



„Adolescence” - A sociological analysis of juvenile deviance in the digital age

„მოზარდობა” - ციფრულ ეპოქაში არასრულწლოვანთა გადახრის
სოციოლოგიური ანალიზი

<https://doi.org/10.52340/healthecosoc.2025.09.02.02>

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Abstract

Introduction: This paper examines from a sociological perspective the British TV series „Adolescence” (2025) in order to investigate how juvenile deviance is represented in the contemporary digital context and how concepts such as toxic masculinity, online radicalization and marginalization of adolescents are reflected. The paper proposes an integrated theoretical approach, using concepts from the sociology of deviance, media theories and cultural studies. **Methodology:** The analysis is based on a qualitative methodology, applying narrative and visual content analysis of the series. Relevant theoretical frameworks such as labelling theory (Erving Goffman), ideology of hegemonic masculinity (Raewyn Connell), subculture theory (Albert K. Cohen), social learning theory (Albert Bandura) and social control theory (Travis Hirschi) are used. Key scenes, lines and visual contexts that support sociological interpretations are identified. **Results:** The series highlights the complexity of juvenile deviance as a result of the interplay between personal, social and technological factors. Jamie, the protagonist, is constructed as a symbol of societal failure to protect, understand and guide adolescents in the digital context. Hegemonic masculinity, lack of family support, 'incel' culture and exposure to misogynistic discourses online contribute to his alienation and radicalization. The institutional reaction and subsequent stigmatization confirm the hypotheses of social labelling theory. The series thus functions as a critical cultural text, highlighting the risks of normalizing violence and gender inequality in male identity formation. **Conclusions:** „Adolescence” provides a sociologically relevant portrayal of the crisis of adolescent masculinity and adolescent vulnerability in the digital age. The series contributes to the public debate on emotional literacy, digital literacy and the prevention of youth violence, becoming a valuable tool for research, education and public policy. The paper argues for the need for systemic interventions targeting family support, school involvement and regulation of the online environment as forms of protection against contemporary juvenile deviance.

Keywords: juvenile deviance, hegemonic masculinity, incel culture, online radicalization, social labelling, sociological film analysis, adolescence, digital literacy, Adolescence (2025).

Quote: Radu-Mihai Dumitrescu. „Adolescence” - A sociological analysis of juvenile deviance in the digital age. Health Policy, Economics and Sociology, 2025; 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.52340/healthecosoc.2025.09.02.02>

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აბსტრაქტი

შესავალი: ნაშრომი სოციოლოგიური პერსპექტივიდან იკვლევს ბრიტანულ ტელესერიალს „მოზარდობა“ (2025) იმ მიზნით, რომ გააანალიზოს, თუ როგორ არის წარმოდგენილი არასრულწლოვანთა გადახრა თანამედროვე ციფრულ ეპოქაში და როგორ აისახება ისეთი კონცეფციები, როგორიცაა ტოქსიკური მასკულიზმობა, ონლაინ რადიკალიზაცია და მოზარდთა მარგინალიზაცია. ნაშრომი სთავაზობს ინტეგრირებულ თეორიულ მიდგომას, რომელიც ეფუძნება გადახრის სოციოლოგიას, მედიათეორიებსა და კულტურათმცოდნეობას. **მეთოდოლოგია:** ანალიზი ეფუძნება ხარისხობრივ მეთოდოლოგიას და მოიცავს სერიალის ნარატიულ და ვიზუალურ კონტენტ-ანალიზს. გამოყენებულია შესაბამისი თეორიული ჩარჩოები, როგორიცაა: სტიგმის თეორია (ერვინგ გოფმანი), ჰეგემონური მასკულიზმობის იდეოლოგია (რევენ კონელი), სუბკულტურის თეორია (ალბერტ კ. კოენი), სოციალური სწავლების თეორია (ალბერტ ბანდურა), სოციალური კონტროლის თეორია (ტრავის ჰირში). ანალიზში იდენტიფიცირებულია საკვანძო სცენები, დიალოგები და ვიზუალური კონტექსტები, რომლებიც უზრუნველყოფენ სოციოლოგიურ ინტერპრეტაციებს. **შედეგები:** სერიალი აჩვენებს არასრულწლოვანთა გადახრის სირთულეს, როგორც პერსონალურ, სოციალურ და ტექნოლოგიურ ფაქტორთა ურთიერთქმედების შედეგს. სერიალის მთავარი გმირი, ჯეიმი, წარმოჩენილია როგორც სიმბოლო საზოგადოებრივი მარცხისა. ჰეგემონური მასკულიზმობა, ოჯახური მხარდაჭერის ნაკლებობა და ონლაინ სივრცეში მისოგინიური დისკურსების ზემოქმედება მისი გაუცხოებისა და რადიკალიზაციის გამომწვევ ფაქტორებად იკვეთება. ინსტიტუციური რეაქცია და შემდგომი სტიგმატიზაცია კი ადასტურებს სოციალური სტიგმის თეორიის ჰიპოთეზებს. შესაბამისად, სერიალი ფუნქციონირებს როგორც კრიტიკული კულტურული ტექსტი, რომელიც წარმოაჩენს ძალადობისა და გენდერული უთანასწორობის რისკებს მამაკაცური იდენტობის ფორმირების პროცესში. **დასკვნები:** „მოზარდობა“ სოციოლოგიურად რელევანტურად წარმოაჩენს მოზარდთა მოწყვლადობას ციფრულ ეპოქაში. სერიალი მნიშვნელოვან წვლილს შეიტანს საჯარო დისკუსიაში ემოციური ინტელექტის და ახალგაზრდული ძალადობის პრევენციის საკითხებზე. ნაშრომი ამტკიცებს სისტემური ჩარევის საჭიროებას — განსაკუთრებით ოჯახური მხარდაჭერის და სკოლის ჩართულობის თვალსაზრისით — როგორც თანამედროვე არასრულწლოვანთა გადახრისგან დაცვის ფორმას.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: არასრულწლოვანთა გადახრა, ჰეგემონური მასკულიზმობა, ინსელ კულტურა, ონლაინ რადიკალიზაცია, სოციალური სტიგმა, სოციოლოგიური ანალიზი მედიაში, მოზარდობა, ციფრული კომპეტენცია, Adolescence (2025).

