



IDENTITY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: SILENT, INTIMATE AND UNCONSCIOUS CONFLICTS IN THE FORMATION OF ADOLESCENCE

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Abstract:

The bodily and social transformations make adolescence a stage of great contradictions for those who experience it. Adolescents also need to deal with changes in demands arising from family and social institutions that aim to prepare them for the responsibilities of adulthood. Sudden variations in expectations generate divergences, as at sometimes they are too young and at others, too old. At this juncture, this work presented the changes that occurred in adolescence based on the concepts of identity and identity crisis created by psychologist and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson in his theory of human development. To structure the discussion, scenes from the film "Ferris Bueller's day off: screenplay" were described, intending to illustrate how young people experience it in contemporary times. Thus, in the light of Psychoanalysis, the work showed how adolescence can be a period of silent, intimate and unconscious conflicts, and it is important to have a real, unique and sensitive vision so that we can welcome these subjects.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis. Erik Erikson. Identity. Youth.

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IDENTIDADE E PSICANÁLISE: CONFLITOS SILENCIOSOS, ÍNTIMOS E INCONSCIENTES NA FORMAÇÃO DA ADOLESCÊNCIA

Resumo:

As transformações corporais e sociais fazem com que a adolescência seja um estágio de grandes contradições para aqueles que o vivem. O adolescente também precisa lidar com as modificações nas demandas provenientes das instituições familiares e sociais que visam prepará-los para as responsabilidades da fase adulta. As variações repentinas nas expectativas geram divergências, pois em alguns momentos são jovens demais e, em outros, demasiadamente velhos. Nessa conjuntura, este trabalho apresentou as mudanças ocorridas na adolescência a partir dos conceitos de identidade e crise de identidade criados pelo psicólogo e psicanalista Erik Erikson em sua teoria do desenvolvimento humano. Para estruturar a discussão, foram descritas cenas do filme “Curtindo a vida adoidado” pretendendo ilustrar como os jovens a vivenciam na contemporaneidade. Assim, a luz da Psicanálise, o trabalho mostrou como a adolescência pode ser um período de conflitos silenciosos, íntimos e inconscientes, sendo importante haver uma visão real, singular e sensível para que possamos acolher estes sujeitos.

Palavras-chave: Psicanálise. Erik Erikson. Identidade. Juventude.

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional period marked by intense transformations in various aspects such as physical, psychological, familial, and social. Due to the characteristic changes of this phase, young individuals are confronted with a series of challenges and conflicts that play a crucial role in their formation. In this context, psychoanalysis emerges as a valuable theoretical and clinical approach for understanding the processes of subjectivation involved in the formation of identity during adolescence.

This paper aims to discuss, through the theories of psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, the concept of identity and identity crisis, as well as to characterize adolescence considering psychoanalysis. To fulfill this purpose, this text begins with a brief account of the movie “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off” (1986) to illustrate how this stage of human development is portrayed in contemporary society.

Therefore, the objective of this article is to explore the complex relationship between identity and psychoanalysis, with an emphasis on the silent, intimate, and unconscious internal conflicts experienced by adolescents when confronted with cultural demands, familial expectations, and individual and group pressures.

By delving into the topic of adolescence, the intention is to provide an enriching perspective for professionals in the field of mental health, psychologists, psychoanalysts, educators, and parents, helping them to understand, from a more realistic and humanistic standpoint, adolescents in their journey towards the construction of identity.

2. ABOUT THE JOURNEY

The movie “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off” (1986) is American fiction produced and directed by John Hughes portrays how the teenager Ferris, played by Matthew Broderick, seeks intense, unrestrained, and inconsequential fun experiences while constructing his identity to meet the demands of adulthood. Regarding this period, Quadros (2017) reports that the teenager is in a functioning mode described as “neither-nor.”

According to Quadros (2017), this means that young people neither work nor study, but they will soon have to become emotionally and financially independent from their families. The demands and expectations are frequent and confusing because sometimes they are almost adults, and others are not yet adults. This situation generates anguish as the young person needs to mourn the loss of the child’s body, the loss of the child’s identity, and the childlike relationship with parents.

Still in the movie, the 15-year-old Ferris expresses difficulty in abandoning the “neither-nor” phase, meaning transitioning from childhood to adulthood, as he engages in various behaviors such as lying, deceiving, and breaking social rules to delay adolescence. On the other hand, Ferris seeks experiences characteristic of adulthood by driving his father’s expensive car and skipping school.

Furthermore, the teenager Ferris invites his girlfriend and best friend to live various adventures in just one day, collectively carrying out their eloquent escapades. Addressing the theme of adolescence, the cinematic plot illustrates the social pressures that young people face to mature quickly, choose a successful career, the doubts adolescents confront about “who am I versus who they want me to be,” and the anxieties of receiving much responsibility and little credibility, among other issues typically experienced in this phase of life according to Folquito, Garbarino, and Souza (2023).

In this context, it is worth noting that adolescence is characterized by Erikson (1968) as a broad period of human development, spanning from 12 to 18 years. Similarly, the Statute of Children and Adolescents (ECA) indicates the same age range for adolescence in Brazil (BRASIL, 1990). However, it is important to clarify that the delineation of this developmental phase may differ in each country, as it is correlated with social, cultural, economic, and political organization (FOLQUITO; GARBARINO; SOUZA, 2023).

Moreover, Erikson (1976) describes that it is during this period that identity emerges. According to the author, the concept arises from personal identity along with historical continuity, in other words, an individual's identity is linked to their life history. However, the author points out that this concept is often applied partially by society, sometimes corresponding only to one aspect of a young person's life, such as social roles, personality traits, or conscious self-images.

