

Social pressure

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Alexander Fountain April 4, 2011 Writing 101 Peer Pressure State of Mind In today's society everyone and everybody are influenced through something known as peer pressure. After doing research, I have come to the conclusion that peer pressure is divided into two parts which is family and school. These two can sometimes cause adolescents to give in to peer pressure and on the importance of social life, a lack of interest or communication on the part of the parents and teachers, and the unrealistic expectations that these entities create. Although the real reason for attending school is to receive an education, it also provides children with a medium through which they can develop relationships with other children that eventually turn into long term friendships. The ability to form friendships can be traced back to pre-school years, and its importance isn't done by itself but by eager parents who want their children to fit in at school. In Dr. Juvonens book, he states that, "Interactions with friends or other peers are crucial for the development of a mature morality" (Juvonen 11). So when reading Doris Lessings Group Minds, she also touched on how we as people begin to interact or change a lot when dealing with a group instead of ourselves individually. Lessing said, "When we're in a group we tend to think as that group does: we may even have joined the group to find "like minded people" (Lessing 725). So when a child goes to school at a young age we come in with our own identity until we meet a group and we begin to converge our style to fit in with Fountain 2 the group, so we can become accepted. Dr. Juvonens also states, "The classroom setting represents not only an educational arena but a powerful social context in which the psychological adjustment of children and adolescents can be affected" (Juvonen 248). Teachers tend to promote social

interaction by assigning exercises that require working in pairs or groups. Furthermore, when a teacher spots a child playing alone, they will encourage the child to join the other children while overlooking the possibility that the child might have preferred to be alone. Thus, from an early age, children are taught to value the importance of social interaction and this value stays with them as they move into the adolescent years. The result is that adolescents come to value their friendships deeply and in some cases more so than their relationships with family members. Dr. Tate states, " The group develops through casing, limit testing, polarization of values, and positive peer culture" (Tate). This accounts for the adolescent not being able to refuse their friends for fear of losing the bonds that they have formed and is thus a cause of their greater susceptibility to peer pressure. Which shows that school has become an institution which is also responsible for placing unrealistic goals upon these adolescents, who are only concerned with immediate gratification. Because they cannot yet visualize the long-term benefits of a good education, their goals conflict with those of educators. These conflicting interests eventually lead adolescents to rebel against these unrealistic expectations and thus give in to peer pressure as a demonstration of their rebellion. A second contribution to the vulnerability of adolescents in the face of peer pressure is the lack of interest or communication on the part of the parents. Reading Csikszentmihalyi's Being Adolescent: Conflict and Growth in the Teenage Years, he states, " Under ordinary Fountain 3 circumstances, parents and children rarely do things together, except at meal times. Ever since work and school have pulled adults and children away from the home, conflicting schedules keep family members circling around

each other in eccentric orbits"(Csikszentmihalyi, p. 145). If the parents are not around or simply do not show interest in their children's affairs, then it should not be surprising that adolescents will be more influenced by their peers with whom they spend the majority of their time. Which is why when parents wonder why their child acts a certain way it's mainly because the only people the child can really look up to and learn from are their friends. Csikszentmihalyi went on saying that, " In terms of sheer amount of time, peers are by far the greatest presence in the adolescent's life"(Csikszentmihalyi 71). Since the adolescent also spends a good deal of time at school, it would seem that the teacher would serve as a secondary parent in the classroom to whom students could come to for guidance. However, not so much a lack of interest but rather a lack of communication exists in this setting as well, due to the ratio of students to teacher in the classroom. This brings out the possibility of the teacher having a true personal relationship with each student. This is a situation not easily remedied but nonetheless it is still a factor in an adolescent's tendency to turn to their friends as role models. If there are no adults available to provide negative feedback, then once again it is not surprising that they give in to the pressures placed on them by their peers. So when looking at Vegas point of view in Drug Use and Ethnicity in Early Adolescence he stated that, " Adolescence is a period of biological growth and maturation, self discovery and social adaptation"(Vega 4). By this definition it can be seen that the adolescent world is significantly different from the adult world. This point of view shows the Fountain 4 expectations placed on adolescents by family and school have become unrealistic therefore this leads to causes of rebellion

and conformity to peer pressure. In the home environment, relations between parents and adolescents tend to be strained because of a conflict of interest. So when it comes to dealing with children parents don't have that impact that they once had, because now the tendency to listen to the parents is very hard, but when speaking with your friends or teacher its easier and more comfortable. Csikszentmihalyi also stated that, " Davis also argues that there is inevitable conflict between adult realism and youthful idealism within the family"(Csikszentmihalyi 131). Parents expect their children to see things the same way they do, overlooking the fact that they have more experience in life that thus accounts for the difference in perspective. Of course, there are those who say that it is not the parents and teachers who are responsible, but the teenagers themselves. Furthermore, it has been argued that despite the ways used to understand the behavior of adolescents and to relate to them on their level, adolescents seem to have a mind of their own. They are completely aware of their actions when giving into peer pressure. Although this may be the case, it does not follow that society should not make any more efforts to help teenagers as they go through the difficult transition from adolescent to adulthood. Because it is the parents and teachers that instilled in them the value and meaning of friendships, it should be the parents and teachers who help them to see that friendships also have limits. If adolescents realize that social interaction is important but only to a certain point, then they will have the strength to say no to their friends. Likewise, if parents and teachers somehow find a way to better communicate with their children and students respectively, these adolescents Fountain 5 would most likely come to share their feelings with

them and not rely so much on their peers for feedback. And lastly, if parents and teachers became aware of the unrealistic expectations that they place on teenagers, the result would be a decrease in conflict as well as a decrease in the number of adolescents who feel the need to rebel through conformity to peer pressure. In other words, the ways in which family and school cause adolescents to give in to peer pressure leads to a resolution of the causes.

What is the overall result? Adolescents have a healthier sense of the meaning of friendships, they have an alternative other than peers to whom they can turn to, and they are freed from any unrealistic expectations that they themselves can't understand. But most importantly, they become less susceptible to the traps of peer pressure. Works Cited Behrens, Laurence, and Leonard J. Rosen. *Writing and Reading across the Curriculum*. Boston: Longman, 2011. Print. Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Reed Larson. *Being Adolescent: Conflict and Growth in the Teenage Years*. Basic Books, Inc. 1984. New York Juvonen, Jaana and Kathryn R. Wentzel. *Social Motivation: Understanding Children's School Adjustment*. Cambridge University Press. 1996. Cambridge Tate, Thomas F., and Randall L. Copas. "Peer Pressure" and the Group Process: Building Cultures of Concern." *Reclaiming Children & Youth* 19. 1 (2010): 12-16. Academic Search Complete. EBSCO. Web. 8 Apr. 2011. Vega, William A. and Andres G. Gil. *Drug Use and Ethnicity in Early Adolescence*. Plenum Press. 1998. New York