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ABSTRACT

LATE ADOLESCENCE:  
CONTEMPORARY THEORY, RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECTS

by

Wayne George Joosse

This dissertation offers a comparatively broad analysis of the behavior of college students. More specifically, it focuses on the major developmental tasks, psychological needs and personality dynamics of that age and situational group. Other important dimensions of the college student's behavior, including academic performance, are discussed only as they relate to the primary psycho-social themes.

Put another way, the focus is on the psychology of late adolescence or, more specifically, on "youth," a new pre-adult stage of development increasingly apparent in our technological culture. Because youth is the creation of a certain type of culture, a pervasive theme is the sociological dynamics of that cultural matrix. And because youth is, almost by definition, inextricably connected to higher education, there is also a strong educational emphasis. Nonetheless, this is written from a psychological perspective and it is primarily the theory and research from that discipline which supply the structure of this dissertation.

Although the information and analyses could conceivably be of value to a wide range of people, it was written with the

(non-psychologist) college educator primarily in mind. It is my belief that increased understanding of the nature and needs of college students would enhance the effectiveness of such educators. Ironically, that knowledge is only rarely a part of the preparation of college teachers.

The initial chapter of the dissertation introduces the concept of "youth" and asserts the need for further understanding of that stage of development. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with developmental antecedents found in childhood and adolescence.

The five succeeding chapters discuss various dimensions of the college student's search for identity--the search for self (chapter 4), others (5), meaning (6), vocation (7), and identity (8). Chapter 4 emphasizes the development of autonomy and a sense of self; chapter 5, heterosexual and other interpersonal relations. Chapter 6 considers the determination of values and meaning; chapter 7, vocational direction. Chapter 8, "The Search for Identity," is a cumulative and integrative view of those quests.

The final chapter focuses on implications and potential applications for higher education, particularly within the classroom.

Certain value-judgments generated my motivation and shaped the text. First, I believe the research reflects a disturbing disparity between the goals many colleges glibly list in their catalogs and the actual effect they have on students. Secondly, perhaps consequently, I believe that college students and contemporary society exhibit symptoms which call for corrective measures by higher education. More broadly, I subscribe to a view of education that makes "individual development" the central goal of the college experience.

Nevertheless, I have attempted to minimize and identify the

presence of such value-judgments and to write from this basic premise:

Regardless of how one sees the goals of higher education and of his

classroom, one enhances the chance of approximating those goals by

better understanding the nature and needs of college students. Clarifi-

cation of those dynamics, not a persuasion concerning certain problems,

solutions, or goals, is what I have primarily attempted to offer.



LATE ADOLESCENCE:  
CONTEMPORARY THEORY, RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECTS

By

Wayne George Joosse

A DISSERTATION

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1975 .

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I formerly thought that this page merely reflected custom. It is now apparent that it is instead an inadequate vehicle for expressing my gratitude to many people.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
PART I LATE ADOLESCENCE	
Chapter 1 - YOUTH: A NEW STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT . . . . .	4
Prologue	
Youth: A New Stage	
Cultural forces and human development	
The emergence of youth	
Problems of terminology	
Deficiencies in Our Understanding	
Lopsided attention	
The Freudian slip	
The Need for Increased Knowledge	
The needs of college educators	
Higher education: Big business	
Higher education: Important business	
Disillusionment	
The Challenge of Student Needs	
PART II DEVELOPMENTAL ANTECEDENTS	
Chapter 2 - THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDHOOD: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS . . . . .	33
The Continuity-of-Development Position	
The Change-Is-Possible Position	
A Compromise and a Connection	
A compromise: Erik Erikson	
A connection: Nevitt Sanford	
Theoretical Capsules	
Intrapsychic	
Learning theories	
Humanistic	
Cognitive-developmental	
Conclusion	
Chapter 3 - THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENCE: CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS . . . . .	72
Issues in Adolescent Psychology	
Different than adolescents of the past?	
Are the changes for good or ill?	

- Primary determinants: Biological or cultural?
- Storm and stress?
- Relations between generations
- Dynamics of Our Response to Adolescents
- What Constitutes Adolescence?
- Developmental Tasks of Adolescence
  - Developing a clearer sense of self
  - Developing more mature relationships
  - Developing a value-system and life-style
  - Developing academic and vocational competencies
  - Moving towards a sense of identity
- In summary

### PART III THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

#### Chapter 4 - THE SEARCH FOR SELF . . . . . 106

- Self and Identity: Confusion of Terms
- The Road to Autonomy
  - Dependency and trust
  - Autonomy versus shame and doubt
  - Dependency in adolescence
- The Role of Parents
  - Why parents hold on
  - Causes of Dependency: Parents and professors
  - The declining importance of families?
- The Effects of Social Forces
  - Society on the couch
  - A new age?
  - Society, women, and self
- The Shaping of Self in College
  - Regulation of emotions
  - Building a sense of competence
  - Becoming more autonomous
- Outcomes: Healthy and Otherwise
  - Shame and guilt
  - Self concern and inferiority
  - Hostility: Direct and indirect
- In Summary

#### Chapter 5 - THE SEARCH FOR OTHERS . . . . . 159

- Peer Relations
  - Peer relations in childhood
  - The function of peers in adolescence
  - Peer versus parental influence
- Winning and Losing: Characteristics and Consequences
  - Determinants of peer status
  - Isolation
  - Enslavement
  - The values of society

Heterosexual Development and Relations	
During childhood	
Puberty	
Dating	
Sexual Activity and Morality	
Sexual activity	
Sexual morality	
Is there a sexual revolution?	
Coping with change	
Epilogue	
Chapter 6 - THE SEARCH FOR MEANING . . . . .	219
Meaning and Adolescence	
Cultural forces	
Impeding factors	
Meaning, Values, and Moral Development	
Theories of moral development	
Forces of change	
Pitfalls, problems, and unanswered questions	
Values of the Young	
Generation gap: Myth or reality?	
Values of the young: The majority	
An alienated minority	
Values of the young: A minority	
Assessing the Youth Movement	
Critical perspectives	
Research results	
Looking Toward the Future	
Chapter 7 - THE SEARCH FOR VOCATION . . . . .	270
The Importance of Work	
The pressure to choose	
Difficulties in choosing	
Theories of Vocational Choice	
Actualities of Vocational Choice	
Stereotypes, prestige, and fantasy	
Vocational information, tests, and experience	
Sex Roles, Women, and Work	
Culture and Work: Realities and Values	
Basic Decisions	
Whether to go to college?	
Parental influence	
Dropping out	
Choosing a major	
Vocational Choice and Identity	
Chapter 8 - THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY . . . . .	317
The Nature of Identity	
The importance of identity	
The indefiniteness of identity	

- Types of Students
- Types of Identity
  - Foreclosed identities
  - Moratorium status
  - Identity achievers
  - Identity diffusions
  - Negative identities
- Identity Crisis: Normative and Necessary?
- Concepts of Mental Health
- A Model of Maturity
  - Toward a mature self
  - Toward mature relationships
  - Toward a mature guidance system
  - Toward mature vocational direction
  - In conclusion

#### PART IV EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Chapter 9 - YOUTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION . . . . . 378

- Youth: Under-developed Psychological Territory
- The Myopia of Higher Education
- A Student Development View of Education
  - The growth of self
  - The importance of relationships
  - The quest for meaning
  - The need for vocation
- Higher Education and the Search for Identity

## INTRODUCTION

The motivation behind the chapters which follow was generated by an interest in higher education and a commitment to college teaching. More precisely, it is an interest in and commitment to college students for they are, in the final analysis, the very raison detre for most if not all of what's involved in higher education and college teaching.

If that is the case, one might readily assume that an expanding understanding of college students would be a major priority of college educators. Surprisingly, that neither is nor has been the case; this stage of development--the college years--remains an underdeveloped area of psychological theory and research. Even what knowledge we do possess is rarely part of the preparation of college teachers. It was that deficiency, need and challenge which motivated me.

It is beginning to appear that college students no longer represent only a situational category but, more importantly, a new stage of development. Because of cultural changes in contemporary American society and a related expansion and extension of higher education, the nature and length of the adolescent transition has been appreciably altered for millions of young people. Out of that sociological and psychological context has arisen what is increasingly identified as the stage of "youth," a late- (or maybe post-)adolescent, pre-adult developmental experience.

In the chapters which follow, I attempt to analyze this stage



of youth and the behavior typical of college students. (Though the two categories are not synonymous and though differentiations will be made, the overlap is considerable and significant.) After an initial over-view, the developmental antecedents commonly experienced in childhood and adolescence are examined.

The body of this text is a five-dimensional model for explaining what might best be called youth's "search for identity." Sequentially, we will attempt to review, synthesize, and extend the major theoretical views and research findings pertaining to youth's search for self, others, meaning, vocation, and identity.

Because youth is, almost by definition, inextricably connected to higher education, there is a pervasive attempt, most obvious in the final chapter, to identify implications and potential applications for college educators. Underlying that emphasis is a belief that a better understanding of the nature and needs of college students will enhance the effectiveness of higher education and the development of college students.

**PART I**

**LATE ADOLESCENCE**

## CHAPTER 1

### YOUTH: A NEW STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

#### PROLOGUE

Human beings are fascinating. This is not only the attitude of many of us who have chosen a life's work oriented around the study of human behavior but the opinion of most non-psychologists as well. Who is not intrigued by the dynamics of his own behavior? Who doesn't find "people watching" an interesting way to pass time?

Man's whole life span is fascinating. Even after thousands of years and billions of births, the near-miracle of human conception and childbirth continues to awe most of us. Recently we have seen a surging interest in death and dying. From womb to tomb, human beings are fascinating.

There would be little point in debating which stage or segment of the life span is the most interesting. That is simply a personal opinion or value question. Perhaps it is even a foolish question. Each part of the life cycle is inextricably linked to every other part and it is hard to imagine someone being totally excited by one stage while fully bored with another. Developmental psychology texts notwithstanding, human life is a seamless whole.

Yet we are forced to make something of a choice. We live in an age of exploding knowledge and, frustratingly, can not know as much about many things as we would like. There are no Renaissance Men

today. No one can keep up on even one discipline. Psychologists narrow themselves to, for example, developmental psychology. Developmentalists, in turn, may be authorities on only childhood and child psychologists may be hard-pressed to keep up on the expanding knowledge of only one dimension of a child's growth, e.g. language acquisition. For others of us, we are forced to focus on one segment of the life cycle because our vocational responsibilities put us primarily in contact with one age range.

For me, and some of you, that concentration is on college students. That is the age group we work with, quite likely and relatedly the age we find most interesting, and the type of person we wish to better understand. College students present our particular challenge.

If one's involvement in life must be limited, I can easily imagine a less rewarding focus. Though we also suffer from the frustrating limitations discussed earlier, our trade-off strikes me as a favorable one. The developmental dynamics and behavior of college students are at least as fascinating as those of any other age group, and perhaps more so.

The college-age person actually telescopes the full life span. He is beyond a doubt the product of formative influences from previous stages of life. But it is also a time, I believe, when a person assumes many behavioral qualities which will characterize him throughout the adult years. In actuality, though not of necessity, the college years are often the last time major personality changes will occur.

The college years are a key time of transition and the college student a paradoxical mixture of qualities. No longer a child (or even really an adolescent) but not yet an adult, neither immature nor mature, the normative student defies easy classification or generalization. Emotionally dependent in many ways yet obviously, sometimes self-consciously independent, alternately egocentric and altruistic, keenly insightful yet with obvious blind spots, the college student's incongruities and discontinuities make him both fascinating and frustrating to work with.

If there is anything more confusing and paradoxical than the college student's behavior, it is the observations others make of it. Some say that as children of affluence, today's students learned only to play, not work. Yet others see them as a grim generation. Some describe them as idealistic, others as disillusioned. The young are supposedly better informed than ever before yet allegedly anti-intellectual. To some the young are a dangerous threat to the morals and values of society, to others the ushers of a new level of consciousness and a new height of social development. Narcissistic or wracked by self doubt? Under greater stress or spoiled by a life of ease? Committed or alienated? The reports are puzzling.

