

Adolescent Crisis and Familial Tension: From Patterns of Vertical Identification to Transformations of Horizontal Identification

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Abstract:

This study explores adolescence as a vital developmental stage through its investigation of identity development which starts with vertical identification of family values and continues to horizontal identification of peer group and digital media cultural influences. The process of becoming an independent adult requires reaching this stage of psychosocial development yet it creates major problems for family relationships. The adolescent wants to find themselves while gaining emotional and behavioral independence yet the family members want to keep their family united through their traditional caregiving roles. The two people express their divergent viewpoints through their different beliefs about relationship rules and their opposing approaches to managing time and personal boundaries.

Modern societies create cultural conflicts because they handle new cultural changes which stem from technological progress and worldwide growth which produces fresh distinctions between different age groups. The parental model loses its symbolic power as adolescents face multiple conflicting models which results in emotional turmoil for them.

This paper reaches the conclusion that family adjustment needs to support transformation processes instead of attempting to stop them. The development of emotional intelligence requires three essential components which include steady parental examples of balanced discipline and affection and secure spaces for emotional sharing and autonomy and active listening to adolescent viewpoints and social changes. Young people develop their identity during the transition from adolescence to adulthood through uniting their familial bonds with their expanding curiosity about the world outside their home.

Keywords : Adolescent Crisis ; Familial Tension ; Transformations ; Vertical Identification ; Horizontal Identification

Introduction:

Adolescence represents a vital growth phase which requires young people to leave behind their family-based childhood identities so they can develop new identities through life experiences outside their home environment. According to developmental psychology research this stage of development produces major changes in cognitive and emotional and social abilities which drive

young people to find their place in society through multiple cultural frameworks and expanding global influences (Steinberg, 2017).

The external environment now delivers numerous messages and values through digital platforms and peer connections which causes children to develop new identities that replace their previous ones. The adolescent begins to build new self-perceptions and social understandings while exploring personal freedom boundaries. The acceptance of multiple models creates a state of emotional uncertainty because of the contrast between family-learned values and the fast-changing social environment. At this point, the family framework becomes the arena in which these daily contradictions interact.

The adolescent's interest in peers takes precedence over family which causes parental influence on behavior and decision-making to weaken while new identification models emerge that usually seem more appealing yet tend to be unstable and inconsistent. The new identification sources that adolescents choose to follow will predictably create conflicts with their parents because young people need independence but their parents need to maintain authority. The differences in personal values between family members create ongoing disputes about time management and life path which makes adolescents the main source of family conflicts because they represent the clash between their developing world and their family's established way of life.

The adolescent world undergoes transformation during development which leads to family conflicts because their new identity conflicts with their parents' established family structure.

The adolescent development of values creates family conflicts about time and identity because adolescents develop new values which clash with their family's established framework (Arnett, 2021).

Adolescence brings physical development yet also creates new family relationship patterns because young people form new identities which affect how they communicate and handle disagreements with their family members.

1. Study Problem

Adolescence marks a vital developmental period when personal identity development meets family relationship changes which creates a suitable environment for multiple family conflicts to arise. The adolescent begins to re-examine their vertical identifications which stem from their parental relationships according to psychoanalytic theory. Freud demonstrated how identification functions as a basic process which shapes personality development while showing that family members serve as its most important sources. Erik Erikson developed this theory further through his study of adolescent identity development which shows that young people must leave behind their childhood attachments to build their own sense of self (Erikson, *Identity Youth and Crisis*, 1966). The research conducted by James Marcia and other studies demonstrates that people who fail to move from unstable identity statuses to achieved identity experience emotional and behavioral problems which create more stress for their families (Marcia, 1966, pp. 551–558).

The same context supports Peter Blos's theory of Second Individuation (Blos, 1967, pp. 162-186) which describes how adolescents develop new horizontal identification patterns through peer relationships instead of relying on parental authority. (Harris, 1998) supports this idea through her research work. The transition from vertical to horizontal identification creates various obstacles which hinder the process of identification. According to Murray Bowen changing one family member creates system-wide imbalance which produces emotional responses when adolescents establish new personal boundaries with their family members. A family that fails to change its boundaries to give teens independence will experience conflicts between extreme separation and dangerous closeness according to Salvador Minuchin (Minuchin, 1974).

