

Article critique



Kids Growing Up Scared By J. Adler J. Adler's article Kids Growing Up Scared is a frank commentary on the manner in which childhood has been eroded by modern man. In today's society adults have adapted to changes that have influenced the manner in which they raise children. These changes are characterized by guiding principles which are "sexual, economic and political" in nature. (Adler) With these three tenets as guiding principles for raising children today, children have as much responsibility for their own welfare as adults do. This shared responsibility brings the child out of the safe confines of childhood and brings him sharply into an adult world with the result that innocence is lost at an early age. It is difficult to argue with the position Adler takes. Today's media reports are filled with stories of children as both victims and authors of serious crimes. Both scenarios indicate that children are exposed to conduct that entirely adult in nature, with the result that the innocence of childhood is lost.

Adler writes of the measures that parents and adults in general take to protect children from crime. These measures involve a stream of "hyper-vigilance". (Adler) Fear of crimes against children are unrealistic given that there are diseases that claim the lives of children far more frequently than crimes. (Adler) This is perhaps the only point that Adler makes that invokes dissension. Fear of crime against children can never be underestimated. Children are vulnerable to crime and require adult protection and supervision. When a child is given free licence to traverse on his or her own, they are always potential victims.

However, Adler is right in his observation that children have become hostages and imprisoned in their homes. There are parents who attach a leash to their children at the mall to guard against abductions. (Adler)

Today's adults have taken protection to the extreme. Children are cautioned to the point of exhaustion against the harm that can befall them. In one case, Adler notes that one family went beyond merely setting alarms in the cars and in their home. They have even fixed alarm systems on members of the family. (Adler) These kinds of measures cause undue fear and alarm for children and are entirely unnecessary. The best approach to guarding against the risk of harm is to ensure that small children are never left without adult supervision. There is no logical reason for raising the alarm with small children. Adult responsibility toward small children includes protecting them from the harsh realities of the world. Only when they are able to look after themselves as they approach adulthood, is it necessary to expose them to that kind of information.

Economic conditions have forced mothers out of their homes and into the labor market. As a result children are largely left to themselves in the home and have to learn how to prepare food at an early age.(Adler) Joining the labor force is an unfortunate reality that cannot be avoided. However, it is worth noting that small children should never be left alone and parents who are driven to work for economic reasons should ensure that small children are left with a responsible caregiver.

The rate of divorce has changed the structure of households so that parents change partners frequently exposing their children to sexual reality. (Adler) Unfortunately, children engage in sexual relations at an early age and are bored with sex in their teens. (Adler) Whether or not teenagers become bored with sex is not the issue. The real issue is that children shouldn't be exposed to sex at an early age at all. Children are not responsible enough to engage in sexual activity and the risk of contracting sexually transmitted

diseases or producing unwanted pregnancies. Just as children should be shielded against the harsh realities of the world, they should likewise be kept unaware of sexual activity.

Adler is right in principle. Children are excessively exposed to an adult world. They are under increasing pressure to share the responsibility of protecting themselves from harm, taking care of themselves and to experiment with sex. While it is doubtful that parents are deliberately encouraging their children to experiment with sex, it is certainly true that parents are purposefully encouraging children to take care of their own safety and to take care of themselves in the home. In this sense society itself which has created the norm, is robbing children of the joy and innocence of childhood.

Bibliography

Adler, J. (Jan. 10, 1994) “ Kids Growing Up Scared.” Newsweek, 43-50.