

## Let's Talk About "Adolescence" and Incel Culture

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Released a little over a month ago, "Adolescence" has become the third most-streamed Netflix original series, falling behind "Squid Game" and "Stranger Things." The British limited series, written and created by Stephen Graham and Jack Thorne, follows the arrest of 13-year-old Jamie (Owen Cooper) for the brutal murder of 13-year-old Katie (Emilia Holliday). Stephen Graham, another celebrated actor, assumes the role of Eddie Miller, Jamie's father. Throughout this four-part series, we see Jamie's initial arrest, the follow-up investigation at his middle school, his psychological evaluation, and, finally, the irreparable impacts of his actions on his family.

"Adolescence" marks Owen Cooper's breakout role as [Graham admits to Cooper "blowing \[his\] mind" during his audition](#). In addition to the series' taxing and emotionally demanding subject, the cast rose to the challenge of shooting one-take episodes, where each 40-minute episode was in a single, continuous shot. To achieve this, the show takes advantage of "character tag," where the director follows a character's movements until another character is in close proximity. Motion plays an important role in the story's development and in setting the tone for specific locations. Using these shots, we get an empirical view of the secondary school environment and the hectic nature of a police station.

In an [interview](#), Graham admits his desire to explore the various influences on a child's upbringing, especially in our modern age where the internet exposes young minds to a variety of toxic concepts. The series explicitly mentions Andrew Tate to critically address incel culture. Incels or the "involuntarily celibate" believe in the 80/20 rule that 80 percent of women are attracted to 20 percent of men. The latter 80 percent of (heterosexual) men unable to find romantic sexual partners are thus involuntarily celibate. Although this culture fosters hate and resentment towards women, it simultaneously desires their approval.

There are several cases of self-described incels who commit mass violence, for example [Elliot Roger](#) and [Scott Beierle](#). The latter, with an established history of publicly hating women, shot up a hot yoga studio in 2018, killing two and injuring four women. Though these are extreme cases, men who immerse themselves in this culture often exhibit a recurring pattern of hatred and profound loneliness.

Easily accessed through media and absorbed by impressionable teens, this culture shaped Jamie's worldview. In the series, Katie, the victim, calls him an incel on social media. Jamie, burdened by the self-hatred and low self-esteem common in "incels," believes he is "ugly." When he's asked if women are attracted to him, he replies with "of course not." Embracing the 80/20 rule, he becomes even more desperate for female approval from Katie and his counselor, Briony.

When Briony (Erin Doherty) psychologically assesses him, she experiences Jamie's toxic intimidation, including physical threats, and insults. Ultimately, Jamie desperately asks Briony if she likes him, showing his need for female approval even after his mistreatment. Similarly, Jamie's harmful relationship with women is revealed as we learn that he violently stabs Katie after she rejects him. The series thoroughly explores Jamie's inner psyche, as no one believes a child can exert this much anger and violence. Even when video evidence unmistakably shows that Jamie has become a murderer, we desperately grasp onto anything that disproves Jamie's great evil.

Like his father, we see the little boy he used to watch swinging on monkey bars and drawing pictures at the kitchen table. As Jamie's parents cycle between "we made him" to "how did [we] make that?" no blame is assigned. There are only reflections on the nature of parenting and the effects society has on the mental and emotional upbringing of an impressionable child. As a society, we have a responsibility to reject hate culture. It negatively affects younger minds. There is no concept or 'truth' worth creating murderers out of children.



IMDb