The research defines its core issue in the following way:

What impact does the change in adolescent emotional attachment from family to peers (abandoning previous identifications) have on family relationships and how do families adapt to this change?

2. Conceptual Framework:

2.1. Family: From the perspective of family psychology, the family is defined as a dynamic, interactive system that brings together a group of individuals connected through emotional relationships and reciprocal social roles. The organizational structure serves as a system which determines how members influence each other through its defined limits and communication channels and interaction methods. The family exists as a psychosocial unit which goes beyond biological and legal definitions because it shapes individual personalities through identification and social learning and emotional regulation and basic needs fulfillment for security and belonging and meaning.

Accordingly, the family is an integrated psychosocial system based on emotional relationships and reciprocal roles among individuals. The system maintains its equilibrium through the interaction of communication patterns and boundary management and the functions that provide support and create a sense of belonging. The family unit functions as the main environment which shapes personal identity and emotional growth and social development and any modification in one family member produces changes in the entire family system (Minuchin, 1974).

2.2. Identification represents a core psychological mechanism which enables people to adopt the qualities and behaviors of another person they deeply care about until these characteristics become part of their own personality structure. The process serves as a psychosocial development mechanism which helps form identity and build conscience and create emotional connections and serves as a defense mechanism under specific circumstances.

Freud regarded identification as a cornerstone in the formation of the ego and the conscience, arising from the child's earliest emotional relationship with their parents. Freud states that identification functions as a process which enables value and norm transmission while serving as

the fundamental process for superego development. Human development continues its natural progression from infancy through adolescence and into adulthood.

2.3. Vertical Identification: This refers to the internalization of the traits and behaviors of parents or other adults who represent authority and serve as role models within the family.

2.4. Horizontal Identification: This refers to the internalization of the traits and behaviors of peers or groups to which the adolescent belongs outside the family, in pursuit of belonging and social acceptance.

Erikson, on the other hand, viewed identification as forming the basis of identity structure, arguing that the adolescent engages in a process of selection and differentiation among the models they identify with in order to achieve a coherent identity. Failure in this selection process leads to role diffusion or an identity crisis.

2.5. Adolescence:

Adolescence stands as the developmental stage which connects the period of childhood to the stage of adulthood through its focus on the transition from dependence to self-reliance. The exact beginning and ending points of this phenomenon prove challenging to identify because historical timelines merge with environmental conditions and cultural differences and human biological and psychological growth rates between social groups and across different societies. The core of adolescence emerges from the way personal qualities interact with the educational approaches and cultural principles and social learning methods that exist in every community.

2.6. The Adolescent:

The individual who exists between childhood and adulthood experiences ongoing development because their growth process has not reached its final stage. Adolescence represents a transitional phase which allows people to test their new skills while exploring different identities to discover their authentic self and establish their life direction (Al-Jasmani, 1994). The stage develops increased sensitivity because the child experiences psychological and social transformations at the same time as rapid physical and instinctual development which brings them closer to adult male and female biological characteristics while society continues to view them through their former identity. The fast physical growth of adolescents clashes with the enduring social rules which leads to new problems and pain that affect both teenagers and their families because families represent the second group to experience these changes. The individual experiences a crucial moment because their body develops into adulthood yet their social status remains as a child which creates internal conflicts for teenagers and family conflicts because of fast developmental changes.

3. The Adolescent on a Journey of Self-Discovery and Self-Assertion:

During adolescence young people experience multiple challenging changes which transform their understanding of themselves and their perception of the world around them. The main challenge for teenagers involves discovering their identity through the process of understanding what their personal meaning of self is. Oriol explains that the concept of identity proves challenging to define

because it exists at a fundamental metaphysical level which makes it impossible for psychologists and sociologists and anthropologists to reach a common final definition (Oriol, 1983, p. 32). The adolescent stage presents various psychological and social elements which together build the framework for personal development. According to Erikson, identity emerges from the continuous interaction between the individual's internal psychological mechanisms and the social factors within which they are embedded; this interaction generates in the adolescent a state of ongoing reevaluation of self-image, feelings, roles, and expectations of both self and others.

