for an

identity, they experiment and explore various possibilities to emerge with an identity, that they believe, reveals who they are. Traci, a young, smart, innocent, and intelligent adolescent at Portola Middle School in Los Angeles, has her set of like-minded friends. As any adolescent would do, she wanted to create an identity of her own, and soon began to visualize herself like Evie, a pretty and popular girl in school. She becomes excessively attracted to the popular girls at school and became jealous of how much the guys at school liked them. When she tried to approach boys, they had eyes only for girls like Evie, and this stuck in her mind. When she tried to make friendly conversations with them, they would tease her for wearing those 'cabbage patch' clothes. When Evie ridiculed her for her silly sock selection, she goes home infuriated and throws them in the garbage can. When Melanie sees this, she takes Traci out to buy her some 'trendier clothes.' This was her way of trying to shed the 'little girl' image of hers in school. When Tracy wears her new clothes, she is complimented and asked whether she would like to join her and her friends in shopping that evening. Evie gives Traci a non-existent telephone number, but she takes a city bus to Melrose Avenue, where she finds Evie and her friend. When Traci sees how thrilled the girls were after shoplifting, Traci walks out, only to fall prey to an opportune moment where she steals a woman's wallet to impress Evie. Their friendship blooms and soon, Evie moves into the Freeland household. In trying to create an identity for her analogical to Evie's, Traci steals, screams at Melanie in front of Evie and Melanie's customers to show her authority, shouts at Melanie for calling her a baby, and takes drugs and flirts with boys to show her maturity. In trying to create an identity of her own, Traci is led down a

path of sex, drugs and petty crimes. As Traci creates an identity for herself, her world breaks into fragments of hate, tension, pain, vulgarity, and frivolity.

Social and emotional bonds are inter-related, and when adolescents experience an increase in their emotional outlook, their relationships with their peers change to become vulnerable or emotionally intimate. This is a period of character crisis, and it is during this period that a greater trust among peers becomes essential. It is during these growing up years of adolescence that the role of teen peer groups becomes increasingly important, as teens look to one another for comfort and support, rather than their families. In the beginning, things looked good between Traci and her friends, but when Evie comes into Traci's life, Evie's character influence on Traci is so strong that she begins to ignore her two best friends. Evie's role in shaping Traci's behavior is so intimidating that Traci begins to hate everything she liked before. The peers with whom she began to spend time had unscrupulous behavior, which stuck to Traci. In her anger, her rebellion, her attitude, her character was influenced by the people around her, namely Evie and Javy. Friendships, peer relationships and peer acceptance drives character development, and in having the likes of Evie and Javy as peers, Traci's character was bound to be influenced by their own behavior. The lacklustre, laid-back attitude of Javy, and the rebellious, arrogance of Evie had a telling effect on Traci. From a bright and intelligent girl, Traci became a nervous wreck; indulging in sexual acts, taking drugs, using abuse language, fighting, and self-abuse. The adolescent Traci, because of her complicated family life, turned to a set of friends whose characters were

counterproductive. Therefore, one sees in Traci's behavioural change, the increased reliance on friendships to demonstrate adolescent's growing independence and peer influence. Traci had to steal, take drugs, and indulge in sexual acts to have Evie's respect, and recognition.

Anticathexis is about ego issues, where socially unacceptable needs of the id is challenged. People with ego at times try to divert issues by projecting themselves differently, and when Hiding urges and desires is one common form of escapism from reality. According to Freud, when people become anxious, they try to hide their inner state by employing a defense mechanism. For Traci, it was the case of facing reality, and so, she exemplifies the Freudian personality theory of reality anxiety. It was the id factor. Traci used the id factor to counter her emotional urges. In the quest to develop an identity, Traci acted without understanding its consequences. Therefore she used id as the structure of Freudian personality theory. For Melanie, it was a case of superego, as she tried without realizing what she was doing was actually counterproductive. She spent most of her time either in her business, or with Brady, thinking that, her ethics would do well for the family. In real life, I remember that as an adolescent, I too, like all other adolescents my age, had a hero. I would try and imitate the way he walked, spoke, or even dressed. I began to ape him so much that I began to unconsciously act like him in real life! What I thought would give me a certain personality or identity in school soon began to dominate my behavior, which was frightening, and a few years later, with a lot of effort, regained my lost identity.

There is no doubt that peers can influence one's behavior, and that,

everyone must be careful in choosing the kind of friends they want. It also comes as no surprise that parental supervision and support should always be there for children in the adolescence, as this is a period of changes. Instead of trying to imitate others, choose what is best for you, and develop your own identity, rather than exemplifying those of others. These are confirmed assumptions that I have understood from this movie.

Friends are always helpful and will stand by you always. It is not easy to be influenced by a person(s), and I am sure that a person can control his or her emotions and not violate space to affect others around them.