ციტატა: რადუ-მიჰაი დუმიტრესკუ. „მოზარდობა“ - ციფრულ ეპოქაში არასრულწლოვანთა გადახრის სოციოლოგიური ანალიზი. ჯანდაცვის პოლიტიკა, ეკონომიკა და სოციოლოგია. 2025; 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.52340/healthecosoc.2025.09.02.02>.

Introduction

The film “Adolescence” (2025) explores the complex landscape of youth deviance in the digital age, encompassing a wide range of behaviours and influences shaped by contemporary societal, familial and peer dynamics. Juvenile deviance has been extensively studied in diverse contexts, revealing that the interplay between social factors, digital interactions and emotional development play a crucial role in shaping adolescent behaviour. The changing nature of these influences reflects wider societal changes, in particular the evolution of technology and its pervasive impact on young people.

Juvenile deviance is often contextualized within multiple factors, including family dynamics, educational environments, peer associations, and economic conditions. Juveniles in conflict with the law perceive their deviance as a product of these multiple influences (Korde & Raghavan, 2023). This finding confirms previous literature emphasizing how economic adversity and family support systems interact

decisively with adolescent behaviours (Hartanto et al., 2022). Emotional development, which is significantly influenced by family relationships and the educational environment, has also been shown to be instrumental in predicting involvement in delinquent behaviours (Hartanto et al., 2022). Understanding deviance requires consideration of peer influence, particularly in online environments where adolescents are increasingly socializing. Higher rates of peer deviance correlate strongly with increased externalizing problems during adolescence, suggesting that the social environment significantly shapes young people's actions and life choices (Petersen et al., 2014). In addition to peer influences, emotional maturity is essential in mitigating the risks associated with deviance. Emotional maturity not only predicts an adolescent's self-concept, but also significantly reduces the likelihood of delinquent behaviour, demonstrating that emotional regulation skills developed in family and school contexts can act as a buffer against deviance (Hartanto et al., 2022). As the digital age evolves, these emotional and social skills are increasingly under pressure from digital interactions, which may alter traditional pathways of youth development.

Another key issue is the impact of digital media exposure, which has been associated with various forms of deviance among adolescents. The increasing prevalence of online interactions raises concerns about cyber-bullying, exposure to inappropriate content and peer pressure in digital formats. The intersection between peer dynamics and digital contexts can create opportunities for both positive engagement and negative outcomes, complicating the landscape of juvenile deviance. For example, peer deviance manifested through social media platforms can lead to increased risk-taking behaviours and emotional distress, illustrating how virtual friendships can mirror or even exacerbate real-world influences on adolescent behaviour (Bains, 2014).

This dynamic is further complicated by systemic inequalities in certain contexts. Adolescents from marginalized communities face increased risks of delinquency not only because of peer influences, but also because of reduced family support, along with greater exposure to community violence (Miliauskas et al., 2022). The systemic nature of these influences emphasizes the need for interventions that address the broader socio-economic contexts in which adolescents develop. For example, programs designed to increase family involvement and provide support in navigating digital spaces can help address underlying factors that contribute to deviance (Valdez et al., 2005).