The adolescent must deal with an extra difficulty which requires them to find their personal identity within the social and cultural connections that define their community. According to Pierre Tap identity arises from the combination of physical and psychological elements with moral and legal aspects and social and cultural characteristics which people validate through storytelling that shows their social position (TAP Research Group, 1991, pp. 13-34). The adolescent needs to develop their life story during this period while the world expands rapidly and becomes more complex. The process of identity development according to Tap follows a path from shared characteristics to unique personal traits which ends with individual uniqueness through a process called personalization.

Adolescents must deal with physical development and hormonal changes as well as internal battles about social belonging and personal self-definition while managing family expectations and peer influences and cultural norms. The transformations unite psychological elements with cultural factors to position adolescence as a battle between present childhood status and future adult goals therefore making this developmental stage highly vulnerable to change and requiring strong family support and understanding.

4. Adolescence Between Internal Alienation and Familial Tension:

The adolescent experiences multiple psychological and social changes during their search for identity which makes them vulnerable while their family system becomes prone to instability and increased stress. Kurt Lewin established field theory and group dynamics yet he described adolescents as "marginal men" because they exist between two social groups of children and adults (Lewin, 1948). The transitional state makes adolescence an especially challenging time because it marks the shift from known childhood experiences to uncertain adult experiences which adolescents have yet to understand. The transitional period according to Lewin creates insecurity for teenagers while making their psychological conflicts worse.

The adolescent person will face their body as the main unfamiliar territory which they must learn to accept. The adolescent's body undergoes fast changes which make them watch themselves closely while they become distracted from family activities to focus on their outside appearance. The combination of turning inward with physical and emotional development creates the basic factors which produce conflicting feelings and adjustment problems and sometimes results in aggressive actions toward family members by certain adolescents.

At this point, psychoanalytic approaches—particularly the work of Braconnier—offer an explanation (Braconnier & Marcelli, 1998), positing that identity construction requires a series of identifications that accompany the developmental process. The adolescent needs to let go of his current identifications by starting with the parental ones in order to develop new identities. The ideal ego of the adolescent experiences a transformation during this stage because they start to look for identification figures beyond their childhood parents in order to build independence and self-expression. The adolescent rejects previous role models because they view them as insufficient for building a positive self-image.

(Kestenberg, 1962, pp. 441-522) states that young people establish new social connections with others to create fresh social groups which results in the development of their identity. The social world outside the family unit gains control over adolescent lives when they begin to interact with more people. The biological sexual urges that appear during puberty drive teenagers to explore new relationship models which they discover more fascinating and better suited to their developing interests and desires than their family relationships.

The teenager makes a transition from vertical social connections which involve parents to horizontal social connections which include peers and media and digital world influences. The structural changes in society have reduced parental authority over teenagers because their social environment now centers more around their peers than their parents.

The adolescent gains power over their feelings of powerlessness through their connection with peers while they escape from the unimportant aspects of life. The created culture develops from educational methods but it creates distance between students and their families and established social norms (Fsian, 2009, p. 33).

The family endures major stress and anxiety from the natural development of identity discovery which includes separation and rebellion and self-discovery. The present stage contains two opposing elements which define its nature. The first element shows that parents want their children to succeed in school but the second element makes them doubt their teenager's ability to make good choices so they become more controlling. The adolescent keeps wanting independence yet still relies on parents which causes emotional conflict between them.

The adolescent develops negative feelings toward adults because they fight against authority but then complains about not receiving enough guidance (Coleman & Husen, 1985). As a result, levels of family adjustment vary from one family to another. The transition from childhood to adolescence proves manageable for certain young people who have supportive families but others face difficulties which result in increased family conflicts and tensions.

The process of identity formation which involves changing personal identities and learning new social behaviors and dealing with independence while needing support makes this stage a challenging test for family unity during adolescent growth.