Part of the problem, of course, is in treating "the college student" as some sort of homogeneous entity. Do we mean the winner of a scholarship to Harvard or a marginal admittance to some junior college? The freshman or the senior? The activist or hippie? The commuter or dorm resident? The Jesus freak or an aspiring business tycoon?

Part of the explanation for the inconsistent observations is that wide differences obviously exist among college students. Furthermore, most individuals also exhibit a range of paradoxical behaviors. Finally, the values and dynamics of the observer appreciably influence his perceptions of the young. Each of these factors helps to explain the lack of consensus and each will complicate our own efforts to better understand the dynamics of college student behavior.

#### YOUTH: A NEW STAGE

This is the era of "future shock." Things change fast. Maybe, some observers of human adaptation report, things change too fast, a hypothesis that will be of repeated interest to us in this thesis.

The new does not stay new very long. While a three year old child is not old, a three year old car is. Shoe styles, lapel widths and dress lengths have trouble lasting even that long. The new becomes old very quickly.

Much of this is, of course, premeditated and intentional. Our economic system is to a large extent predicated on just such change, on planned obsolescence. But it happens to ideas, too. It is not without reason that text books have an increasingly shorter life span. This is particularly true in a discipline like psychology which has a comparatively short history and rapidly changing frontiers of knowledge.

For these and other reasons, most of us do not often read things that were written more than five years ago. When we do, however, our myopic, almost arrogant view of "truth" often collides with the realization that some novelist in 1940 or even sixteenth century Shakespeare perceived many of the major and subtle dimensions of human behavior.

There is something humbling about such discoveries but also something reassuring. Despite all the mind-boggling change of recent years, the basic nature of people has not changed much. Adam, the first person we know much about, desired, like modern man, to become more than he was. When he got into trouble, he tried, like people often do today, to exonerate himself and blame someone else. And his children scrapped, even as siblings do today. The civilizations and cultures within which men live change significantly but the human experience, we easily forget, remains very much the same.

There is valuable truth in that observation but also something misleading. In other respects, the human experience is not as universal as we often suppose. When we consider the life span of man, from birth to death, it is hard to imagine that the intervening life stages have not been the lot of man at all times and in all places. Broadly speaking, that may be so. But in significant ways, the human experience and the stages of life are not as biologically programmed or universal as we often assume.

#### Cultural Forces and Human Development

Although "adolescence" is now a household word, it wasn't always so. For most of recorded history, there were only children and adults. Even that differentiation was more quantitative than qualitative; children were seen simply as small adults. Even with no greater knowledge than mine of the great art of the Middle Ages, you may recall that children were pictured as little adults. Children and adults mingled together, wore the same clothes, interestingly possessed the same body proportions, and performed many of the same functions.

Although the biological aspects of puberty were obviously recognized, it was not treated as part of a transitional stage. Indeed, by age seven or eight, the child was seen as capable of sharing the obligations and opportunities of adulthood. Philippe Aries' Centuries of Childhood<sup>1</sup> provides, for the interested reader, comprehensive and provocative documentation of these historical changes.

A number of factors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries allowed childhood to slowly emerge as a more distinct stage of life. Rousseau-like thinking advanced the idea of promoting the child's development while protecting him from the corrupting influences of adult society. Other economic and social changes demanded more literate citizenry (hence more education) and offered more leisure time. Simultaneously, there was a decrease in infant mortality and a diminished need for children to enter the labor force. So began the stage of childhood as we know it.

The concept of adolescence has even more recent origins.<sup>and</sup> Though antecedent factors can be seen clearly in the nineteenth century, the birth announcement was G. Stanley Hall's monumental Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education (1904).<sup>2</sup> America was shifting from a rural, agrarian society to an urban, industrial one which required not only the rudiments of elementary education but also higher skills possible only through secondary education. Furthermore, labor-saving inventions and rising productivity and prosperity allowed millions of teenagers to remain outside the labor force.

Adolescence remains a somewhat hazy concept with few nailed-down truths. Though for decades Hall's belief that adolescence was a



period of "storm and stress" went virtually unquestioned, we are now, as we shall see, less sure. Similarly, there are new challenges to Coleman's seminal and previously heralded idea of "the adolescent society."<sup>3</sup> But one thing is clear: a stage of life which previously barely existed--adolescence--is now seen as an inherent part of human development.

Considerably more could be said about the emergence of both childhood and adolescence but our primary concern is with youth, still another and very recent culturally-induced stage in the human life cycle. Prior to that, however, two somewhat summarizing observations should be made.

First, the direction of human development and the content of the various stages are by no means solely determined by man's biological constitution. "Instead, psychological development results from a complex interplay of constitutional givens...and the changing familial, social, educational, economic, and political conditions that constitute the matrix in which children develop."<sup>4</sup> Such forces can modify existing stages and create new ones.

Secondly, and relatedly, this is not to say that no one experienced an adolescence or youth before the concept or recognized stage emerged. The potential for such an experience is likely part of the human endowment and once we define an emerging stage, we can often locate, historically, individuals with the experiences and qualities we now use to identify the stage. What is "new" is that a stage is entered not only by atypical individuals but by millions of normative young people.

### The Emergence of Youth

We have briefly sketched the socio-cultural forces which promoted a distinct stage of childhood. We further noted that other forces, primarily related to the industrial revolution, were responsible for the emergence of adolescence. Now, in an amazingly short span of time, still other social transformations appear to have produced still another life stage. The "technological revolution" has produced the subsequent stage of "youth."

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, adolescence has been gradually extended. Initially, it encompassed but a few years. An individual reached puberty between ages 12-14, terminated education at 16-18 if not before, married and entered full-time employment soon after. In 1900, for example, less than 7% of the young completed high school.

Since then, adolescence has gradually begun earlier and ended later. During the past century, each successive generation has reached puberty, begun the adolescent growth spurt, and attained adult size, shape, and physiological function earlier.<sup>5</sup> On the other end of elongated adolescence, close to 90% of the young now complete high school. Furthermore, over 50% of those go on to college, 50% of those graduate, and nearly half of the college graduates go on to graduate or professional schools. What was initially a 3-5 year child-to-adult transition lived out primarily within a close family structure has grown into a 10-15 year span lived out primarily in the schools. A phase of extended disengagement which was first true for only a small minority of the young has now become a normative experience. Though the population in the United States has not yet tripled since 1900, there are now 35 times as many college students.

This new period of psychosocial development has been brought about by factors similar to those which produced adolescence. An increasingly complex society demanded increased education. Rising prosperity allowed still further delay of entry into the work-a-day world. Indeed, an automated and then cybernetic society came to have, quite frankly, no need for millions of potential workers and that unflattering reality, as much as anything else, explains the emergence of youth.

This point has important psychological ramifications and is worth restating for it will illumine later concerns of ours. I am suggesting that this disengagement is as much a holding pattern as a time of preparation; it is at least as imposed as inherently necessary. Unfortunately, there is increasing evidence that this new stage serves society's needs better than it does those of the developing individual. That certainly was the recent message of the President's Panel on Youth.<sup>6</sup> Less scientific and more radical thinkers have been saying the same for some years now.<sup>7,8</sup>

In brief, youth are segregated from valuable contact with persons of other ages, offered little opportunity for meaningful contributions to society, and encapsulated in educational institutions seriously though perhaps to some extent inevitably dissynchronized with youth's major developmental tasks. Increased education has not resulted in more meaningful education and has created tensions from uneven vectors of development. Moreover, youth are both the product and the victim of forces also responsible for a future-shock rate of change and technological advances which, militarily and ecologically, threaten to destroy our planet. "The 'new' young men and women emerging today reflect and

react against these trends."<sup>9</sup>

We are on the verge of getting into the "heart of the matter"--the dynamics and developmental tasks of youth--but we need to resist that for a bit. Nearly all of the remaining pages attempt to speak to that goal but such efforts will be facilitated if we now deal with some foundational matters, the first being a problem of ambiguous nomenclature.

### Problems of Terminology

This work is about that highly publicized and critically important group of people called...well, that's just one of the problems. "They" really don't have a well-defined or widely recognized name. Some call them "late-adolescents" for they are a product of that elongated stage. But that presents problems for in many ways our subjects are years beyond the themes and challenges we ordinarily associate with adolescence.

Some call them "young adults." While that too makes some sense it also has some misleading connotations. Our subjects generally have not yet decided on much less assumed the roles and commitments which traditionally define "adulthood." Parenthetically, one's preference for "late adolescence" or "early adulthood" perhaps reflects a value judgment on whether the behavior of youth more resembles the delayed rebellion of arrested adolescents or the keen insights of precocious adults.

Demographically, one does not go far wrong in calling them "college students" because that is what they usually are and, for various psychosocial reasons, almost must be. (Our focus will indeed

be on college students though at this point, I am trying to define a slightly different and more "developmental" than "situational" sub-group.) But if one's primary concern is with personality dynamics, as ours will be, linking them with some social institution has certain limits. Some college students are adults; others are adolescents. (Only on really bad days do I think some are still children,) Moreover, some few others, though they possess a personality constellation which we generally identify with college students, no longer do (or ever did) attend college.

As you likely already inferred, there seems to be a growing tendency to call the population of our concern "youth." This appellation, unfortunately, is also far from flawless. Traditionally young people of a wide range of ages, including children, were called "youth." In some current dictionaries, youth is synonymous with adolescence, hardly the answer to our needs. It also has a clumsy singular-plural identicalness and, at least for me, something of an archaic and paternalistic ring to it. Perhaps it would have been better if an altogether new coinage had caught on, like Long and Long's "collescent,"<sup>10</sup> though most such appellations strike one as a bit gimmicky. So, for better or worse, "youth" seems slightly in the lead as the accepted label. Perhaps all this confusion and haziness about a group of people who may number as many as 10,000,000 reflects something important about our concerns and priorities. It seems ironic that at a time when dictionaries have become so large one can hardly carry them and when every unique sub-type of animal and automobile has a clearly defined (though in those two cases, often shared)

name, that we don't do better with people. Perhaps this reflects how recent our awareness of this age-stage is or how minimal our commitment is to really understand them. In either case, it helps to explain why our understanding of youth is rather deficient, a matter to which we now turn.

#### DEFICIENCIES IN OUR UNDERSTANDING

Within the last decade, few topics and no age group have received more public attention than college students. Initially, during the early 1960's, it was a positively-valenced attention. A college education was revered and pursued for it promised to enhance individuals and enrich society. Regularly transfused with massive dosages of federal funds, higher education was in robust health as is frantically sought to keep pace with exploding enrollments. Record numbers of young people desired a college degree for it was seen as the price of admission to the American Dream.

By the end of the decade, it was a different type of exploding student body that was attracting a different kind of public attention. In sharp contract to the docile and "silent generation" of the 1950's and early 60's, college students assumed assertive if not aggressive postures as they sought to change not only colleges and universities but society as well. The events of those troubled years and the behavior of those restless students is well known to all of us.

Evaluating these behaviors is not my concern at this time though a clarification of the dynamics behind such behaviors will be very much the goal of later chapters. For now, I'm simply making the observation that college students have been very much in the public

eye. Perhaps too much so. A case can be made that the "activist" movement was not only exaggerated by the mass media but to a considerable extent, generated and perpetuated by it as well.

But here is the irony. One might logically assume that with such extensive observation and analysis would come a commensurate increase in understanding. One might even suspect that theory and research on this age group has been catapulted far ahead of that for other ages and that it is high time to shift our attention to other stages of human development. Neither, however, is true.

It would, of course, be equally erroneous to imply that such analyses were of no value and did nothing to advance our understanding of youth. Nonetheless, there seems to have been a contemporary corollary to the old maxim of "much heat, little light." Even after this inordinate amount of attention, our understanding of personality change during college years remains comparatively weak.