Juvenile deviance in the digital age also reflects broader cultural narratives, particularly around masculinity and risk-taking, which are sometimes normalized within specific communities. Family values can significantly shape an adolescent's choices and interactions with peers, suggesting that initiatives aimed at strengthening family bonds may play a crucial role in steering young people away from delinquency (Dishion et al., 2004). Conversely, normalizing certain behaviours within peer groups can lead to a spiral of deviance, in which peer influence becomes a more dominant force than family guidance. Moreover, the legal perspective through which juvenile deviance is understood has evolved. The distinction between juvenile and adult offenders continues to generate discussions about the adequacy of existing systems to respond effectively to young offenders. Understanding the neuroscience of adolescence is crucial for the formulation of more humane and responsive juvenile justice policies (Benekos & Merlo, 2016). This perspective highlights the nuances of adolescent development, advocating for a justice system that recognizes the potential for change and growth in juvenile offenders. The digital age presents unique challenges and opportunities for understanding juvenile deviance. The prevalence of online behaviours calls for a reassessment of existing frameworks for understanding juvenile delinquency. Integrating digital literacy into educational curricula can serve as an effective strategy to empower adolescents to safely and responsibly navigate online spaces. In addition, examining statistics on deviance in digital contexts can provide insights into emerging trends in young people's behaviour that are significantly influenced by technology.

The interplay between emotional development, peer relationships, family support and socio-economic conditions elucidates the complexity of juvenile deviance in the digital age. Understanding this

complex web of influences can inform more effective intervention strategies and policies aimed at reducing delinquency and promoting healthier developmental trajectories for adolescents. The digital landscape, while presenting new challenges for young people, also offers avenues for connection and positive engagement, underlining the importance of a multifactorial approach to adolescent behaviour. The sociological analysis of youth deviance in the digital age reveals a rich web of influences and outcomes that require a nuanced understanding of adolescent development. The intersection of emotional, social, and environmental factors provides critical insights into contemporary youth behaviour, suggesting intervention pathways that emphasize comprehensive support systems and the importance of family and community involvement.

Analysing films using sociological frameworks is a process that encompasses various methodologies that reflect the attributes of the films themselves as well as the social, cultural and emotional contexts surrounding their creation and reception. A fundamental aspect of sociological film analysis is the recognition that films function not only as vehicles for entertainment, but also as rich texts that encapsulate social values, collective fears and experiences. This understanding is rooted in the recognition that a film can evoke diverse interpretations influenced by personal, historical and cultural contexts.

Underpinning sociological interpretations are qualitative methods that play a significant role in film analysis, facilitating a deeper understanding of how narratives, characters and cinematography interact with social issues. One suggestive example is the identification of a number of myths associated with mass armed attacks in American cinema, noting how popular films often reflect and reinforce social anxieties and moral panics related to gun violence, while academic knowledge frequently challenges these portrayals (Silva, 2019). This situation illustrates how narratives in movies might perpetuate myths, but can also provoke critical discussions that challenge social norms, thus serving as crucial texts for sociological research. Building on the qualitative content analysis, it is possible to highlight how the emotional dimensions of films can further contextualize personal and family dynamics, including themes of loss and selective disclosure within family narratives (Rober et al., 2011). Such issues are crucial as they not only highlight individual grief, but also reveal collective social behaviours regarding family secrets and interactions, enriching the sociological discourse surrounding the content of films. By recognizing the interplay between narrative elements and social realities, researchers can gain a nuanced understanding of how films mirror and shape audience perceptions and emotional responses. The methodological framework underpinning sociological analysis synthesizes a variety of qualitative approaches. Ethnographic methodology allows researchers to place films within broader social contexts. Collaborative tasks within film production have been explored including illustrating the importance of behind-the-scenes social interactions that contribute directly to the narrative and structure of films (Ligorio & Ritella, 2010). Such insights reinforce the realization that a production context is as important as the content presented on screen.

Sociological analyses elucidate how films can reflect contemporary public perceptions. One suggestive example is a systematic analysis of public perceptions of healthcare as portrayed in the media, which can be extrapolated to understand how various professions and social groups are represented in films (Girvin et al., 2016). By critically evaluating these representations, sociologists gain insights into how societal roles and stigmas are constructed and perpetuated through cinematic narratives, thereby enhancing sociological understanding of film as a cultural artifact.

At the intersection of qualitative film studies and sociological methodologies is the question of the representation and portrayal of different groups in the film industry and the implications of these portrayals for understanding society. Qualitative analyses used in historical and contemporary examinations of film promote a deeper understanding of how underrepresented groups traverse cinematic landscapes and how their stories are shaped or reshaped by dominant cultural narratives. By using qualitative tools such as narrative analysis, it is possible to dissect films to reveal the broader socio-cultural

commentaries embedded in their narrative discourses. The ways in which narrative structures can be influenced by psychological theories, particularly when examining character narratives that reflect trauma, loss or social change is a key landmark (Rober et al., 2011). This emphasizes the critical role of psychological frameworks in informing sociological understandings of cinematic narratives.

In addition to using qualitative frameworks, a comprehensive sociological analysis of film also requires an understanding of temporal contexts. The methodology applied in examining chrono- patterns, or the intrinsic connection between time and space in narratives, illustrates that time plays a critical role in shaping viewers' understanding of plot and character development (Ligorio & Ritella, 2010). Recognizing the broader cultural and historical moments in which films are made and consumed is essential to a sociological analysis.