For Erikson (1976), identity is broader than social representations, structuring itself from something loudly demonstrative of the self. According to the author, identity is a kind of deliberately anarchic exploration of the self that arises from an unconscious quest to understand oneself. Therefore, the construction of identity exhibits a silent, intimate, and unconscious tension, fostering a conflict within the self, described as an identity crisis by the author.

The crisis is depicted by Erikson (1976) as a specific confusion in individuals about who they are and what they are experiencing both internally and externally. According to the psychoanalyst, it is from this conflict that the invigorating subjective feeling of uniformity and continuity emerges, that is, the construction of the feeling "this is who I really am" arises from a conflict.

In line with Erikson's concepts, researchers Teixeira and Couto (2010) add that adolescence is a phase marked by the intensity of actions and feelings, along with significant bodily changes during puberty. The authors assert that this phase is experienced in contemporary society through immediacy, collective rule-breaking, and the pursuit of fame and money, characteristics highly stimulated due to social imperatives of fleeting pleasure and experiences in the here and now.

According to Teixeira and Couto (2010), to live in society, we need to postpone our pleasure to follow rules that seek the common good. However, the imperatives of our society do not provide adolescents with the sensation of delaying pleasure, as they can, deceptively, do and have everything they want with just a click, allowing for the immediate acquisition of objects like phones, clothes, and more. As a result, the researchers warn that unrestricted consumption makes it difficult for hyperconnected young people to cope with situations where they need to wait.

Quadros (2017) also notes that during adolescence, there are social and familial expectations for the teenager to mature and prepare for adulthood. However, according to the author, adolescents do not enjoy certain "privileges" that adults have, creating a duality of maturity versus infantilization, leading some adolescents to prefer staying in more childlike conditions with fewer responsibilities and demands.

Considering this setting, although Freud did not explicitly write about adolescence in his works, the psychoanalyst made significant remarks about puberty, describing it as a period of intense transformation and emotional turbulence in a person's life (FREUD, 1996 [1905]). To support these claims, the psychoanalyst offered considerations about puberty in the theory of psychosexual development.

Regarding the characteristic bodily changes of puberty, Salles (2005) describes that adolescents experience sexual physiological maturation during this period. This maturation triggers the need for adolescents to modify their body image, leading to an openness to new sensations, especially genital sensations.

In addition to sexual maturation, according to Freud's psychoanalytic theory (1996 [1905]), puberty brings forth the emergence of new responsibilities. In relation to this, Freud states (1996 [1905], p. 234):

[...] while clearly incestuous fantasies are overcome and repudiated, one of the most significant and also one of the most painful psychic realizations of the pubertal period is consummated: the detachment from parental authority, a process that, on its own, enables the opposition, so crucial for the progress of civilization, between the new generation and the old.

Thus, during this period, Freud (1996 [1905]) argues that young individuals undergo a series of internal conflicts as they attempt to navigate the tension between their sexual desires and the need to conform to social expectations. In addition, Carvajal (2001) notes that puberty is a tumultuous process because young people will confront issues such as differentiation, separation, finitude, changes in roles and positions within the family dynamics, as well as frustrations arising from growth and the choices they must make.

These processes are interconnected; for Freud (1996 [1905]), individuation, in other words, is related to the search for one's own identity. In this regard, Carvajal (2001) suggests that, according to Psychoanalysis, young individuals during puberty are trying to discover who they are and what their place is in the world. For this to happen, the author points out that it is necessary for the adolescent to break away from the affections of childhood towards parental figures, redirecting these affections towards other objects such as best friends, social groups, romantic partners, among others.

3. DISCUSSION THE ADOLESCENCE

The text delves into the complexities of adolescence, exploring it through the lenses of psychoanalysis and the cinematic portrayal in "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" (1986). It highlights the challenges adolescents face in constructing their identities amidst societal, familial, and individual pressures. The narrative unfolds with a

focus on Erikson's theories, emphasizing the broad period of human development that is adolescence.

The movie illustrates the "neither-nor" phase, a term introduced by Quadros (2017), where adolescents neither work nor study, yet must soon become emotionally and financially independent. This phase generates internal conflicts, representing the struggle between clinging to childhood and embracing adulthood. Ferris Bueller, the protagonist, embodies these tensions, engaging in rebellious behaviors while grappling with the expectations imposed by society and family.

Erikson's concept of identity formation during adolescence is explored, emphasizing the search for one's identity amid societal expectations. The identity crisis, as described by Erikson, is the internal conflict faced by individuals in understanding who they are amidst external and internal pressures. This crisis is vividly illustrated in the movie and resonates with the challenges identified in the psychoanalytic discourse.

Teixeira and Couto's (2010) perspective on the immediacy of pleasure and the impact of unrestricted consumption on adolescents is discussed, raising concerns about their ability to cope with delayed gratification. The societal imperatives of fame and money, as portrayed in the movie, contribute to the unique challenges faced by the hyperconnected youth of today.

4. CONCLUSION

The text provides a comprehensive exploration of adolescence, intertwining psychoanalytic and Erikson theories, cinematic representation, and contemporary societal dynamics. It sheds light on the multifaceted nature of adolescent development, emphasizing the internal conflicts, identity struggles, and societal pressures that shape this transitional period.

The cinematic example of Ferris Bueller serves as a poignant illustration of the complexity's adolescents navigate in their journey towards maturity. The text urges mental health professionals, educators, and parents to adopt a more realistic and humanistic perspective, fostering understanding and support for adolescents in their identity construction.

In conclusion, the integration of psychoanalytic theories and cinematic narratives offers a nuanced understanding of adolescence, acknowledging the intricate interplay between internal conflicts and external influences. This exploration contributes to a richer comprehension of the challenges faced by today's youth as they navigate the intricate path towards self-discovery and identity formation.

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