This "pressing need for theory" and "virtually unexplored... (area)...of personality research" has been for years the recurring theme of Nevitt Sanford, one of the keenest observers of the college experience.<sup>11, 12</sup> Apparently, however, to little avail for as Rappoport wonders in his recent book covering personality development across all age ranges:

Since it is a rather sizable and interesting piece of psychological real estate, it is surprising to discover that the adult transition period (ages 18-25 in his scheme) remains an under-developed area in personality research.<sup>13</sup>

A further irony is that even though college students are a captive, convenient, and frequently used pool of research subjects (exceeded only by white rats) for academic psychologists, the numerous

molecular studies have not culminated into a comprehensive and functional body of knowledge.

In brief, then, considerable research and even more mass-media attention on college students have somehow not led to the level of understanding one might expect. Hopefully, however, such studies and treatments will be for us valuable raw material.

### Lopsided Attention

A second explanation for the gap in our understanding of youth is related to the idea that youth pose a psychological threat to many adults. Careful analysis of that assertion will have to wait until later yet we can quickly note an interesting paradox. Although at one level we as a society worship the idea of youth (e.g. major advertising motifs), in our actual response to the young we have a strong tendency to focus most on their unsettling and anti-social dimensions. We easily characterize them in negative terms, e.g. rebellious, ungrateful, disrespectful.... And this is not a recent phenomenon. A favorite device of authors writing about young people is to offer a quote which sounds deceptively like the lament of contemporary parents and teachers--"lazy...disrespectful of elders...the undoing of our society"--then gleefully springing the surprise that it was really a quote from some ancient writer. (Socrates, in this instance.)

As Rogers points out:

Even scientists have done little to provide the public with corrective lenses so they can view youth with 20-20 vision. Note the amount of concern researchers have shown to deviant and antisocial youth compared with those who seem less colorful. In 1930, about 12% of publications recorded in Psychological Abstracts concerned juvenile delinquency and deviant behavior; in 1950 the figure rose to 59% and in 1960 to 68%. However, let us remember that 95% or more of adolescents are not officially



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categorized as delinquent.... Unfortunately, the negative influence of the delinquent on the general public's image of youth continues unchanged.<sup>14</sup>

The same lopsidedness was recently exhibited regarding college activists. On the basis of the evening news, popular magazines and even a great deal of scholarly writing, one got the impression that it would be hard to find a college student whose right fist wasn't in a power-salute and whose left hand didn't contain matches for igniting some dean's files. But when the dust settled and some scientific analyses were complete, we discovered that only a very small percentage were "revolutionaries" (perhaps 3%), few more had engaged in overt protests (around 15%) and that the great majority "were moving without acute discomfort into the mainstream of society."<sup>15</sup>

That lopsidedness, it should be noted, is a reflection of the unevenness which characterizes much of psychology. Personality theorists, for example, understandably base their views on the personalities they observe. Unfortunately, beginning with Freud, such theorists saw primarily "sick" people; most healthy people do not seek psychological consultation. That we know more about mental illness than mental health is not necessarily bad since such people, after all, are more in need of therapeutic intervention. But when we are tempted to generalize those theories to the population at large, we must not forget upon which sample the conclusions were based. Maslow and other humanistic psychologists have offered a valuable corrective in pointing out that when one studies "abnormally" healthy people, quite a different profile emerges.



### The Freudian Slip

A third and for our purposes final reason for the comparative weakness of our understanding of youth is more directly related to Freud. One of his many major contributions was a clarification of the critical role of early childhood experiences. Most psychologists are not "Freudians" yet few would dispute the value and essential validity of that contribution. This view of personality development was solidified when parallel findings on the primacy of the early years were uncovered in other dimensions of human development, e.g., intelligence. Programs like Head Start are a testimony to such thinking.

Perhaps, however, we have been over-sold the Freudian-based notion of little significant change after early childhood. Evidence is surfacing that early experiences may not be as indelible or irrevocable as we have thought<sup>16</sup> and that significant personality changes can occur during the college years,<sup>17</sup> though for reasons that will be of particular interest to us, all too infrequently do occur. In terms of conventional psychology, this belief in significant change later in life is mildly heretical but it should not appear so to the more than a million people who teach, counsel, and administer in our high schools, colleges and universities. If they do not believe that significant changes are not only possible but likely, it is hard to understand why they get out of bed and go to work. Although some teachers have lost whatever vision they once had, most of us are not content to see ourselves as attendants at an educational filling station pumping into people's heads information which can have little effect on their lives. Rather, most professors--and most colleges if they really mean what they say in their catalogs--have more meaningful goals. We will attempt



throughout these pages to be sensitive to the assumed validity and possible implications of such goals.

#### THE NEED FOR INCREASED KNOWLEDGE

To this point, I have only tried to establish that there is a deficiency in our understanding of college-age people. But to establish a void is not tantamount to establishing a need. What value would increased understanding in this area have?

The answer could be as wide as the value-spectrum which exists in contemporary America. On the one extreme, scientific-minded people value knowledge in and of itself, aside from any immediate application. This is not necessarily an "art for art's sake" rationale for in science, the difference between basic and applied research is not that the latter is useful and the former not. Rather, it is a matter of timing, a matter of when the utilitarian value becomes apparent.

At the other end of the continuum would be an increasing number of ambitious entrepreneurs who seek to exploit the market of affluent youth and who would eagerly use increased understandings to refine the hidden persuaders in their bag of tricks.

In between are numerous other personnel--administrators, ministers, parents, dorm counselors, professors and others who interact with college students who frequently confront their and our own limits of understanding. Many such people believe that expanded understanding of the young would help them to better approximate their goals.

Finally, we should not over-look the needs of young people themselves. Introspective searching, as we will see, is certainly one of the hallmarks of youth--even more so now as we observe a trend away



from activism towards privatism<sup>18</sup>--and one of the few areas where they welcome assistance from adults. Indeed, one of the major complaints of college students is that the conventional curriculum does little to facilitate their quest for self understanding.

### The Needs of College Educators

While I would be pleased if this has value to all the people mentioned above, excepting the exploitive entrepreneurs, it is college teachers whom I have most in mind as I write. In many ways, their needs are the greatest. As Dressel has noted, it is ironic that a group which identifies itself as a profession and is in the business of preparing other professionals yet provides for itself little if any professional preparation.<sup>19</sup> Although the majority of Ph.D.s enter college teaching, the doctorate remains primarily a research degree, placing faith in the questionable assumption that the good researcher is a good teacher.

Put another way, there are three main areas in which the college teacher should, ideally but perhaps even realistically, be knowledgeable. First, and no one seems to dispute this, he should be a master of his subject area. Secondly, and this is the major value judgment underlying and pervading this writing, he needs to understand not only the subject he teaches but the subjects (people) he teaches, the nature of the persons he seeks to change. Finally, most college teachers could profit from a greater understanding of the mechanics and mysteries of teaching, of the process and interaction between teacher and student for as the "Hazen Committee" concluded, "Whatever their professional skills and reputations may be, faculty members are simply not very





good at teaching students."<sup>20</sup>

Until recently, no great concern was expressed about this state of affairs. We live with less than perfection in about every area of life and the gap between the real and the ideal in college teaching apparently seemed no more serious.

I believe, however, that there are now a number of reasons to be concerned about that disparity and I would like to take a fair amount of time to discuss them--for two reasons. First, some of the issues involved are foundational to what we hope to accomplish in later chapters. Secondly, this seems a good time to further make explicit some of the major value judgments which will pervade this work. An author is not, of course, fully aware of the subtle and complex ways his biases affect the shaping or even the selection of the material he presents. "Buyer beware!" is a good motto for any reader but the author, it seems to me, also has a responsibility not to smuggle values under the guise of truth. That is what differentiates education from propaganda. So--some of those values are identified in the following discussion.

#### Higher Education: Big Business

Returning to our earlier question: Why then is higher education, and in particular the college teacher, in need of increased understandings of youth?

First of all, higher education is now big business. Though the population of the United States between 1961 and 1971 increased 11%, enrollment in higher education increased over 100%.<sup>21</sup> (Earlier we noted that since 1900, that enrollment has increased 3500%, a rate of



12 times that of the population increase.) During the past decade, the number of graduate degrees has more than tripled<sup>22</sup> and costs have soared from about \$8 billion to more than \$25 billion.<sup>23</sup> Looked at more broadly, Gould points out that the magnitude of change in higher education since 1960 is greater than that during the 300+ years between the founding of Harvard in 1636 (No misprint...140 years before the "birth" of our country) and 1960.<sup>24</sup> Even in 1966, Meyerson observed that "American colleges and universities have a larger population than Denmark, Ireland or any one of the majority of nations in the United Nations."<sup>25</sup> Clearly, higher education is big business.

Especially since we will at time be critical of American higher education, we should not miss the impressive accomplishments reflected in the above figures. The American university has not only responded to a continually changing mandate from a changing and increasingly complex society but simultaneously accommodated burgeoning numbers of students. "Since World War II, colleges and universities have assumed responsibility for offering post-high school education to almost everyone who desired it...(while yet)...providing the theoretical bases and technical skills needed to keep our highly dynamic society functioning and growing."<sup>26</sup> That higher education could expand at such a phenomenal rate without deterioration--and often improvement--in quality merits our respect. Too often critics seem blind to the many laudatory achievements and features of higher education and college educators.

### Higher Education: Important Business

Higher education is not only big business but also important business. Seeds of that argument were evident in our previous discussion; the problems and challenges of a post-industrial society are significantly linked with the goals of higher education. This is especially true in a world of complex social organizations, ubiquitous revolution, and a rate of change so great that discoveries become obsolete before they can be assimilated. We depend on higher education to provide the knowledge and produce the leaders such complicated times require. Trite though the expression may be, college students are "the leaders of tomorrow." They will assume control of the industrial, political, educational, religious and military institutions of society and they will determine whether the challenges and problems facing us will be mastered.

Obviously, this is no easy task. It would not be so even if we were agreed on values and goals, even if we had a clear and consensual sense of direction. But that is not the case. In The World of Higher Education, Dressel and Pratt observed an "identity crisis."<sup>27</sup> The young have such a crisis. The society which both shapes and is increasingly shaped by youth has the symptoms. And now higher education, reflecting both the youth and the society they seek to serve, takes on and seeks to resolve an identity crisis of its own.

Though there may be confusion over what the goals of higher education are, there is agreement that goals are important. The opening pages of almost every college catalog articulate the intellectual and physical, social and emotional, ethical and spiritual ways colleges seek to change students. From the Greeks on down, educators have

shared the vision that education should promote the growth of the "total man."

Secretly, many educators must have long sensed that there was quite a difference between their aspirations and their accomplishments. Those who chose instead the more comfortable state of self-delusion were relatively safe until behavioral scientists began doing objective studies on the impact of college. The findings were not heartening. Perhaps the best known of these reports was by Jacob<sup>28</sup> who assembled considerable evidence that, in general, colleges did not succeed in bringing about the important changes, particularly in values and attitudes, which the catalogs promised. More precisely, Jacob's conclusion was not that students don't change but that "college" doesn't change them. Nonetheless, the potentially disturbing implications of these studies were pretty much ignored both by the public, which soon entered an era of enthusiastic support for higher education, and by professional educators, who continued to bamboozle themselves and the public with inspiring catalogs and grandiose goals.

### Disillusionment

Many of these delusions--and unfortunately, also a good deal of legitimate faith in higher education--were shattered by the social upheaval and campus unrest of the late 1960's. In short order, the public's perception of higher education shifted from seeing it as the panacea for society's evils to, equally unfairly, as the origin of most problems. "What's wrong with these kids?" "What's wrong with the people who are supposedly teaching them?" Student dissent was seen as a serious threat to the social order and "campus unrest," according to

a 1970 Gallup Poll, was considered the nation's "main problem." Strong votes of "no confidence" were registered by the public through state legislatures and the federal funds which previously had been nearly unlimited became painfully limited.

The above is not even a superficially complete analysis of those traumatic years; the issues were complex and neither side monopolized either truth or distortion. The key thing for our concerns is that those turbulent years triggered a great deal of soul-searching by those who cared about higher education and youth. Why the restlessness and anger? Why the apathy and alienation? Why do nearly 50% of freshmen drop out prior to completing their degree? (To say nothing about the "emotional drop-outs.") Why the drug abuse? Something seemed to be missing in higher education. The national conscience sensed that something more was possible...and needed.

