# Parents warned about sinister emoji meanings in Netflix's 'Adolescence'



Experts have issued warnings to parents about the nuanced and often sinister meanings behind emojis popularised in the Netflix drama "Adolescence". The hit series, which is currently one of the most viewed shows on the streaming platform, follows the story of 13-year-old Jamie Miller, portrayed by Owen Cooper, who faces arrest for the murder of a female schoolmate.

Developed by Jack Thorne and Stephen Graham, "Adolescence" tackles complex themes surrounding incel culture—an online community characterised by its anti-woman sentiments and misogynistic ideologies. According to the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, incels, short for "involuntary celibates," typically comprise heterosexual men who feel unable to secure romantic or sexual partnerships despite desiring them. This feeling often leads to demeaning blame directed at women, whom they perceive as responsible for their perceived shortcomings.

Within the narrative, key insights are provided by character DI Luke Bascombe, played by Ashley Walters, as he investigates the concealed messages behind emojis left by the victim Katie on Jamie's Instagram. A pivotal moment in the second episode occurs when Adam, Bascombe's son, elucidates the meanings behind these symbols, revealing their connection to the alarming ideologies propagated by the incel community.

Allysa Czerwinsky, a PhD student in Criminology at the University of Manchester and an expert in the study of incel culture, spoke with the Manchester Evening News about the implications of emojis in the series. She emphasised that the emojis, such as the red pill, black pill, and 100 emoji, serve as vehicles for insidious messages often overlooked by parents. Czerwinsky explained that the red pill emoji signifies a radical awakening within the incel philosophy, indicating that someone has come to accept troubling truths about gender dynamics: "The red pill is like, 'I see the truth'. It’s a call to action by the manosphere."

This theme of perceived enlightenment continues with the black pill ideology, which posits that some men are doomed to perpetual failure in romantic pursuits due to genetic disadvantages. Czerwinsky noted that such beliefs can cultivate a victim mentality, wherein feelings of inadequacy are channelled into an identity grounded in incel culture.

Another emoji referenced in "Adolescence" is the 100 emoji, which according to Adam, encapsulates the '80/20 rule'—a belief held by many in the incel community that 80% of women are attracted to merely 20% of men. This ideation further entrenches harmful stereotypes about dating hierarchies and female agency in mate selection.

Czerwinsky also elaborated on the significance of the dynamite emoji used in the show to signify someone who identifies as an incel, affirming its association with explosive attitudes toward gender relations. Moreover, the series presents a spectrum of meanings for different coloured heart emojis, suggesting that what may seem innocuous can actually possess darker interpretations within these online subcultures.

"In their exchanges, children are utilising these symbols in ways that may not be immediately evident to adults," Czerwinsky remarked. She highlighted that these phenomena exist just outside mainstream comprehension but critically inform how young people navigate relationships and social interactions online.

The emergence of incel culture has sparked widespread conversation, particularly with the launch of "Adolescence," which showcases the toxic masculinity often perpetuated within this environment. Jamie's violent act against Katie, motivated by her rejection and bullying, reflects these themes and has drawn scrutiny about the impact of such narratives.

Prominent figures associated with the incel community, such as Andrew Tate and Jordan Peterson, further amplify these ideologies, employing statistical manipulation and misogynistic rhetoric to appeal to disaffected young men. With their influence, the conversation surrounding incel culture continues to grow, leaving parents and society to grapple with the implications and the necessity of understanding this complex issue.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.hellomagazine.com/healthandbeauty/mother-and-baby/821359/adolescence-children-suspicious-emoji-usage/> - This article discusses how the Netflix show 'Adolescence' highlights the use of emojis with hidden meanings, particularly those associated with incel culture and its ideologies. It also mentions the show's portrayal of complex themes like misogyny and gender-based violence.
* <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/experts-warn-parents-over-hidden-26438546> - This article features Allysa Czerwinsky, a PhD student in Criminology, discussing the implications of emojis in 'Adolescence' and their connection to incel culture. She explains how these symbols convey insidious messages often overlooked by parents.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incel> - This Wikipedia page provides an overview of incel culture, including its definition as a community of 'involuntary celibates' and its association with anti-woman sentiments and misogynistic ideologies.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-55562116> - This BBC Newsbeat article discusses Andrew Tate's influence on incel culture and how his views have been criticized for promoting misogyny and toxic masculinity.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/20/incel-culture-misogyny-violence> - This Guardian article explores the broader societal implications of incel culture, including its links to violence and how it perpetuates harmful stereotypes about women and dating hierarchies.
* <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-attraction-doctor/202201/the-80-20-rule-in-dating> - This Psychology Today article discusses the '80/20 rule' in dating, which is referenced in 'Adolescence' as part of incel ideology. It explains how this belief can lead to harmful stereotypes about dating and female agency.