

Reader responds to article on Oregon shootings

27 May 1998

Dear Editor,

I think your article on the Oregon shooting brings out important issues for consideration. I would like to bring up some other material I read which also shows how society and the culture today affect adolescent youth. There is a phenomenon among teen girls called self-mutilation. I first read about it several years ago in the book *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, written by psychologist Mary Pipher. In the preface, the author explains, 'I want to help them [teen girls] see their lives in the context of larger cultural forces.'

In the past, when there were large social movements to improve society, teenagers could direct their anger at poverty, injustice, racism, etc., socially. They could give their lives meaning, so crucial for their development. As your article on Oregon explains, alienation in social relations has reached new heights. Today all the stress and anger teens feel is directed against themselves or other individuals they know.

Self-mutilation, when girls cut or burn themselves, is described as inflicting harm on the body when in psychic pain. Unfortunately I have seen articles recently in the major teenage girls' magazines that made me realize that this cutting is less unusual than I first thought. I hope that your article will enable people, especially adolescents, to begin to understand and consider possible solutions for their predicament and the problems in society.

EG

See Also:

The shooting in Oregon

Alienation, adolescence and violence

[23 May 1998]



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