Observers of youth began predicting that the next protest target of students would be what they see as the poor quality and personal irrelevancy of much of higher education. The public, in a similar vein but with different values in mind, began to talk seriously about accountability in higher education. That trend is still in motion.

Faculty were unsettled by such talk for they had enjoyed their autonomy, freedom from evaluation, and relatively high status. This is not to imply that faculty had maliciously or deliberately abused such freedom. Rather, the "crisis in the classroom" was what Silberman called "mindlessness"--that so few people in education take time to ask why they are doing what they are doing and to think seriously about purposes and consequences.<sup>29</sup> About the same time, MacLeod,<sup>30</sup> one of

the most insightful and informed authorities on undergraduate teaching, urged instructors to ask: What am I teaching? Why? To whom? What are their needs? What kind of education will be of greatest value to them? To society? It is my premise that if college teachers seriously asked such questions, major modifications in undergraduate education would likely follow. The purpose of this work is to promote the kind of understanding which will help the college teacher in his response to such questions.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF STUDENT NEEDS

This is not still another call for curriculum reform. Too often that leads to only an illusion of change. Richardson, in summarizing a major study of curriculum changes over a 10-year period in 322 colleges,<sup>31</sup> observes that most "changes...were minor and could be characterized as a 'reshuffling of credits' and 'tinkering'...with the clerical-distributive domain."<sup>32</sup> Other observers, less diplomatically, call it a "waste of time" serving only to "give the faculty something to do...while meeting...their need for neatness and elegance."<sup>33</sup>

Curricula are constantly being changed but when the emphasis is more on the nature of the disciplines than on the nature and needs of students, such reform is, I believe, doomed to be ineffective. It is my belief, and another bias of this work, that when one begins, as Mayhew did when he wrestled with curriculum questions,<sup>34</sup> by enumerating the needs of the post-adolescent, far more meaningful curricula changes will occur. The newest "Coleman Report" seems predicated on a similar belief.<sup>35</sup>



Nevitt Sanford,<sup>36</sup> Joseph Katz,<sup>37</sup> and other keen analysts of the college experience have carried these implications to their logical extension. They argue not only that since college has a major effect on the personality dynamics and development of the student, educators must think seriously and plan deliberately concerning the nature of that effect but further, that "individual development" should be the primary goal of higher education.

Although my own biases regarding undergraduate education are very compatible with that "individual development" view, it is not my primary purpose to promote that philosophy of education. Such views will inevitably surface again, particularly in the "implications and applications" discussion of the final chapter. But in between, my major challenge is to present as objectively as possible what we know about the developmental tasks and dynamics of youth. And in order to construct a valid and functional perspective on youth, research will be drawn from a wide range of theoretical positions.

In summary, my goals are more practical than philosophical. This work attempts to offer understandings to be used by college teachers to achieve the goals which they have determined, not primarily to persuade them that they should have other goals. My basic premise is this: Regardless of what one sees as the goals of higher education and of his own classroom, one enhances his chances of approximating those goals by better understanding the nature and needs of college students.

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## **PART II**

### **DEVELOPMENTAL ANTECEDENTS**

## CHAPTER 2

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDHOOD: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The child is father of the man--and of young men and women as well. Put more directly, if we are going to understand youth, we need also to have some understanding of prior and subsequent stages of human development. The behavior we eventually hope to comprehend is often complex and confusing but our perspective will be clarified if we catch a sense of the continuity in human development.

For example, it is not infrequent to have a student who, despite considerable ability, is handicapped by feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Taken at face value, this is a bewildering paradox. But when one appreciates how feelings about one's self develop and how impervious to change such a concept can be, despite a great deal of contrary evidence, the paradox becomes less mysterious.

Or consider the relationship where a professor encounters from a student resistance if not hostility. Further assume that such a response is not appropriate to the circumstances of the behavior of the professor. In such a situation, it is not unlikely that the student is transferring to that relationship angry feelings that really have their origin in relationships with previous authority figures, most likely the parents.

This is not to say that the effective teacher must become some kind of analytic therapist capable of working through with the student

aberrations of development. It is to say, however, that a teacher is better equipped to deal with the here and now when he is sensitive to possible antecedent conditions. This chapter attempts to at least begin that foundation.

Perhaps because of psychology's ambitious goal--to establish principles of behavior despite the fact that each human being is unique --it is far easier to find differences of opinion among psychologists than consensus. Fortunately, however, it is on this point of major concern to us--the influence of childhood experiences on later personality structure--that there is considerable agreement. Since Freud, few psychologists dispute one of his major contributions: childhood experiences significantly shape adult behavior.

Because the implications of that assertion are so significant and the ramifications so pervasive, it is not surprising that there are differences of opinion on related issues: How important are childhood experiences? Are the effects modifiable or irreversible? Can therapeutic change take place without going back into the past? Indeed, as two major authorities on personality theory ask, can we even understand present behavior without knowing of past events?<sup>1</sup> Are people not only pushed by their past but also pulled by their future, by their goals and values?

We will need to grapple with these and other issues as we progress but for now, we will not be wasting time or restricting our interpretive or pedagogical options by examining the Freudian position. Subsequently, we will look at theorists who believe, for instance, that college students are not only capable of major personality change but are in a high state of readiness to do so. From there we will move on

to other key principles and issues in child development. Our goal will not be a comprehensive and exhaustive review of child psychology, a task more suitable to a 500 page text or 1000 page handbook than to a single chapter.<sup>2</sup> Rather, we will seek to review selected research and theory in child psychology that seems prerequisite to understanding the development of college-age students.

#### THE CONTINUITY-OF-DEVELOPMENT POSITION

It is not without reason that, even 35 years after his death and nearly 70 years after his most important work, Freud remains the most acknowledged psychologist of all time. Today, advertising agencies sell everything from aspirins to presidential candidates with little correlation between publicity and quality. But Freud had to make it on his own merits. Most personality psychologists, even non-Freudian ones, acknowledge that he "is the giant upon whose shoulders we all stand."

Four contributions of Freud stand out as those of greatest importance. First of all, though Freud did not invent the idea of unconscious behavior, he did greatly expand our understanding of both the dynamics operating below the level of awareness and of the defense mechanisms we rally to deal with such forces. Secondly, he clarified the essentially sexual nature of many of our drives. Thirdly, he high-lighted the significance of dreams and even more importantly, devised and articulated a theory of therapeutic intervention which provided the foundation for subsequent and myriad forms of counseling and psychotherapy. Finally, and of primary importance to us, he greatly advanced the notion that the first few years of life are critically decisive in the formation of personality.



The reader has probably had at least light-hearted contact with such Freudian terms as anal-fixation and oral-stage. A sound understanding of such terms is not important to our concerns; later revisions of Freudian thought, particularly that of Erik Erikson, will offer greater usefulness to us. In brief, however, Freud saw the infant and young child as moving through a series of stages--oral, anal, phallic (a latency period) and genital--where primary satisfactions were linked to various body areas or erogenous zones. Under normal conditions and with adequate parental behaviors, the child moves through these stages with little trouble, ever more approximating a mature personality capable of meeting the demands of later life. If, however, there is undue frustration or deprivation, Freud speculated that the libido or psychic energy became fixated or hung-up at a certain stage, resulting in a corresponding personality type--if not pathological condition developing. For example, during the first year of life, major satisfactions revolve around sucking and feeding--oral activities. If, so this theory goes, such needs are not satiated and fixation occurs, the individual may develop a life-long need for oral gratification. The alcoholic, compulsive eater, or excessive talker may be adult manifestations of that need.

Though such hypothesizing can, I agree, border on the ridiculous, we should not let that detract from two inherent and important Freudian principles: (1) Each psychic event is determined by the ones which preceded it; behavior is, at least in part, a product of its antecedents. (2) These mental processes are usually unconscious. Despite all the changes and variations on Freud, those two hypotheses remain fundamental. Both have important implications for understanding the behavior of

college students.

"Giant" though he may be, Freud is also vulnerable to a number of criticisms. In particular, psychoanalytic thought was and continues to be based on highly subjective and clinical judgments. In a discipline that honors well-controlled, comparatively objective empirical studies, Freud's methodology does not get high marks. It is, therefore, appropriate to ask if there is more substantial evidence for the primacy of childhood experiences?

There appears to be. Kagan and Moss' Birth to Maturity,<sup>3</sup> an impressive study reflecting thirty years of research at the Fels Institute, asserts that much adult behavior can be predicted from six-to-ten year olds. This seems particularly true of the level of dependency in females and aggression in males. This is, of course, also related to the matter of cultural sex roles, a topic we will examine in chapters 4 and 5.

Numerous studies of institutionally-raised and comparatively-deprived infants, such as those by Goldfarb<sup>4</sup> and Ribble,<sup>5</sup> also corroborate the idea of the (in these cases, crippling) influence of infant experience on personality formation. Rank,<sup>6</sup> Murphy<sup>7</sup> and others have even made a case for prenatal or uterine experiences affecting personality development.

A final example of strong evidence supporting the continuity of behavior across ages comes from Bloom's Stability and Change in Human Characteristics.<sup>8</sup> Primarily concerned with the critical effect of early environment on intellectual development, Bloom reports inordinately high correlations of early and late behaviors. His assertion that roughly half of a child's general learning pattern is

attained by age five and 80% by age eight had much to do with the establishment of Head Start and other pre-school programs. For Bettelheim, Bloom's book is evidence that significant change in behavior and personality cannot commonly take place after age five.<sup>9</sup>

The alert reader may have noted that in recent paragraphs our focus has shifted from "personality development" to "cognitive development." Though we will somewhat maintain that artificial dichotomy in later chapters, dealing more with the personality than cognitive dimensions of college students, we would do well to remember that they are inextricably bound together. Much behavior and many personality changes which we do not ordinarily associate with cognitive functions are in actuality dependent on them. Recent work by Piaget, Kohlberg, and other "organic lamp" theorists have made that abundantly evident. We will review such theorists in the latter pages of this chapter.

Before turning to the theories and research which give less emphasis to past experiences and more to contemporaneous events, we will take a short trip down a side road to examine the distinction between genotypic and phenotypic behavior. That differentiation does much to clarify why the main issue--stability and change of behavior--has been something of a stalemate.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, it will provide a good opportunity to note the multiplicity and complexity involved when we try to sort out the motives and behaviors of human beings, a problem we will repeatedly face.

"Phenotypic" behavior is that which is overt and visably characteristic of the individual, "genotypic" that which is inherent in the individual's make-up. More exactly, genotype refers to the

total genetic endowment generally common to a biological group though in psychological literature, it is often used in reference to the psychological processes underlying the observable behavior.

Since observation is at the heart of scientific psychology, it is not surprising that some of the conclusions about the stability of human behavior were based on phenotypic manifestations when, in actuality, the underlying psychological processes may have been quite unstable. To take a simple example, an eight month infant may cry when he is hungry or frightened by a strange stimulus. An eight year old child may cry in anticipation of punishment while a 38 year old man may cry upon learning of some tragedy or even at failing at some important task. The act of crying is very similar in all cases but the events which caused the crying are markedly different and "there is no compelling theoretical basis for expecting that the infant who cries easily in response to novel events will be the adult who will cry at task failures."<sup>11</sup>

More broadly, in the same way that different motives can lead to the same behavior, the same motive can lead to different behaviors. Behind both the braggart and the "wallflower" may be very similar feelings of inadequacy. Or even in the same person, the anxiety which may be behind a school phobia at age six can also generate a highly industrious attitude towards school work at some future time. In sum, the same psychological need (e.g. adequacy) can be met through a wide range of behaviors and the same behavior (e.g. working hard in college) can meet quite different needs.

What is stable? What has changed? The genotypic/phenotypic distinction has not been clearly made in much of the relevant research.

Perhaps this glimpse into the complexity of human behavior can also give us a new appreciation of why psychology does not advance with great leaps or offer grand laws.