Beyond textual analysis, the role of audience reception in film studies also deserves attention. The impact of films on audience behaviour and perception highlights the active role viewers play in interpreting narratives. Such interactions interact with social fears, aspirations and beliefs. Research on this audience-centred perspective reinforces viewers' agency in the construction of meaning in films, emphasizing a reciprocal relationship between film texts and social contexts. Qualitative analyses can also use visual methodologies to understand non-verbal cues and their sociological implications. Such approaches elucidate how visual storytelling conveys messages about gender, race, and class within film. By investigating aesthetic choices, narrative structures, and character development, it is possible to emphasize how specific cinematic techniques interact with sociocultural dynamics to reinforce or challenge prevailing narratives. It becomes increasingly clear that films can serve as both reflections and shapers of social values. The methodological framework for sociological film analysis integrates qualitative methodologies that unlock a deeper understanding of the themes, characters and audience interactions portrayed in each film work. Qualitative content analysis remains a vital lens through which to uncover the layered meanings of films, illuminating the broader social themes that films depict and influence.

Methodology

A sociological analysis of the movie “Adolescence” (2025) was conducted through a systematic and theoretical approach to its narrative, visual and ideological content. The overall objective was to understand how it reflects, reproduces or challenges social phenomena, norms, power structures and socialization processes.

Theoretical conceptualization:

Film as a social text: film is seen not just as art or entertainment, but as a cultural product that reflects the values, conflicts and structures of the society in which it was created - representation theory (Stuart Hall). This theory emphasizes a critical dimension of communication: the importance of audience agency in the meaning-making process (Murji, 2020). Effective message analysis across various communication channels requires consideration of both how messages are crafted and how they are received, a perspective supported by empirical studies that recognize the fluid nature of audience interpretation and representation (Nkomo, 2011).

Film as an ideological tool: film can function as an ideological device (Louis Althusser), shaping perceptions of reality, gender, class, race, violence, norm and deviance). One of the basic components of Althusser's ideological framework is the function of state ideological apparatuses. These, which include institutions such as education, the family, religion and the media, play a crucial role in embedding ideological frameworks in individuals from an early age. It is postulated that they do not operate through direct coercion, but rather through implicit social norms that individuals come to internalize as natural or given. Educational environments and school curricula often reflect dominant ideologies that prioritize certain cultural narratives while marginalizing others; this process has been described as a form of

education in which knowledge is deposited in learners rather than created through dialogue or critical engagement (Case & Hunter, 2014).

Film as a socialization practice (through its representations, a film can influence the way individuals understand social roles, norms and power relations) - a form of informal education).

Methodological steps:

- defining the object of analysis and clarifying the theme: toxic masculinity, online radicalization, adolescent socialization;
- selection of theoretical framework: choice of relevant sociological theories and integration of media/cultural theories;
- identifying the units of analysis (qualitative research): key scenes, characters and their relationships, dialog and language, visual or sound symbols;
- analysing the production context;
- the production context of the movie (producer, social and political context, controversies generated);
- sociological interpretation and correlation (reflection of a social problem, types of norms, roles or stereotypes represented or challenged, the position of the movie in relation to the subject - critical, normative, neutral);
- conclusions and implications (key messages about society in the movie, potential effects on social perceptions).

Results and discussions

Sociological analysis

The British mini-series “Adolescence” (2025), created by Jack Thorne and Stephen Graham, is a four-episode psychological drama that explores online youth radicalization, toxic masculinity and the impact of social networking on teenagers. The film production is shot entirely in single shots and follows the case of Jamie Miller, a 13-year-old boy arrested for the murder of a classmate, Katie Leonard. The epic thread focuses less on “who did it” (the perpetrator) and more on “how it got here” (the social framework that led to the criminal act), providing an in-depth analysis of the social and cultural factors that can influence young people's behaviour.

Themes in the movie

“Adolescence” serves as a case study on how adolescents can be influenced by external factors, which are also the themes identified.

- Online radicalization: Jamie is drawn to the misogynist content and “incel” ideologies promoted by the likes of Andrew Tate, highlighting how the internet can become a breeding ground for dangerous beliefs among young people.
- Toxic Masculinity: The series explores society's expectations of masculine behaviour and how this can lead to repressed emotions and violent outbursts.
- Social isolation and bullying: Jamie is the victim of bullying both at school and online, which contributes to feelings of alienation and seeking validation in toxic communities.
- Inter-generational divide: the differences between parents' and children's experiences of the digital age are accentuated, highlighting the difficulty for adults to understand and intervene effectively in the lives of adolescents affected by new technologies.

The show stands out for its realism in the artistic translation of the themes and for the way it tackles current issues in British society, becoming a platform for discussions about the prevention of youth violence and the importance of digital education.

