



“Stand By Me”

Some Reflections & Possible Avenues of Philosophical Exploration

COMING-OF-AGE & LOSS OF INNOCENCE

- Overarching Characteristics

- Individual grows up, loses childlike ways of seeing things. This may involve taking on new responsibilities or realizing that something wasn't important as it once was.
- Often involves entering a new phase of understanding and learning new skills and gaining “new powers.”
- Often involves a new understanding of the nature of humanity and its potential for “good” or “evil.”

- *Coming of Age*

- Somewhat akin in nature to “rites of passage”
 - Examples: *driver's license, first legal drink, owning your own car, bank account, hunting license, joining a team/military, starting a career or family, etc.*
- Focuses on what is gained
- Often a group action
- Typically has a positive element to it even of what is gained is potentially negative/harmful (e.g., cigarettes, booze)
- Typically focuses on the more positive aspects of “new information” and what is gained by understanding the nature of humanity with greater depth

- *Loss of Innocence*

- Examples (coming from inside/the self & outside/others): First time you ever betrayed your own values, hurt someone on purpose, got in

trouble/misbehaved; First time you ever felt betrayal by another (esp. an authority figure, loved one, friends, or mentor), a role model screws up, getting punished for misbehavior (e.g.. being spanked by a parent).

- Focuses on what is lost
- Often (though not always) an individual action
- Typically has a negative connotation even if what is gained is potentially positive/beneficial (e.g., gaining wisdom, losing one's naiveté, etc.)
- Often has a more negative view of the transformation of "new understanding" relative to the nature of humanity

Some Questions to Explore

- (1) Was this movie a coming of age story? Or a loss of innocence story? Or both?
Is it possible to have a coming-of-age experience without a loss of innocence?
- (2) What do we actually mean by "innocence?" Freedom from moral wrong or guilt? Freedom from deceit and harmfulness? Simplicity? General lack of knowledge or understanding?
- (3) How are coming-of-age and loss of innocence experiences related to our values, life experience, and sense of identities?

VULNERABILITY & MATURATION

- **Shifting landscape of late childhood into early adolescence**
- **A want/need for meaningful connection and sense of place in a changing world**

- A definition of vulnerability: Capable of being physically or emotionally wounded
- A definition of change: To give or experience a different position, course, or direction

Some Questions to Explore

- (1) With respect to "knowledge gained or perspectives shifted," what is the relationship between vulnerability (whether intentional/known or

unintentional/unaware) and our coming-of-age or loss of innocence experiences? Is it possible to have a coming-of-age experience or a loss of innocence experience without some sort of vulnerability in play?

- (2) What might this mean relative to the significance or insignificance of vulnerability to the human experience?
- (3) What is the relationship between vulnerability & *connection* (with self & others) or lack thereof? Can you have a coming-of-age experience or loss of innocence experience without connection?

CHANGING CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE: FRIENDSHIP & GROWING UP IN DIFFERENT ERAS

- Growing up in the 50's

- No internet, no social media
- Family dinners (nightly, regularly)
- No seatbelts in cars
- Regular playtime after school w/ friends in neighborhood outdoors (e.g., softball in streets, tag, hide-n-seek, biking, climbing trees)
- Paper routes
- Sack lunch to school
- Recess in & structured social time in schools
- Drive-in movies & theater matinees
- Sports/awards based on merit vs. participation
- Newspaper & radio predominant news sources
- Strict adherence to the concept of time/punctuality
- Rigid class/gender/race roles
- Beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement
- Korean War
- McCarthyism
- Beginning phases of Vietnam

- Growing up in the 60's & 70's

- No internet, no social media
- Family dinners (semi-regularly)
- Beginnings of shift from sack lunch to school to cafeteria food/other
- After school w/ friends in neighborhood outdoors (e.g., softball in streets, tag, hide-n-seek, biking, climbing trees, other)
- Recess & structured social time in schools
- Shifting class/gender/race roles
- Increased awareness in numerous areas
- Drive-in movies & theaters
- Music concerts
- Civil Rights & Farm Worker rights movements
- Vietnam
- Woodstock, sex, love, drugs, rock & roll

- Growing up in the 80's

- Burgeoning computer age (personal computers)
- No internet, no social media
- Mobile phones
- Family dinners (semi-regularly)
- Seatbelts, airbags in cars
- After school w/ friends in neighborhood outdoors (e.g., softball in streets, tag, hide-n-seek, biking, climbing trees, other)
- More cafeteria food/other
- Movie theaters, VCR's, video games (Atari, Sony)
- Decreased recess & structured social time in school
- Sports/awards based on merit vs. participation
- Newspaper & television predominant news sources
- VH1, MTV and cable television
- Shifting class/gender/race roles
- "Just Say No" campaign
- A.I.D.S.
- Cold War/Nuclear war threats

- Growing up in the 21st Century

- Internet, social media
- Computers/digital world
- Reduced family dinners
- More cafeteria food/other
- Shift from merit-based sports/awards to participation-based
- Television, computer & social media predominant news sources
- Interactive video games
- Increased participation in multiple sports/activities afterschool
- Decreased recess & structured social time in school
- Increased take-home homework
- Shifting class/gender/racial roles
- Shift in what is considered “cool” (e.g., lines between the popular and outcast become more blurred)
- Increased tolerance & awareness in numerous areas
- Medical marijuana
- Helicopter parenting (e.g., monitoring/tracking devices, restrictions from various activities, changes in playground structures, other)
- Iraq War, Desert Storm, 9/11

Some Questions to Explore

- (1) How might some of the differences across eras affect the development and kinds of friendships we have with others?
- (2) How might the differences across eras affect the experiences we have as children? Are there examples from your own life that you can draw upon for insight?
- (3) Even if what is happening across eras varies, do you think that the same (basic) hopes, fears & insecurities of growing up persist *regardless* of these changes? If so, what do you think it is about the difference across eras that results in a different manifestation of these basic ingredients (e.g., development & kinds of friendships differ because of different opportunities, mindsets, etc.)?