#### THE CHANGE-IS-POSSIBLE POSITION

Freud had not only a paramount impact on psychology but a major influence as well on Western culture as a whole. Art, sociology, literary criticism, psychohistory, advertising and a host of other scholarly and public activities reflect unmistakable effects of Freudian thought. And not just Freud. Psychology itself, for good or ill, is a popular contemporary bandwagon.

Yet it has not been all attraction and endorsement. Many people are threatened by psychology and psychologists, perhaps assuming that their secret selves will become unwillingly transparent. Many suggest that it was the sexual emphasis of Freud which people resisted. Perhaps. I find it more likely that the idea of unconscious dynamics is, on a deeper level, more threatening to people. We like to believe that we are aware of our motives and in control of our behavior.

But there is also something distressing and repelling about our main theme--the primacy of childhood experiences. Especially in the past, parents felt inhibited, fearing that they could unknowingly and irreparably maim their children. Still today, individuals can feel bitter and fatalistic, believing that their personalities have been shaped by forces over which they had no control. (We should not, however, overlook the satisfaction and relief that many people, including college students, derive from believing that they are not responsible for their ineffective behaviors. "I was raised wrong;

it's my parents' fault!") Particularly to early twentieth century Americans who wanted to feel optimistic and believe they were the master of their own destiny, Freud seemed pessimistic and deterministic.

It wasn't until the 1950's when the "Third Force" or humanistic branch of psychology gained considerable strength and visibility that a different message was distinctly heard: Man is not the prisoner of his childhood. He can change--and not just minimally, as Freud conceded, but significantly. To understand Carl Rogers is to understand the essence of this larger movement.

When Rogers completed his training at Columbia University, he left equipped with Freudian techniques and a job in the field of child guidance. But apparently, the former did not serve the latter very well and he began a lengthy search to find a more effective frame of reference. That no one in the last thirty years has had a greater impact on the field of counseling than Rogers suggests that his search was successful.<sup>12</sup>

For Rogers and most of the other "self psychologists," perhaps the largest and best defined group within the "third force," what is crucial is whether a person can feel good about himself, whether he can accept and even like himself. For them, that is the core of human happiness and mental health.

Unfortunately, according to Rogers, self-acceptance does not appear to be an inevitable or even common outcome of development in our culture. This is primarily because the parental love which is so crucial to a child's needs is often conditional. Only certain behaviors seem to elicit love from the parents. When, for example, he wets his pants, touches the expensive lamp, gets C's rather than A's or expresses

anger towards his parents, the love appears to be withdrawn. Whether it actually is withdrawn or whether it is only perceived to be by the child is not, for Rogers, the critical difference. It is the individual's own perceptions--"subjective reality"--which really shape behavior.

Since certain behaviors cause such negative consequences--the frightening insecurity of not feeling loved and safe--such parts of the self must be controlled if not suppressed. The child becomes conditioned to an "external locus of evaluation;" pleasing others with his behavior, not himself, becomes primary. Consequently, certain dimensions of self must remain unacknowledged or "unsymbolized" and there develops some degree of incongruence between experience and awareness.

For Rogers, therapy involves not probing and interpretation but establishing a climate of acceptance and "unconditional positive regard." Within such an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance, the client dares to examine the "bad," unsymbolized self which is likely related to the symptoms which brought him to counseling. As the counselor "reflects" primarily the feeling level of what the client is saying, the client becomes reacquainted with the "scary" and "bad" feelings. More importantly, he discovers that those parts of himself need not cause rejection from either another person or himself. Among the results are greater inner-directedness, self-acceptance and congruity between the "real self" and the "ideal self."

Although much of this strikes some psychologists as soft-headed idealism, it should be noted that both the quantity and quality of Rogerian research<sup>13</sup> is surprisingly good. Furthermore, Rogers does not claim to be describing instant or total cures. As the title of

one of his most readable books, On Becoming a Person,<sup>14</sup> suggests, this is a process not a product; these goals are approximated, not attained. Nonetheless, after working with disturbed and conflicted people since 1930, Rogers can still say, "It has been my experience that persons have a basic positive direction."<sup>15</sup> For many people, his optimism and warm faith in mankind offer a refreshing corrective to a behaviorism (described later in this chapter) that is often cold and a pessimistic psychoanalytic tradition.

An important distinction should be noted. Rogers does not differ with Freud over the crucial impact of childhood experiences. Indeed, I've never been able to see a conceptual difference between Freud's "repressed" material and Rogers' "unsymbolized" experiences. Where they do differ is in Rogers' implication that under optimal conditions, repression would not take place and, more importantly for our concerns, that once maladaptive personality formation has occurred, it can be corrected or radically modified during later life. Furthermore, these therapeutic effects need not necessarily take place in a formal psychotherapeutic setting. Indeed, during the second half of Rogers' professional career, he has been increasingly concerned with changing the nature of educational settings.<sup>16</sup> Both points--that major change can occur in later life and that education can be the agent of that change--are critical to our concerns.

The reader interested in pursuing this "optimistic" stance might best choose to examine Rogers further for among those of this persuasion, he has offered the best developed theories of personality development and therapeutic intervention. However, Rogers is not alone in support of this position. Gordon Allport, Kurt Lewin,



Abraham Maslow and others offer cogent arguments and exciting reading.<sup>17</sup> We will have occasion to return to some of their themes particularly when we discuss "the search for self" in chapter 4.

Interestingly, further support for this position has begun to emerge from psychologists previously of other persuasion. For example, until recently Jerome Kagan, a highly respected human developmentalist from Harvard University, felt there was incontrovertible evidence supporting the notion of irreversible deficiencies, particularly in the realm of intelligence. Indeed, he was the joint author of Birth to Maturity, the thirty-year study cited earlier in support of the "stability" position. But his recent study of Guatemalian children uncovered all sorts of paradoxes. In brief, he observed youngsters overcoming early childhood conditions and experiences which "should" have doomed them to severe retardation. Instead, such children were "more impressive than Americans in a set of culture-fair tests."<sup>18</sup>

For over 25 years, other research, particularly by Nancy Bayley, the director of numerous longitudinal studies on the nature of intelligence, has suggested that meaningful changes can occur during college years,<sup>19</sup> after age thirty,<sup>20</sup> and well beyond.

Furthermore, many of the theories of counseling and psychotherapy presently in ascending popularity are characterized by a de-emphasis on the primacy of childhood. Glasser's "reality therapy,"<sup>21</sup> Ellis' "rational-emotive therapy,"<sup>22</sup> and Berne's "transactional analysis"<sup>23</sup> not only take a strong change-is-possible position but quite clearly reject the need to make the past a major focus of therapy.

In brief, though Freudian-based psychologists can well argue that personality is fairly set if not in childhood then during the

resolution of related conflicts which resurge at puberty, an increasing number of theorists and researchers disagree.

#### A COMPROMISE AND A CONNECTION

Although we haven't come close to reviewing all the existing theories of personality, the reader might well be wondering how it is "possible for psychologists to study the same human behavior and yet end up with so many diverse, contradictory, and competing positions."<sup>24</sup> Without denying that such diversity exists--we shall continue to encounter it throughout our discussion--in some respects the differences are more apparent than real.<sup>25</sup> Consensus is emerging at some points and there are theorists who can help us harmonize these conflicting views. Two who will serve us well both at this point and in future chapters are Erik Erikson and Nevitt Sanford--Erikson to bridge the gap in the previously discussed issue of whether and under what conditions personality change is possible and Sanford to relate these themes to the dynamics of college students and higher education. We will only introduce and not develop their views for they will pervade a great deal of our later discussion.

#### A Compromise: Erik Erikson

The literature on developmental psychology is voluminous; the uninitiated person hardly knows where to begin. For clarity, conciseness and usefulness, he might well begin with Erik Erikson. His theories encompass the full life cycle yet he has paid special attention to adolescence.

Erikson comes out of the Freudian tradition; indeed, he studied under the master himself in Vienna and his views retain some of that

flavor. Erikson's psychosocial stages bear much resemblance to Freud's psychosexual ones though that slight change in terminology masks critical differences in orientation and emphasis.

Like many Neo-Freudians, Erikson reduces the emphasis on instinctual and sexual forces in favor of social and cultural factors. More importantly, without denying the formative importance of the early years, Erikson's eight critical stages are spread throughout the life cycle and he sees the possibility of meaningful change at many points beyond childhood, particularly during the college years. Erikson is more optimistic than Freud but no polyanna. At each recognizable point in development, Erikson believes there is as much chance for psychic damage as for emotional growth.

It would be interesting to digress into biographical data because Erikson is a fascinating man.<sup>26</sup> For example, though he has taught at some of the most prestigious universities and medical schools, e.g. Yale, Berkeley, Harvard, he has but a high school diploma. Besides more conventional writings like his highly regarded Childhood and Society,<sup>27</sup> he has done perceptive studies of key historical figures long before psychohistory became fashionable.<sup>28, 29</sup> These unusual books were not mere diversions but attempts to delineate in vivid and history-shaping personalities the interplay between the individual and society and the resulting identity formation, the heart of Erikson's theory.

Our purposes at this point will be best served by a cursory review of what Erikson is best remembered for: the stages of man. Although there are eight in Erikson's scheme of things, only the first four fall within the domain of childhood. The others, though listed

here, can best be treated in later chapters. It should be noted, however, that Erikson's major complaint concerning how his views have been interpreted is that people have locked his stages into the ages when the prototypic crisis occurs, talking as if the achievements are secured once and for all at a given stage. In Erikson's words: "The personality is engaged with the hazards of existence continuously."<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, there are "critical periods" for each psychosocial stage and successful resolution during that time enhances the individual's competency to deal with subsequent stages and crises.

1. Trust vs. mistrust. For Erikson, this initial crisis is crucial for all subsequent development. He believes that a basic tendency to be trusting and optimistic or cynical and distrustful is learned during the first year. Is the world a satisfying place to live? Can I depend on other people to meet my needs? Dare I have hope and trust? In his own inarticulate way, the child is asking these basic questions and drawing certain conclusions, primarily at the feeling level. These generalizations are based to a large extent on the quality of the maternal relationship. If the child receives consistent, warm, need-meeting care, the foundations of basic trust are laid. Conversely, too early or harsh weaning, neglect, or capricious attention and affection sow the seeds of insecurity. There is reason to believe that even psychotic disturbances, often characterized by distrust of and withdrawal from the external world, have their roots in this stage.

It is, of course, neither logical or wise to generalize about "all" people on the basis of one or a few, though this seems to be a *human* tendency. One of the goals of therapy, and perhaps also of

education, is to teach finer discriminations, e.g., not all people fit your present conceptions, not all men will act like your father. Some mistrust is appropriate and necessary; the fully-trusting person could hardly survive in our society. But in order for healthy personality development to take place, trust must be dominant. A key test--and a prerequisite for successfully coping with the second stage--is whether increasing separation from the mother can be handled without a sense of loss or fear.

2. Autonomy vs. shame and doubt. Although the individual continually confronts the trust-mistrust issue throughout life, a strong propensity is set at least by age two, roughly the time of a second psychosocial crisis.

Particularly if a foundation of trust has been laid, the one-to-two year old is characterized by a new sense of his own powers. Motor skills like walking and the mental activities of thought and language open up new worlds and the child is intrigued by his ability to control and manipulate many of the forces in his life. At times, however, this autonomy collides with either personal limitations or parental regulations. How these conflicts are handled crucially affects the child's development. If the rules laid down for him are perceived as meaningful and not simply attempts to break his will and if his new powers are channeled into largely successful outcomes, a sense of autonomy is likely to develop. If, however, the restrictions appear punitive or his explorations lead to disastrous consequences, feelings of shame (about his behavior) and doubt (about his competencies) are likely concomitants.

To much of the public, Freud's emphasis on toilet training seems the preoccupation of a dirty old man but perhaps this Eriksonian context will help us see it in a new way. Much of what we are discussing pertains to "socialization"--the process of developing a workable and satisfying balance between inner needs and outer demands. Toilet training is the prototypic conflict; holding on or letting go with the sphincter muscles symbolizes the whole issue of socialization. The child must relinquish, in the name of social order, what must appear to him as a perfectly satisfactory method of elimination.