Theoretical framework used

From a sociological perspective, “Adolescence” can be analysed through several theories:

- **Anomie theory** (Émile Durkheim): Anomie theory addresses the social discord that arises when individuals lack clear norms and effective social integration, which ultimately leads to deviant behaviour. Anomia occurs in contexts where social regulation diminishes, resulting in confusion about acceptable behaviours and expectations. In a state of anomie, individuals are more likely to engage in behaviours that deviate from social norms because they experience feelings of alienation and disconnection from the collective moral order (Heckert & Heckert, 2004). This conceptual framework serves as a foundation for understanding diverse social pathologies in disparate cultural contexts. Film context: lack of clear norms and social integration can lead to deviant behavior. Jamie, faced with conflicting expectations and lack of proper guidance, becomes susceptible to negative influences.
- **Labelling theory** (Erving Goffman) argues that behavioural deviance is not only defined by the acts committed, but also (or especially) by the social reaction to them. At the heart of this theory is the idea that individuals come to internalize a deviant identity after being labelled as such; the label “criminal”, “problematic”, “dangerous”, etc. can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Mukolo et al., 2010). Social institutions (family, school, police, media) contribute to the construction of stigma. Goffman focused on how social stigma affects an individual's identity and everyday interactions. Context of the movie: after Jamie's arrest for the murder of his co-worker, the whole community (including his family) sees him as a monster or a threat. This deviant label becomes Jamie's dominant identity in the eyes of others. This change is reflected in the way he is treated: he is isolated from peers, teachers, investigators; he receives negative public attention (media, social networks), he is subjected to interrogations that do not seek understanding but confirmation of guilt.
- **Hegemonic ideology of masculinity** (Raewyn Connell): defines hegemonic masculinity as the dominant form of masculinity in a given context, which legitimizes men's position of power in society and subordinates' other forms of masculinity, such as femininity. Not all men practice it, but it becomes the aspirational model for boys and men. This hegemony is supported through culture, education, media and social relations and is associated with: power, emotional control, aggression, rejection of vulnerability, dominance of women and men considered “weak” (emotional, empathetic, feminine) (Smith, 2013). Context of the movie: Jamie, the protagonist of the show, is a 13-year-old boy who feels pressure to be “tough”, is influenced by online figures such as Andrew Tate, who promote a hyper-masculine aggressive model. He represses his vulnerability, unable to talk about anxiety, shame or insecurity. This is where hegemonic masculinity comes in: Jamie has no social space to express suffering in a healthy way, so he turns it into aggression, a behaviour valorised (or at least validated) by the dominant ideology. The male figures around Jamie are illuminating. Jamie's father is himself a traumatized man, but raised under the imperative of masculine silence. He doesn't express his emotions, doesn't know how to offer emotional support to his son. Online digital influencers function as “mentors” of hegemonic masculinity, promoting ideas of male superiority, contempt for women and self-assertion through violence or control. These “male role models” teach Jamie that power is about domination, not empathy, which distorts the way he relates to the world and to himself.
- **Subculture theory** (Albert K. Cohen): Subculture theory posits that adolescents who deviate from dominant social values tend to form subcultures that embody their unique norms and values. Cohen suggested that this emergence occurs in response to the challenges posed by a dominant culture that often marginalizes certain groups, particularly young people who struggle with social expectations and pressures. The formation of these subcultures allows individuals to find solidarity and identity in a community that validates their experiences and provides an alternative moral framework (Hartung & Cohen, 1955). This conceptualization has been instrumental in understanding social divisions and the complexities of youth identity formation in contexts where conformity to dominant norms may be impossible or undesirable. The context of the movie: adolescents who do not conform to dominant values can form subcultures with their own, sometimes deviant, norms. Jamie finds belonging in an online community that validates his frustrations and resentments.
- **Social learning theory** (Albert Bandura): Social learning theory postulates how behaviours are learned by observing and imitating others. This theory, which has evolved since its inception in the 1970s, suggests that individuals can acquire new behaviours without the need for direct reinforcement; instead, they learn by observing others and imitating their actions. Bandura's work

emphasizes the importance of cognitive processes in the learning experience, framing it as a dynamic interplay between personal factors, environmental influences, and the behaviour itself (Raza, 2023). This model is referred to as reciprocal determinism, emphasizing that these components continually influence each other, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of behaviour acquisition (Mytton et al., 2013). Film context: behaviours are learned through observation and imitation. Jamie is constantly exposed to negative role models online, which influences his behavioural development.

- **Social control theory** (Travis Hirschi): Social control theory emphasizes the importance of social ties in regulating individual behaviour and maintaining conformity to social norms. According to Hirschi, weak ties to family, school and other social institutions diminish individuals' willingness to conform to social expectations, leading to an increased propensity towards deviance and delinquency. At the core of this theory is the assertion that individuals are more likely to engage in socially normative behaviours when they have strong attachments to conventional institutions that provide a framework for expected behaviours and accountability (Breckin, 2018). Film context: weak ties to family, school, and other social institutions may reduce conformity to social norms. Jamie's strained relationships with his parents and social isolation contribute to his deviant behaviour.

Qualitative analysis

In this section, suggestive scenes and lines are identified to objectively confirm the presence of the series of dominant themes of the movie. For these themes external references are also sought to validate the interpretation as part of the film's context.