5.The Generational Gap in Culturally Transforming Societies:

Adolescence represents an essential developmental stage which requires children to build new mental structures because they start to question their previous identity. Young people who experience cultural transformations in their environment face more complex natural systems because these changes affect social systems and regular behavioral patterns and established reference points.

The father figure serves as a fundamental base which builds our first sense of identity while upholding our symbolic system but changing cultural norms and social rules create instability in this system. The father maintains his previous social standing which gave him both symbolic power and community respect but the teenager believes he has lost all authority because modern society keeps evolving at a rapid pace. Families experience rising conflicts between their older members and their children because traditional values continue to decline which leads children to reject their parents' authority and search for alternative life meanings.

Fsian Hocine studied how father roles during adolescence combine with Algerian violence (Fsian, 2009, p. 33) in his article which shows that failing values and weak adult figures block fathers from giving their children the symbolic meaning they require for narcissistic projection. The adolescent no longer finds in the father a reassuring mirror or a model capable of containing his aspirations, which opens the door to tensions that may at times take the form of direct shocks.

The fast pace of societal change creates a natural generation gap according to Davis because parents must pass down their life lessons to their children even though those lessons lose value when society moves forward at an accelerated pace. The way parents teach their kids about life through their actions will become irrelevant because society keeps changing rapidly (Ismail, 1982) which makes young people feel distant from their family traditions and new life experiences.

The generational conflict exists as a basic representation of the primary social battle which seeks to establish new social definitions for personal identity and social bonds and power structures during periods of societal evolution. Two intellectual models fight for dominance through a conflict which involves maintaining historical continuity against a new system that seeks to adjust to modern times. The adolescent exists between these two models as he works to rebuild his mental images and find his place in his changing family and society which evolves faster than his home environment.

6.Study Results and Recommendations Supporting Adjustment Between the Adolescent and the Family:

Adolescence stands as a highly complex transitional phase which forces young people to endure two kinds of alienation because their bodies transform at a rapid pace while their social world no longer accepts their child status but has yet to welcome them into adulthood. The adolescent embarks on this journey by diving into a vast ocean of complicated self-discovery questions which include “Who am I?”, “Where is my place in this world?”, and “What are my own values,

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independent of what the family and society have imposed since childhood?" The questions emerge from a specific context which includes physical and hormonal changes that intensify emotional responses until they create periods of extreme happiness and self-assurance followed by deep anxiety and sensitivity to judgment and evaluation.

The internal battles that adolescents experience create effects which reach their entire family system through rising family conflicts. The teenage behaviors which parents view as rebellious or concerning withdrawal include their refusal to talk with family members and their inflexible opinions and their strong need to spend time with friends yet these actions actually represent their attempt to hear their personal thoughts and establish their individual identity. The attempts to reach out to children face a major obstacle because parents find themselves lost in the question "What happened to our child?" The situation might cause parents to stick with their previous parenting methods which used to work with children but now fail to produce any results.

Young people create a conflict between their personal need to become independent and their parents' duty to watch over them. The ongoing battle between independence and parental control creates continuous arguments which make every member of the family experience distress. The quest for personal identity and independence within family life creates opposing forces which disrupt family stability yet allows members to build new equal relationships through improved communication.

Adolescence brings a total change to both individual and family life which makes this stage essential for personal growth and family development. The family reaches its unifying stage which drives organizational changes throughout its structure. People should see this phase as a chance to develop closer relationships and establish their identity when relationships rest on strong psychological and social foundations.

The family stands as a supportive environment which helps people build their identity while maintaining peace but this requires multiple supporting elements to create a nurturing structure:

- The system works by teaching adolescents' emotional recognition through the method of parents who demonstrate matching words and actions. Science research shows that authoritative parenting functions as a leadership style which combines strict rules with supportive actions to create better family relationships and improved teenage mental health (Kim & Chung, 2018, pp. 1-25). Young people discover safety through role modeling because they have faith in their role models when they explore the outside world.
- The psychological and emotional support system functions as a protective mechanism which works together with role modeling to shield against mental health problems. The warm family environment which allows teenagers to express their emotions without facing any form of judgment helps them create improved internal peace throughout their development period. A family member who knows how to keep their boundaries alive by giving their family members freedom yet maintaining clear distinctions. The adolescent becomes responsible when they receive freedom to select choices which stay within the boundaries of established values.