During this stage, the effective parent offers a wise balance of firmness and permissiveness, supporting the child's need to control but protecting him against anarchy he cannot manage. The result is a child who can maintain self esteem and a sense of independence while learning to live within boundaries of external authority.

The following behaviors, not unfamiliar to those who work with college students, might reflect difficulties encountered during this stage: negativism, rebellion against even legitimate restrictions, passive-resistance if not anger towards authority figures, feelings of inadequacy and shame, over-assertiveness or the inability to be assertive when appropriate, and the lack of discriminatory power, i.e., the tendency either to embrace everything or reject everything. We will have opportunity in chapter 4 to further analyze the dynamics of such behaviors.

3. Initiative vs. guilt. Greater freedom and competency promote still wider exploration of the child's world and his increased command of language opens the way to more interpersonal relations. He becomes

more active and even aggressive; he begins to take initiative.

During this time, roughly ages three and four, the previously external prescriptions and restrictions become increasingly internalized. Conscience becomes a greater factor in both determining his behavior and his reactions to it, e.g., guilt over falling short of what he thinks he "ought" to be. Although some psychologists seem to treat all guilt as neurotic, guilt can be appropriate and constructive; it can provide valuable feedback needed to shape behavior in more effective ways. If initiative wins out over guilt, life is seen as purposeful and challenging. If guilt wins out, we often see in later life a self-restrictive, "uptight" person who expects an unrealistic level of morality from both himself and others. In chapter 6, when we examine the young person's search for meaning, we will extend our understanding of moral development.

4. Industry vs. inferiority. The final task of childhood in Erikson's scheme is to attain a sense of productivity, a sense of self-as-achiever. It is no longer enough to just explore; he must also master some of the tasks and tools of his culture. In American society, school is at the center of these challenges. If the child does not gain recognition and a sense of accomplishment during the educational process, he is likely to carry with him a sense of inadequacy and inferiority, if not despair--though ironically, he may come to accept work as the only criterion of his worth. Because of cultural values, success in the athletic or social spheres can, particularly during the high school years, somewhat off-set minimal academic accomplishments. However, *such* routes lead to a successful and productive adult life for only a

small percentage of our society and for those, a rather precarious and transient recognition.

The key issue here is not the nature or extent of the child's achievement but whether the child feels that he measures up to the standards set for him by his family, society, and ultimately, himself. If he does, the child moves ahead equipped with a sense of self-worth and competence.

Although Erikson does discuss the concept of "competence,"<sup>31</sup> it is not a major theme of his. It is, however, becoming a major theme for an increasing number of other psychologists, particularly since Robert White's very significant paper, "Motivation Reconsidered: The Concept of Competence."<sup>32</sup> You may recall our bewilderment over psychologists looking at the "same" behavior yet responding with myriad theories of personality. Some observers see an emerging consensus, or at least a unifying core concept, at this very point of "personal competence."<sup>33</sup> In contemporary psychology and education, behavioral criteria, in contrast to the traditional intrapsychic model, are increasingly emphasized.

This temporarily concludes our discussion of Erikson for our developing child is beginning to exhibit signs of puberty and adolescence. We will return to Erikson repeatedly for his fifth and sixth psychosocial crises--identity vs. identity diffusion and intimacy vs. isolation--are particularly at the heart of the behavior we wish to understand.

Before leaving Erikson, be reminded of three points: (1) The *terms* used by him illustrate polarities. People are more likely



located at some point on the continuum between the two extremes.

(2) Although these crises are particularly discernable at certain stages of life, the issues are never "finished business," we continually work out our responses to self and the world. (3) The crises are inextricably linked together. The degree of success the individual achieves at each stage significantly affects the prognosis at each subsequent stage. That is, basic trust promotes autonomy, independence leads to initiative, both merge into a sense of industry, and all have important implications for subsequent stages of growth. The effects of both vicious and benevolent cycles are critical and apparent to anyone who works with college students.

#### A Connection: Nevitt Sanford

We began this chapter with a discussion of how stable or changeable childhood behavior is in later years. After that discussion, Erik Erikson and Nevitt Sanford were briefly introduced. Erikson has offered us a compromise, or better, a synthesis of the two extreme positions. Sanford will help us to connect these developmental themes to the dynamics of college students and the nature of higher education.

Sanford is an articulate and forceful authority on personality development with a special interest in college programs. Although Freudian in many ways, e.g. an emphasis on unconscious processes, he strongly disputes the ideas that personality inevitably solidifies at an early age and that nothing short of intense therapy will ordinarily effect significant changes in later years. Rather, he believes that college years are times particularly rich in potential for personality change and that the college experience could be a more potent agent of

change. Regretfully, in his opinion, because college educators don't really believe that they have that potential, their effects are accidental, sporadic and minimal. That may be a misleadingly euphemistic way of stating Sanford's view for in another place he agrees that "no thinking man could pronounce anything but a severe judgment on the present condition of higher education."<sup>34</sup>

For Sanford, there is an interesting and important contradiction in the thinking of college educators--and the public, for that matter. On the one hand, it is generally assumed that there is little change in mental abilities after age sixteen or seventeen. Admission policies are based on such assumptions and colleges are eager to categorize their students along axes of ability, being almost annoyed when a student inconsistently falls into a variety of "boxes." On the other hand, the public--and certainly college educators--place great faith in the ability of higher education to significantly change students. And not just intellectually. The goals commonly stated in college catalogs--greater self awareness, better understanding of other people and cultures, less prejudice in thinking, increased social responsibility--unequivocally refer to changes in personality and character.

College students reflect the same ambivalence about the prospect of change. One can't help but notice the spirit and idealism of incoming freshmen and various studies have verified that "going to college" triggers great expectations and extraordinary fantasies.<sup>35</sup> Yet students seem to have little confidence in their own ability to bring such changes about, adopting instead a passive and vague hope that something external--"the college"--will somehow produce the desired changes.

In actuality, the effects of "the college" on students are minimal, as an increasingly large and embarrassing body of research attests, and by the time the idealistic freshmen become upperclassmen, they are "indistinguishable from the rest of us prosaic adults."<sup>36</sup> Freedman shares Sanford's disappointment that in college, a mass socialization process appears to take precedence over the kinds of individual development that could have more intrinsic meaning and worth for the individual student.

Sanford, like Erikson, subscribes to the idea of stages of ego development. He seems more dubious, however, about how inevitable development is after the post-childhood years and while he agrees with the humanistic thinkers that such change is possible, he disagrees with their idea that such development occurs quite naturally given the proper, threat-free climate. In contrast, he reverts back to the more traditional tension-reduction model where challenge, not safety, is the impetus for growth.

The goal of college, in Sanford's view, is to confront the student with challenges that require new kinds of adaptive responses in order to reduce tension and restore equilibrium. It is only when old patterns of behavior are insufficient that new behaviors will be developed. In some respects, this is an expanded and educational version of Festinger's "cognitive dissonance" theory.<sup>37</sup> When a person knows two things which do not fit together, it is tension-producing and the person has to deal with the dissonance. There is, of course, no guarantee that the individual will do so in healthy, growth-producing ways rather than in defensive and distorting ways. Sanford's college educator would obviously need some understanding of the conditions

under which each take place.<sup>38</sup>

Sanford believes that the college student is typically in a high state of readiness to develop new behaviors. College is likely to offer a high degree of independence compared to previous home and school situations and the student is relatively free of encumbering commitments. Moreover, the student is aware of the developmental tasks that not only adulthood but his present circumstances hold and he is eager to test his powers. But readiness is not enough; he also needs challenges strong enough to induce tension though not so great as to trigger unconscious and defensive reactions. "These occurrences result in the enlargement and further differentiation of the systems of personality and they set the stage for integration on still higher levels."<sup>39</sup> Given the individual differences of college students, Sanford does not minimize the difficulties in developing such tension-producing challenges or in executing them with precision and timing. Nonetheless, theoretically compatible research, like Heath's twenty-year study of college students,<sup>40</sup> offers evidence that Sanford is not puffing up a pipe dream.

Admittedly, adults and even adolescents do not change as readily as children. Because older people have a greater repertoire of behavior, they can more readily handle tension-inducing stimuli with existing behavioral patterns. Nonetheless, given the state of readiness characteristic of most students and their ability to develop not only new competencies but a new image of self (albeit, not totally discontinuous with the past), Sanford believes that higher education has failed to maximize such opportunities. And while psychology courses may have special potential, the confrontations in courses like history

and anthropology, sociology and literature with personalities and values quite alien to his own could readily provide the tension-inducing, behavior-developing stimuli discussed earlier. A relationship with a faculty member could have similar effects.

#### THEORETICAL CAPSULES

No one psychological theory lays claim to all truth. Less grandiosely, no one theory can even adequately unify and explain what psychological "truth" we do know. Consequently, in our quest to better understand the college student, we would be unwise to restrict ourselves to one theoretical perspective. Each theory has its strengths and weaknesses; in our comparatively unexplored territory, an eclectic set of directions promises to take us furthest.

While pursuing other issues and goals, we have already encountered a number of theories. Names and sources were often cited but not, I suspect, sufficiently well organized for the non-psychologist to keep straight. Summaries of four major theoretical postures at this point will hopefully both clarify and consolidate the material already presented and enable us in future chapters to utilize the best from a number of perspectives without repeated and disconcerting theoretical explanations. Helpful as Erikson and Sanford will be, we will need to draw on a wide range of theoretical perspectives.

#### Intrapsychic

Freud's psychoanalytic view, which we used to represent the strong continuity-of-behavior position in our discussion of childhood determinants, is the core position within the larger rubric of "intrapsychic theories." In general, these are views which emphasize



childhood experiences, unconscious processes, emotional content, and--perhaps above all--internal conflicts. Despite Neo-Freudian revisions which give more emphasis to social forces and less to genetic factors and instinctual drives, making man more ego-directed and less irrational, intrapsychic conflicts and the resulting defense mechanisms remain central to these theories.

Although we have already briefly reviewed Freud's psychosexual stages, we have not identified his major personality components--id, ego, and super-ego. The id contains the instinctual drives of man such as thirst and hunger, sex and aggression. The id, according to Freud, operates on the pleasure principle, i.e., without reality or ethical considerations, it seeks selfish and immediate gratification of its impulses.

Skipping to the third sub-system, Freud's super-ego is roughly equivalent to what we call conscience. In contrast to much religious belief of his day, Freud did not see this as "the still small voice of God," mysteriously instilled to keep man on the straight and narrow way. Rather, the content of the conscience comes from society's and particularly one's parents' morals and mores. Perhaps because the child wants to be like his parents or more likely, because the love he so urgently needs is conditionally tied to his ability to live by those guidelines, he internalizes that system of right and wrong, good and bad, and makes it his own. These inner controls are often in conflict with the desires of the id.

The ego develops in order to mediate these conflicting forces. Although its primary goal is to satisfy the demands of the id, it

recognizes how self-destructive it would be to ignore external realities. Hence the ego is said to operate on the "reality principle."

Increasingly since Freud, ego-strength has come to be seen as a key measure of psychological health. You need not buy Freud's unique terminology in order to appreciate how central the conflict between inner impulses and outer demands is for each individual. College students who are exploitive of others, live primarily for pleasure, impulsive, or minimally self-controlled in other ways may be seen as having a lopsidedly strong id...or more accurately, a weak super-ego. A controlling super-ego, on the other hand, often produces a guilt-ridden and unhappy individual; social prescriptions which have been internalized too often inhibit personal desires.

Ego-defense mechanisms, as the name suggests, are techniques the ego employs to defend itself against anxiety-producing attacks from either flank. Although such mechanisms are a part of even the healthy person's behavioral repertoire, their over-use is considered dangerous. In such an individual, neither the id or super-ego would necessarily appear to be in disproportionate strength but the apparent balance would be artificial and precarious, not the product of genuine ego-strength. Eventually, one must deal with the demands of both the id and super-ego or live in danger of having one's defenses overwhelmed. This itself is an anxiety-producing state-of-affairs, requiring still further defensive and self-deceptive maneuvers, setting in motion a self-defeating and vicious cycle.<sup>41</sup>

Intrapsychic theories are long on clinical insight but short on empirical support. The system, though impressive, is rather closed



and circular, often able to validate its claims only by invoking itself. Nonetheless, these theories are profound and perceptive with a richness not often evident in the more scientific theories to which we now turn.