• **Toxic masculinity**

Suggestive scenes:

- In the third episode, Jamie is interviewed by psychologist Briony Ariston. Throughout the discussion, Jamie oscillates between friendly behaviour and angry outbursts, including attempts to dominate the conversation and control the situation. These manifestations reflect the influence of misogynistic ideologies and concepts of toxic masculinity on his behaviour.

- Interview with the psychologist: Jamie says that “boys don't have to cry” and that “girls just want attention”, lines that indicate the internalization of patriarchal norms.

- The confrontation with his father, in which Jamie accuses, “You never talked to me, you just told me what not to do”, indicating a lack of an empathetic male role model.

- The show highlights how Jamie has been influenced by online content, including figures such as Andrew Tate and “manosphere” communities. These influences led him to adopt a distorted view of gender relations and develop aggressive behaviours.

Sociological significance: a reflection of the hegemonic ideology of masculinity (Raewyn Connell), which promotes control of emotions, dominance and superiority over women.

The organization *Oasis Da Service* looks at how “Adolescence” exposes the dangerous link between toxic masculinity online and violence against women. The series shows how young men can be influenced by misogynistic content online, which can lead to violent behaviour in real life (Oasis Da Service, 2025).

• **Online radicalization and incel culture**

Suggestive scenes:

- Detectives discover that Jamie watches motivational YouTube videos of misogynistic influencers (e.g. Andrew Tate).

- In the first episode, after Jamie's arrest, detectives discover sexually aggressive comments he has left on Instagram photos of models. This scene highlights the influence of social media on young people's perceptions of gender relations and sexuality. The detective asks, “How do you feel about women, Jamie?”, highlighting the confusion and negative influence of the online environment on young people.

- Jamie's comments on Katie's Instagram account: "Another girl who thinks she's special just because she's a girl."

Sociological significance: illustrates the mechanisms by which the internet can provide communities of belonging based on hatred and frustration, an example of a "deviant subculture" (Albert K. Cohen).

A *University of Melbourne* study highlights how "Adolescence" tackles online radicalization and incel culture. The show highlights how teenagers, particularly boys, can be drawn into online communities that validate their insecurities and resentments, offering a simplistic explanation for their social and emotional problems (Young, 2025).

"Incel" culture (short for "involuntary celibate") is an online subculture made up mainly of heterosexual men who self-define themselves as incapable of forming romantic or sexual relationships, even though they want them. Although it started as a support forum at first, over time it has evolved into a community known for extreme misogyny, social resentment and sometimes glorification of violence (O'Hanlon et al., 2023). The defining characteristics of "incel" culture are a sense of sexual and social exclusion and the fact that its members believe that society (particularly women) denies them affection and sex, which leads to deep frustration. They see themselves as "victims" of a superficial system in which only "attractive" men (called "Chads") have access to relationships. Extreme misogyny manifests itself in that women are often reduced to degrading stereotypes. They are perceived as the cause of the suffering of the "incel", and therefore treated with hatred, contempt and objectified. There are even conspiracy theories about sexuality: "incel" adherents use terms such as "looksmaxxing", "blackpill" (the belief that reality is fatalistic and cannot be changed) and believe that romantic success is determined solely by genetics and physical appearance (O'Hanlon et al., 2023). Glorification of violence is present in some "incel" forums that have promoted or sympathized with violent attacks committed by members of the community (e.g., Elliot Rodger, the perpetrator of a 2014 massacre, has become a "martyr" to some "incels") (Kupper et al., 2024). Social isolation and psychological distress seem common elements: behind the anger, many of these individuals suffer from depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and unresolved trauma. Instead of genuine support, they find validation in a community that amplifies hatred and self-pity.

- **Cyberbullying and online harassment**

Suggestive scenes:

- In the second episode, it's revealed how Jamie's classmate Katie started a cyberbullying campaign against him, labelling him as "incel" in Instagram comments. This online labelling and harassment contribute to Jamie's isolation and frustration, highlighting how stigmatization can deeply affect the teenage psyche.

- Katie and her friends post screenshots of conversations with Jamie, accompanied by humiliating messages.

- The message: "Jamie is a dangerous incel. Girls beware!" is circulating through student groups.

Sociological significance: reflects theories of stigma (Erving Goffman) and the impact of labelling on deviant behaviour. Also reveals power dynamics in digital socialization.

- **Mental health and lack of emotional support**

Suggestive scenes:

- Jamie is caught alone in the room, obsessively repeating speeches about "male power", a sign of emotional instability.

- The psychologist notes in her chart, "Dissociative displays, repressed anger, vulnerability avoidance."

Sociological significance: it mirrors social control theory (Hirschi): adolescents with weak family and school ties are more prone to deviance.

