

Part 2: Theoretical Background and Further Information

Just like the body undergoes considerable changes during the growing phase of puberty, so does the outward appearance of young people as well. They become very much preoccupied with their own appearance. Young people are self-conscious about their body and often look at themselves in the mirror. Due to hormonal changes, they encounter skin problems; Boys and girls pay a great deal of attention to their figures and their weight. Moreover, appearance is viewed critically, with role models (i.e. from films) playing an important part in the lives of adolescents. Group pressure is growing and the child who fails to conform runs the risk of social rejection.

Many parents are horrified about the way children are dressing nowadays.

Certain groups in society intentionally set themselves apart from others by following a distinctive dress code or fashion, such as punks and skaters. Everything still revolves closely around the latest fashions, which change from one year to the next. With the passage of time, young people have become more dependent on each other. This means that they want to have what others have. No one has the courage to wear clothes or to listen to music that is not popular with other young people. They also feel that they are buying a better quality product when they buy a name brand product rather than a "no name" product. Through advertising, especially using popular role models such as top athletes, brand-name products have become even more idealized and have gained additional prestige. In fact, brand-name clothes have become even more important today than ever before. Young people do not at all shy away from cost and efforts when it comes to their image. On the contrary!

Social inequity is noticeable among young people: those who do not have enough money to spend on brand name clothes are not considered cool by the others, as very few people consider the price-quality ratio to be important. The price is irrelevant, the important thing is to be "in". It would also appear that a person, who does not wear brand-name clothes, will even have problems finding friends. Due to their pride, there are very few young people who take a stand against brand-name clothing or renounce other material possessions. In fact, it is common knowledge that other materialistic objects are growing in importance in addition to clothes. These are the so-called status symbols, which are often the prerequisite for a person's acceptance into a group. At this age children become increasingly reluctant to undertake activities with their peers however.

In order to make objective decisions for later life, in order to smoothly socialize with others and in that way to find and protect one's own identity, young people need to be supported by their families as well as by the competent educational actors in schools.

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