### Learning Theories

If you had a psychology course in college, it probably had a strong learning theory tone for if the psychoanalytic view is dominant in the clinical world, behaviorism, the heart of learning theory, dominates the academic world.

The roots of learning theory go far back into psychology though John Watson is usually seen as the prime mover. Impatient if not annoyed with the inner workings which fascinated Freud, Watson decreed that psychology should stick to observable behavior. Primarily, that meant stimulus-response bonds and the conditions which govern them.

From Pavlov came the idea of classical conditioning, the idea that when a neutral stimulus is repeatedly associated with an emotionally valenced stimulus, it comes to elicit the same emotional response. For example, when your kindergarten or first grade teacher began class with the request, "Take out a sheet of paper," at best it only aroused curiosity regarding what might be on the agenda. But when that command was repeatedly paired with an anxiety-producing surprise quiz, the previously neutral sentence itself became anxiety-producing.

The second major type of conditioning has more practical importance. Called "operant conditioning" and most directly linked with B. F. Skinner, it is based on the principle that behavior is shaped by the consequences it has for the behavior. If behavior Y leads to a

reward, it is likely to be repeated. If it does not lead to a reward, or leads to an aversive consequence, behavior Y is less likely to be repeated. That simple rule, the Law of Effect, is used to account for much human behavior, a fact greeted with cheers of "parsimony" or cries of "reductionism," depending on one's theoretical bias.

Using this perspective, when a student exhibits inappropriate or self-defeating behavior, you might begin by asking, "What pay-off does the student derive from such behavior? What is in it for him?" Some need-meeting behavior is being reinforced.

The study of behavioristic psychology has been highly experimental. Its home has usually been the laboratory and the subjects often animals. Some argue that learning theorists have over-stressed method at the expense of important questions and applications. Student expectations for college psychology courses have traditionally been incongruent with what the behavioristic psychologist has to offer. For some time it seemed as if psychoanalytic thought was highly relevant to the "real world" but of questionable internal validity while behaviorism was rigorous and internally sound but of little relevance to real-world concerns. Recently, however, that has changed.

To the embarrassment of some of us who had about decided that the behaviorists would live out their lives refining highly specific but non-utilitarian principles, behaviorists pounced on some public problems with dramatic results. Equipped with therapeutic techniques and usually under the banner of "behavior modification," they began to get movement with populations which had been impervious to the methods of other schools of thought. Chronic schizophrenics, sometimes after decades on the forgotten back wards of state hospitals, began to

function and eventually be discharged. Many mentally retarded attained levels of performance previously thought to be beyond their reach. Nor were the "normal" excluded. Whole school systems adopted "token economy" programs and experienced a dramatic change in atmosphere. Seemingly incorrigible rowdies of junior high age began to act more socialized than delinquent. These successes were, of course, neither total or universal, but they were substantial. When I once tried to teach an in-service course for teachers without covering behavior modification techniques, there were vehement objections. Teachers, previously discouraged to the point of leaving the profession, offered strong testimonials of the wondrous things token-economies had accomplished in their schools and classrooms. Behaviorists are heady folks these days. "Today the schools and hospitals, tomorrow the world!"

The second change which enhanced behaviorism was caused by the wedding of behaviorism with social learning theory. Men like Albert Bandura<sup>42</sup> seemed to realize that impressive though conditioning principles were, they could never fully explain the complex behaviors so characteristic of man. He and others sought an explanation and found it in modeling and observational learning. Beginning with Freud's concept of identification, social learning theory offers clear explanations of when, why, and how imitational learning takes place. These principles have importance to us because a college professor is a powerful though not always positive or effective model in the eyes of his students.

### Humanistic

Though in different ways, both the intrapsychic and behavioristic theories are strongly deterministic; both see man as a product of forces (instinctual or environmental) beyond his control. Skinner recently generated great controversy by asserting that freedom was more illusory than real<sup>43</sup> but he was only being bold enough to make explicit what had been implicit in the writings of many others.

To many psychologists, the previously discussed theories are dehumanizing, reducing man to a partially civilized beast, "a larger white rat, or a slower computer."<sup>44</sup> They feel that studies based too much on animals and clinical perceptions based largely on unhealthy people have left psychology with a distorted if not amputated version of man. Although the intrapsychic and behavioristic positions offer valuable contributions, it was largely in reaction to the inadequacies of those views that the "third force" or humanistic psychology developed. Allport, Maslow, and Rogers, whose views we earlier utilized in juxtaposition to Freud's view on personality change, are the major spokesmen for this camp.

In many respects, humanistic thinkers are an eclectic lot for they do not deny that man sometimes operates on unconscious or even irrational motives or that he can be governed by conditioning principles. But they believe there is so much more to man. To genetic and environmental forces, they would add "self as a third major determinant,"<sup>45</sup> a mystifying assertion to more conventional psychologists.

What this claim means is this. Each person develops a personal view of himself, a self concept. In our culture, at least, because of its emphasis on physical appearance, the individual's "body image" will

likely be a critical determinant of his self concept. More important than this view or concept, however, is the way the person evaluates it, the way he feels about this "self." Am I superior or inferior? Adequate or inadequate? Lovable or unlovable? It is upon these evaluations that the critical amount of self-esteem is based.

In chapter 4, we will investigate why the criterion for these assessments is usually other people. I will also attempt to explain the unfortunately wide-spread tendency to develop feelings of inadequacy and the behavioral results of such feelings. For now, our concern is the humanistic idea that each person lives within his own private world of experience, perceiving and interpreting each event in the light of his own needs and feelings. This is "reality" for him. To truly understand a person, we must attempt to see the world through his eyes, not ours. This is what the currently fashionable idea of "empathy" is all about.

The humanistic perspective is more positive and personal than those previously discussed. Like the existentialists, with whom they blend on many points, every man is "his own project." He creates himself. There is an emphasis on freedom and creativity, on potentialities and individualism. Perhaps this is the real hallmark of humanistic psychologists. They deal with topics rarely treated by the other theoretical camps, e.g. love, values, the four emphases mentioned above. For many people who are aware of such dimensions of human experience and value them, only the third force seems to be talking about a subject that deserves to be called "man."

### Cognitive-Developmental

Our fourth and final theory can be dealt with more briefly for it is not so much a full-blown theory of personality as it is a theory of cognitive development. However, when that perspective also offered a cogent account of sex-role identity and moral development, it became more a theory of personality and more useful for our purposes.

The concept of homeostasis, borrowed from the biological sciences, has proved valuable to psychologists. It posits that a living organism seeks equilibrium. For example, when the body has gone without food for some time, signals related to the hunger drive become apparent; body chemistry has been altered and food is needed to return the organism to a state of equilibrium. Numerous psychological corrolaries, not unrelated to the physiological principles, were developed and a "tension-reduction" model of motivation ruled for some time. Not surprisingly, that model was subject to many of the same criticisms we have made of behaviorism, particularly: Does a human being only strive to maintain itself or does it have a need for actualizing its potentialities? Our earlier concept of "competence" comes in handy here for even animal studies, many of them summarized by Hunt, indicate a need for challenge and growth beyond any deficiency-motivation.<sup>46</sup>

This background will help us appreciate a key factor in the cognitive-developmental theories of this section. While they too center the fundamental concept of motivation around "equilibrium-upset," it is seen as an impetus to evolve into the next stage of development, not just to return to the zero-point of homeostasis. If that reminds you of Darwin's evolutionary theory, that will not be a misleading recollection. If that triggers understandings of Piaget, you will be

even more on target. For this school of thought, that grand old man, Jean Piaget, is the "giant upon whose shoulders we stand."<sup>47</sup>

According to these cognitive developmental theories, there are distinct qualitative differences in both cognitive and personality processes at different ages. Piaget's keenly observed and well described experiences with children provide ample evidence of this; mental structures and functions change with age. The sequence of these transformations is invariant but the rate of development is determined at least in part by experience. Where possible, new experiences are assimilated to fit accustomed ways of thinking but when that is not possible, cognitive (and personality?) processes need to change in order to accommodate and integrate the new knowledge. Assimilation and accommodation, in Piaget's thinking, are the components of equilibration, the process of seeking equilibrium. Note well, however, this state of equilibrium is not identical with the state which existed prior to the tension-inducing stimulus. Rather, the process of differentiation and integration move the person to greater complexity and wholeness, the qualities of well-developed personality.

The principles of cognitive-developmentalists are of interest to us for several reasons. Although Piaget will not be a major figure in our discussions, one can hardly ignore him while talking about contemporary education. Secondly, Kohlberg's principles will be indispensable in trying to understand moral development in college students. Finally, Nevitt Sanford, whom we have already discussed and whose "individual development" philosophy of education will pervade subsequent chapters, leans heavily on the same equilibration model of change to which the cognitive-developmentalists subscribe.

It should be noted, however, that Sanford nonetheless rejects many of the conclusions which Piaget and his followers have arrived at. For example, Piaget believes that a semi-final stage of intellectual equilibrium is typically reached during the mid-teen years. But Sanford cites studies which indicate that significant intellectual gains (the source or "cause" of other gains) occur well into the adult years and that there are large individual differences in the time of life at which a ceiling of mental ability is attained.<sup>48</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

We have reached the end of our theoretical review. We have been neither inclusive--many theories of personality have not been mentioned--or exhaustive--much could yet be said about those we have covered. For our purposes, it seemed wise to draw rather sharp, albeit somewhat artificial lines of demarcation but you should know that some major theorists are bruised if not abused by such a rough categorical sort. Dollard and Miller, for example, offer a good blend of learning theory and psychoanalytic thought; Sullivan combines the interpersonal emphasis of the third force with a Freudian foundation. Should you wish to better understand theories of personality, several fine texts stand ready to assist you.<sup>49</sup>

This also concludes our consideration of the importance of childhood experiences in understanding college-aged students. Is personality fairly well shaped and solidified by the end of childhood or is meaningful change possible during college if not adult years? Your position on that issue has important implications.



The evidence in support of the former position ("As the twig is bent....") has been more widely disseminated; much of the public, if **only** at a subconscious level, subscribes to that view. And it is **tenable**. Nevertheless, if one really believes that, it makes it **difficult** to get out of bed to go to work with college students. What of significance can you accomplish?

There are broader implications as well. Gordon Allport, one of **the** more wise and socially sensitive psychologists of this century, has **expressed** them well:

Up to now the "behavioral sciences," including psychology, **have** not provided us with a picture of man capable of creating or living in a democracy.... They have delivered into our hands a psychology of an "empty organism," pushed by drives and molded by environmental circumstances.... But the theory of democracy **requires** also that man possess a measure of rationality, a portion of freedom, a generic conscience, personal ideals, and a unique **value**. We cannot defend the ballot box or liberal education, not advocate free discussion and democratic institutions unless man has the potential to profit there-from.<sup>50</sup>

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## CHAPTER 3

### THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENCE: CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our primary goal is to understand better the personality dynamics of college students. I have argued, however, that since the person of that age is significantly (though not unchangeably) shaped by previous stages of development, our purpose will be well served by a consideration of those antecedent experiences.

In the previous chapter, we focused on childhood. In the process, we had opportunity to become familiar with the major theoretical positions in psychology to which we will frequently allude. In this chapter, we will attempt to gain an over-view of adolescence. The secondary theme here will be more conceptual than theoretical. We will organize our purview of adolescence initially around some major issues and secondly, around the major developmental tasks of adolescence. That organizational format will blend quite readily into the structure we will use in our detailed examination of youth.