Global Child Forum points out that “Adolescence” explores how teenagers form their identities under constant digital surveillance. The series highlights the pressure to create idealized versions of the self-online, which can affect young people's mental health, self-esteem and interpersonal relationships. “Digital spaces affect every aspect of a young person's life. We cannot build them responsibly without asking young people what they need.” “As an [communications] industry, we have the ability to create a positive impact for millions of people. This is both an exciting opportunity and a shared responsibility.” Are two of the messages of this forum (Lodding, 2025).

- **Social isolation and adolescent identity crisis**

Suggestive scenes:

- Flashback: Jamie alone in the schoolyard, watching as classmates laugh and exclude him.
- Monolog: “Nobody sees me. But online, there they listen to me. That's where I'm who I'm supposed to be.”

Sociological significance: it perfectly captures anomie (Durkheim) and the need to belong, even in a destructive community. The Internet becomes a place of refuge and validation for marginalized identities.

- **The failure of intergenerational communication**

Suggestive scenes:

- Parents discuss post-arrest: “I thought it was just a phase”, indicating an emotional breakdown and lack of involvement in the child's digital life.
- Mom: “I never knew what he was doing on the internet. I was afraid to ask.”
- The ending and reflection on parental responsibility: In the final episode, Jamie's parents reflect on their own mistakes and how they neglected the warning signs of their son's radicalization. This introspection highlights the importance of parental involvement and open communication in preventing negative influences on teenagers.

Sociological significance: illustrates the digital divide between generations and parents' lack of cultural capital to understand the online world of teenagers.

A professor at the *University of Gloucestershire* points out that “Adolescence” reveals the impact of social networking on children and young people, highlighting a dark world that many parents are unaware of. The series highlights the need for parents to be more aware of their children's online activities and to get actively involved in their children's digital education (Shafi, 2025).

Production context of the series

The British series “Adolescence” (2025), created by Jack Thorne and Stephen Graham and directed by Philip Barantini, is a profound exploration of youth violence, online radicalization and the crisis of contemporary masculinity in Britain. Through an intense narrative and innovative cinematography, the series brings to the forefront a society undergoing profound social and cultural transformation.

Social context: toxic masculinity and online radicalization

“Adolescence” tackles themes such as misogyny, “incel” culture (involuntary celibate men) and the negative influence of social networks on young people. The main character, Jamie Miller, a 13-year-old boy, is arrested for the murder of a schoolmate, and the investigation reveals his exposure to misogynistic ideologies and influences such as Andrew Tate. The series highlights how young boys can be drawn into toxic online communities that promote hatred of women and violent behaviour (Hogan,

2025). This theme reflects a real concern in British society, where cases of violence committed by young men have been associated with online radicalization. The series not only raises these issues, but has also generated national debate and has been proposed for viewing in schools and in the UK Parliament to educate and prevent such behaviour (Bernabe, 2025).

Production context: cinematic innovation and artistic collaboration

“Adolescence” is remarkable for its use of the “one-shot” technique, with each of the four episodes filmed in one continuous, uncut sequence. This approach, implemented by director Philip Barantini and cinematographer Matthew Lewis, lends a particular intensity and authenticity to the narrative. Each episode required weeks of rehearsals and multiple attempts to achieve the desired result. The production was produced by Warp Films, Matriarch Productions and Brad Pitt's company Plan B Entertainment, highlighting an international collaboration and commitment to artistic quality. Actor Stephen Graham, who also plays Jamie's father, was actively involved in the development of the project, wanting to bring attention to the issues facing young people in today's society (Langabeer, 2025).

Local context: reflecting the realities of the North of England

Filming took place in Yorkshire, in towns such as South Kirkby, South Elmsall and Sheffield, areas affected by industrial decline and socio-economic problems. This choice lends authenticity to the story, setting the action in an environment that reflects the difficulties facing communities in the North of England. The school used for filming was Minsthorpe Community College, and the police station scenes were shot on a purpose-built set at Production Park in South Kirkby (Jacob, 2025). By setting the action in these locations, the series highlights the impact that local factors such as poverty and lack of opportunities can have on young people's development and the risk of radicalization.

Cultural and political impact: from screen to Public Policy

“Adolescence” had a significant impact in the UK, becoming the first show on a streaming platform to top the ratings. The show has been praised for its bold approach and for the way it raised sensitive issues around youth, violence and the influence of the online environment. The British Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, supported the initiative to broadcast the series in schools, believing that it can help educate young people and prevent violent behaviour (Hogan, 2025). The series has also been discussed in Parliament, highlighting the role that art and media can play in shaping public policy and raising awareness. “Adolescence” is not only a successful series, but also a catalyst for essential discussions about contemporary British society. Through its complex and insightful approach, the series offers a valuable insight into the challenges facing young people and the collective responsibility to create a safer and more empathetic environment for future generations (James et al. ., 2025).

Social impact of the series

The social impact of the mini-series “Adolescence” is significant and can be analysed on several levels in a critical and constructive way. The series functions as a cultural intervention on acute issues in contemporary society, especially in relation to teenagers, gender, digital literacy and social responsibility.