- The way people communicate effectively together with open dialogue enables adolescents to share their thoughts. Young people share their thoughts through genuine discussions which focus on active listening instead of using commands or indoctrination tactics. The process of value discussion and role expectation clarification creates a bridge between generations while showing young people their position within their family and community. Research shows that family operations and communication quality directly influence how people build their identity and experience fewer identity conflicts (Schwartz, Mason, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2009, pp. 177-211).
- Flexibility in confronting cultural and social transformations: The family needs to understand that working with current changes and talking about them with their teenager enables them to keep their family traditions while adapting to new circumstances. Young people develop social skills through their natural environment when they maintain their vertical family relationships and horizontal friendships which build both responsibility and independence.
- The role of historical reference and family narratives: The role of historical reference and family stories as a thread connecting past and future cannot be overlooked. The adolescent establishes their enduring identity system through family historical knowledge which they refer to as intergenerational self by extracting strength and values from this detailed historical account. Research conducted by Duke and Fivush demonstrates that this knowledge produces better self-esteem and life control which scientists recognize as a true psychological resource (Duke, Lazarus, & Fivush, 2008, pp. 268-272).
- Family members actively support the natural re-identification process because it represents a standard developmental stage. The adolescent requires assistance to shift from their childhood behavior patterns to develop new social interaction skills which help them form their personal identity. Research shows that parents who understand and trust their teens when choosing role models help their children develop stronger identity commitment and better identity development (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008, pp. 207-222).

Adolescence stands as the main source of stress because of its intense developmental changes yet it offers families a valuable chance to develop together. The family system which adopts these pillars allows identity conflict to develop into a creative process of balance instead of suppressing it. The family develops into a stronger unit through this stage while maintaining the idea that adolescent relationship support leads to improved psychological health and family unity for future generations.

7. Conclusion:

In light of the foregoing, adolescence emerges as a fundamental phase which transforms the psychological and social patterns established during childhood while testing the family's ability to support developing identities. The period goes beyond biological development since it serves as a transitional stage which unites personal growth with social development and connects individual

experiences with family life while bridging childhood to adulthood. This is what makes it one of the most sensitive phases of life, given the questions, conflicts, and new demands it generates.

The study of adolescent identity development reveals that family conflicts emerge as standard outcomes from the changing parent-child bond during adolescence. Young people need to achieve psychological independence while joining social groups and altering their established roles and reference points to build their personal identity. Learning style differences create family disputes when families cannot adjust to these changes or fail to understand them properly.

Research in contemporary psychology shows that adolescents seek independence yet they also need emotional and symbolic support to handle the fast changes in their environment. Family harmony depends on multiple factors which include containment and support and role modeling and clear boundaries during this stage. A family which listens well demonstrates ethical values through its actions and supports teenagers to explore their independence while keeping their protective role intact will establish a secure path toward adult development.

The vital position gains power when societies experience quick cultural transformations because traditional identity markers disappear while new identification systems develop through technological and media platforms. Generation conflicts stem from opposing definitions of personal identity and life meaning so families should create communication systems which unite traditional values with modern developments to maintain continuity during times of change.

Accordingly, adolescence should not be understood as a locus of threat to relationships, but rather as an opportunity to rebuild them on more mature and reciprocal foundations. Through this stage families can reassess their educational methods while they transform into supportive containers which help teenagers build their authentic selves. The gateway functions as a passage which leads to conflict when wisdom is missing but yields to peace and mutual growth through improved understanding and adaptable communication.

Adolescence transforms into a crisis only when families together with their social settings prove insufficient to manage the changes that occur during this stage. When role models, supportive relationships, and open dialogue are available, this stage is transformed from an arena of conflict into a pathway for renewal and the establishment of a mature identity, restoring the family's central role as a space for the construction and guidance of the self in a rapidly changing world.

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