

self. Body awareness is part of self-awareness. In their search for identity, adolescents consider the relationships that have developed between themselves and others in the past, as well as the directions they hope to take in the future.

Significant others hold expectations for the behavior of adolescents. Often these expectations or demands are persistent enough that individuals make certain decisions that they would not make if they were solely responsible for identity formation. Adolescents may find it too easy to slip into the roles expected by others without incorporating their own personal goals or questioning decisions. Thus, individuals may become what parents or others wish them to be based on these premature decisions. Young persons might form a negative identity when society or their culture provides them with a self-image that is contrary to the values of the community. Labels such as “juvenile delinquent,” “hoodlum,” or “failure” are applied to certain adolescents, who then accept and live up to these labels with behaviors that validate and strengthen them.

The process of evolving a personal identity is time consuming and fraught with periods of confusion, depression, and discouragement. Experts emphasize that adolescents still need monitoring and input from parents during their search for identity; total abandonment during this phase is undesirable and may leave the adolescent feeling fragmented, alone, and adrift, resulting in the development of psychopathology ([Stortelder and Ploegmakers-Burg, 2010](#)). Determining an identity and a place in the world is a critical and perilous feature of adolescence (see [Critical Thinking Case Study](#) box). However, as the pieces gradually shift and settle into place, a positive identity emerges. Role diffusion results when the individual is unable to formulate a satisfactory identity from the multiplicity of aspirations, roles, and identifications.

Critical Thinking Case Study

Discussing the Future

Jeremy, 17 years old, will be graduating from high school in the spring. His mother, a single parent, tells you that she is concerned because graduation is quickly approaching and Jeremy has made