Raising awareness may be the central effect by exposing the general public to an invisible or ignored reality, such as the online radicalization of boys, the “incel” culture and the psychological effects of digital isolation. The impact is likely to shape towards triggering conversations in schools, families and institutions about the harmful influences of the internet. The message encourages parents and educators to rethink their roles in children's emotional and digital education.

There is a challenge to traditional gender norms by designing a cultural product that criticizes hegemonic masculinity and the lack of space for vulnerability among boys. Opening up the public space for discussions about reframing masculinity, some more empathetic and emotionally healthy, may be a desirable outcome. However, it may provoke resistance among those who feel targeted by criticism of 'masculine norms'.

Increased pressure on digital platforms may lead to more ethical and socially-influenced business practices. The series suggests that algorithms and lack of regulation of social networks contribute to the radicalization and normalization of symbolic violence. We can hope that pressure can be increased on tech platforms to regulate misogynist and extremist content. The film's message supports digital education and media literacy initiatives for young people.

Its use in education and prevention can make a significant impact; the movie provides a powerful narrative example that can be used in schools, universities or public campaigns to prevent youth violence and understand online risks. It can become valuable educational material for courses in sociology, psychology, civics or media education; it creates a starting point for discussions in school counselling and family therapy.

Changing the perspective on deviant teenagers can reduce stigmatization, a desirable process in many aspects of contemporary life. The series does not demonize Jamie, but humanizes him, showing that deviance is often a symptom, not a cause. In this way, it encourages a systemic, empathetic and non-punitive approach to juvenile deviant behaviour. Finally, it can hopefully influence public policy towards prevention, not just punishment.

The show should be interpreted as a collective warning about what happens when boys grow up in an emotional vacuum, when emotional education is left to algorithms and when public discourse fails to recognize the fragility of contemporary masculinity.

Conclusions

“Adolescence” (2025) serves as a case study on how external factors, such as online influences and lack of emotional support, can contribute to the development of deviant behaviour among adolescents. The series highlights the need for an integrated approach, including education, family support and regulation of online content, to prevent such tragedies.

The miniseries “Adolescence” offers a complex social x-ray of how teenagers can be shaped by toxic ideologies, lack of support and digital bullying. Its scenes are a valuable resource for analysing deviance, digital socialization and the crisis of contemporary masculinity. The social impact is significant and can be analysed on multiple levels in a critical and constructive way. The series functions as a cultural intervention on acute themes in contemporary society, especially in relation to adolescents, gender, digital literacy and social responsibility.

The sociological analysis of the mini-series “Adolescence” reveals a complex and insightful portrait of juvenile deviance in the digital age, articulating an interdisciplinary framework in which sociology, psychology, cultural studies and media theories come together to decipher the dynamics of adolescent behaviour in the contemporary British context. The series not only reflects pressing social themes, such as toxic masculinity, online radicalization or emotional isolation, but also problematizes them in a critical way, offering a narrative that functions both as a warning and as a call for collective responsibility.

Through the prism of applied sociological theories, the behavioural deviance of the protagonist Jamie Miller is interpreted not as the exclusive result of an individual pathology, but as the product of a cumulative of interconnected factors. Social labelling theory (Goffman) offers a pertinent explanation of how society, through its institutions, public discourse and collective reactions, contributes to the consolidation of the deviant identity of the adolescent, stigma being not only a consequence but a catalyst of deviance. At the same time, the ideology of the hegemony of masculinity (Connell) exposes the systemic pressures on boys to perform a rigid and often destructive masculinity in the absence of alternative models of emotional expression and authentic relating.

The series also offers a faithful representation of how “incel” culture, as a deviant subculture (Cohen), can become a place of refuge for teenagers alienated and rejected by traditional environments, family, school, community. The Internet thus becomes not only a channel for socializing, but also a site

for identity formation, in a climate in which toxic influences can be perceived as life-saving solutions. In this context, social learning theory (Bandura) contributes to understanding the mechanisms by which young people pick up behaviours through observation and imitation, and social control theory (Hirschi) highlights the crucial role of social ties in preventing deviance.

In addition to conceptual analysis, “Adolescence” is a cultural product that manages to trigger meaningful social conversations, functioning as an educational and political text. Its impact in the British public sphere, reflected in parliamentary debates, educational initiatives and media attention, underlines the capacity of visual art to influence discourses, attitudes and even policies. The series does not offer definitive solutions, but proposes a framework for reflection in where empathy, systemic understanding and digital literacy become priorities for a society that takes responsibility for the trajectories of its young people.

In conclusion, “Adolescence” is not just a cinematic fiction, but a sociological tool for analysis and social transformation. Through its narrative realism, thematic depth and social relevance, the series becomes a catalyst for rethinking the relationship between adolescents and society, masculinity and vulnerability, technology and identity formation. In a world where the boundaries between the real and the virtual are blurring, “Adolescence” forces us to re-evaluate what it means to grow up, to make mistakes and to be seen, with all that this recognition entails, in the digital age.

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