The compatibility between adolescence and youth is, of course, not surprising or coincidental. As you may recall from our discussion in chapter 1, "youth" is very much an outgrowth of "adolescence." I have suggested that it makes increasing sense for scholars, educators, and even the public to recognize youth as a separate stage of development. But at least an equal number of current authors<sup>1</sup> treat youth as the latest sub-stage in an elongated period of adolescence. That

schematic difference is not crucial. In either case, what happens during the earlier, primarily teen-age years is foundational to understanding the college student.

#### ISSUES IN ADOLESCENT PSYCHOLOGY

It is difficult to draw an accurate portrait of the contemporary adolescent. In part, that is because of the wide range of individual differences among adolescents. In part it is because of the hazy and culturally modifiable nature of adolescence. Not insignificantly, the difficulty is also because of our own perceptual distortions. As Schneiders observes in musing over whether adolescents today differ from those of his own day:

...our perception...can be distorted to an appreciable degree by the psychological presbyopia of advancing years and by the paramnesia that invariably occurs whenever we retrace our steps and go back to the somewhat nostalgic past. ...a certain amount of repression and distortion occurs with respect to our own adolescence because it would be too disagreeable to remember what it was actually like.<sup>2</sup>

Are today's adolescents essentially like their counterparts of previous generations? That is but one of many issues concerning adolescents which complicate our discussion. We will examine some of those issues for beside reflecting the uncertainties and differences which exist among "experts," these issues will provide an interesting and functional way to approach the phenomenon of adolescence. Furthermore, these issues will serve as more than "background information." Many of the same differences of opinion pervade our understanding of youth.

### Different Than Adolescents of the Past?

Is the contemporary adolescent significantly different from those of the past? One could argue that adolescents remain essentially the same. For example, though it was over twenty years ago that Havighurst posited the major developmental tasks of adolescence,<sup>3</sup> that outline still appeals to current writers.<sup>4</sup> Adolescents need to come to terms with physical and bodily changes, make heterosexual adjustments and become emotionally and eventually economically independent of their parents. That was true in 1953, before then, and still now. The essential needs and tasks of adolescents remain essentially the same. Certainly there are differences between the eras but these changes are more apparent than real, or at least more superficial than substantial.

Yet it is hard to escape the impression that young people today are different. Other observers argue that somehow today's adolescents seem less responsible, more alienated and restless, less ready and willing for adulthood. Though admittedly more knowledgeable than their predecessors, they seem less sure of their direction...and less sure of themselves. They reflect a more uncertain status in a society vastly more complex than even twenty years ago. For example, was there anything in the past comparable to today's wide use of drugs? Isn't that evidence of some profound change?

### Are the Changes for Good or Ill?

Everyone, not just psychologists and sociologists, seems to have an opinion on young people and how they've changed. Few topics have been the focus of more magazine articles, books, and television



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specials. Though these treatments differ, of course, in many ways, the global assessment often takes one of the two extreme positions. Young people are either glorified as the saviors of our society or damned as potential destroyers of that same society. Among the public, such polarized views are particularly common though professional observers are found at the extreme points as well.

Some see contemporary youth as brighter, better informed, less hypocritical, more socially responsive and loving, or, in brief, as more "human" than most of the older inhabitants of earth. Youth, it is claimed, represent a new value system which can not only save us from nuclear or ecological self-destruction but also lead us into lifestyles of greater individual fulfillment.<sup>5, 6</sup> Less extreme supporters acknowledge faulty behavior among the young but see it is a response to the mythical beliefs and negative expectations that an oppressive society has concerning youth.<sup>7, 8</sup>

For others, such grandiose descriptions and exonerating explanations are so much nonsense. They see young people as disrespectful of authority and tradition; anti-intellectual; preoccupied with sex, drugs and music; and myopic in perspective. At best, young people are just as conforming and status-conscious as the larger society; at worst, they represent a massive exhibition of psychopathology.<sup>9, 10</sup> The idea that youth are "going to the dogs" and dragging the rest of society down with them is, of course, not a new one. Such statements have been issued regularly for at least several thousand years.



Primary Determinants: Biological or Cultural?

All theories of adolescence agree that puberty marks the onset of adolescence and that certain biological and physical changes inevitably unfold. They differ widely, however, in regard to the importance of these biological changes and their influence on psychological processes.<sup>11</sup> G. Stanley Hall,<sup>12</sup> "the father of adolescent psychology," and Arnold Gesell,<sup>13</sup> one of the better known developmental psychologists, are only two of many who see adolescence primarily as the maturational unfolding of a genetically programmed series of changes. Sometimes one can detect this de-emphasis on cultural determinants even in book titles, e.g. Kiell's The Universal Experience of Adolescence.<sup>14</sup> Only biological, not cultural determinants are universal.

The physiological intricacies of this issue need not concern us though they do introduce a related and for us more important sub-issue.

Storm and Stress?

One of the key assertions of G. Stanley Hall, one of the first in this country to write systematically about adolescence, was that it was a period of "storm and stress." In layman's language, this view argues that the interests and demands of childhood and adulthood are significantly different and therefore it is only with considerable difficulty that the adolescent negotiates the transition. In Hall's rather Freudian view, the psychic serenity of the latency period is upset by the strong, heavily sexual impulses of the genital period. Consequently, manifestations of anxiety and exaggerated use of defense mechanisms, symptoms of pathology when found in adults, are normal characteristics of the adolescent as the ego desperately tries to cope



with a flood of unfamiliar and scary forces. To this day, analytically inclined thinkers continue to play up the more traumatic dimensions of adolescence. Perhaps because the mass media's treatment promotes this perspective, I suspect that most of the public--and most adolescents?--subscribes to the "storm and stress" view of adolescence.

There is, however, some strong evidence against this view, or at least against making "storm and stress" a universal if not inevitable characteristic of this developmental period. For example, when Margaret Mead, the astute observer of other cultures, studied the adolescents of Samoa, she did not find it to be a particularly turbulent period of life. When the activities of childhood constitute a true apprenticeship for adulthood, as they do in primitive societies but do not in complex technological cultures, the transition is smooth and adolescence almost inconspicuous.<sup>15</sup>

Futhermore, Offer's detailed study of "normal" middle-class boys during the 1960's in the mid-western section of the United States failed to find a high degree of turmoil or chaos.<sup>16</sup> Nor did Douvan and Adelson in a famous and valuable study of over 3000 adolescents. Indeed, they expressed concern over the absence of "storm and stress," speculating that contemporary adolescents may be prematurely consolidating their identities.<sup>17</sup> If that is true and if societies have traditionally benefited from the tensions between generations (the "generation gap" is hardly new) we would all be the poorer for its absence.

If these studies are valid, how can we account for the durability of the "adolescent turmoil" position? Part of the answer might be that much psychological writing is based on people seen in a clinical setting,

a thorny problem of generalization that has plagued psychology since Freud. Another possible explanation is that the turmoil-hypothesis holds up when studying, for example, adolescents from upper-middle class homes but not across other socio-economic levels. Furthermore, it is likely that mass media has focused on a certain element of the young who are more interesting than typical. Finally, many of us--psychologists and the public--have derived our perspective primarily from sensitive and articulate young writers whose experience again might well be atypical.

Yet this leaves us with still another riddle: Why do such articulations, if atypical, have such broad appeal? For example, perhaps no book has been more widely read by high school and college students in recent decades than Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye.<sup>18</sup> Millions of adolescents have accepted Holden Caulfield as their spokesman yet he is so disturbed that it is from a mental hospital that he relates his story. Is there status in being seen, if only by oneself, as sensitive and tortured? Perhaps, as Bandura suggests,<sup>19</sup> adolescence is stormy and stressful not by its very nature but because society promotes and individuals desire it to be such. In a phrase then, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Frankly, the evidence is equivocal at this point.

### Relations between Generations

There appears to be a veritable sand-storm of confusion concerning relations between the generations. Some argue that conflict increased as the young became progressively more disillusioned with the values of society and the lives of their parents. The disrespect of the young

is seen as moving beyond rebellion to the point of rejection, favoring instead at least a counter-culture influenced set of values and life-style.

Others agree that there is conflict but see it originating more with adults. Anxious about their own aging and threatened by and jealous of youth's vitality and spontaneity, such adults allegedly have primarily hostile feelings toward the young. That they deny such feelings only complicates relations.<sup>20</sup>

Still other observers argue that the causes are more sociological. A complex society requires prolonged education and therefore causes a disjointed admixture of independence and dependence. Furthermore, the same educational requirements cause stronger peer-group identifications, bring about an extended period of age-group segregation, and therefore cause greater generational conflict.<sup>21</sup>

In recent years, there has been so much talk about a "generation gap" that one might easily conclude that it is an established truth which no one could dispute. Furthermore, the matter is seen as urgent and we have been flooded with articles describing the gap's symptoms, diagnosing the causes, and prescribing solutions. It is my belief, however, that such talk has been greatly exaggerated.

Already in 1965, Bealer and others labeled such thinking as more mythical than insightful, arguing that the young actually reflect, not contradict, the standards of the larger society.<sup>22</sup> More recently and amazingly, research has strongly indicated that even college activists were to a considerable extent acting out values which their parents held.<sup>23</sup> The point is that there may be considerably less generational conflict than the more highly publicized reports led us



to believe.

If the conflict between generations is indeed subsiding or even illusory, most of the public will breathe a sigh of relief. Perhaps some psychologists, too. But certainly not all for many see such conflict between the young and the old, particularly the parents, as necessary and healthy. The young person grows and defines himself through dialectical conflict.<sup>24</sup> It will not be for the welfare of adolescents and ultimately society if parents refuse to challenge or confront..or even stand firm. If parents and youth agree--out of confusion about personal values and ethical bearings, out of inadequacy, or out of a misguided need for love or desire to "understand" each other--not to assert themselves or bother each other, the psychological consequences of that sort of "generation gap" will be more deleterious than from the one we've heard so much about.<sup>25</sup>

The matter of parent-child relations and the existence or absence of major differences in values between the generations will continue to be of central concern to us. We will return to those themes several times in coming chapters.

Other issues concerning our understanding of adolescence could be cited. For example, the important "stability and change" issue which we discussed in chapter 2 again surfaces in adolescent psychology. Which traits are stable between childhood and adolescence? Between adolescence and adulthood? Where there is persistence of traits, is it due to genetic factors or to constant factors in the environment? If the latter and if the characteristics are undesirable, can they be altered by proper "environmental engineering?" Can high school or college teachers promote change even in non-academic areas of

development?

The interested reader will find in books on adolescent psychology more issues than those discussed here and more information on those we have cited. Indeed, one text is based solely on more than twenty such issues.<sup>26</sup> Hopefully, this coverage has given us some sense of the controversy and creative tension which exists in the study of adolescents. Many of the same issues pervade perspectives on youth.

Two ideas which were implicit in a number of the issues merit separate focus for they relate to some major concerns of subsequent chapters. One is the changing and difficult to define nature of this stage of development. The second, to which we will turn first, is the dynamics involved in adult perceptions and reactions to the young.

#### DYNAMICS OF OUR RESPONSE TO ADOLESCENTS

It is helpful to keep in mind that our views and feelings about young people often say as much about ourselves as about the young. It is somewhat like a projective test; the stimulus is ambiguous and what we see is likely a reflection of our own hopes and fears, satisfactions and frustrations.

One reason why youth holds such fascination for us is that it was the time when we ourselves felt most alive. It was a time when, with a sense of urgency, we tried to consolidate the experiences of childhood while anticipating the challenges of adulthood. It was a time when most of us made crucial vocational and marital choices and decided, though not always consciously, which values we would revolve a life around.

The widespread use of "youthful" themes in advertising suggests that on at least one level, nearly everyone is attracted to the energy and excitement of youth. More particular and vicarious gratifications are likely a part of the reason why some of us chose occupations involving the young.

But as was hinted in our previous discussion of issues, that reaction is not always positive or constructive. Adults also have repressed conflicts and feelings from their own adolescent years and these complicate, often in unconscious ways, the reactions to the young. Or sometimes the major choices we have made--vocation, marriage partner, values--have proved unsatisfying. Though such choices need not be irrevocable--that is, we could do much to redirect our lives--many adults choose instead to feel bitter, despairing or resentful of youth's opportunity to have a different way of life.

Such unfulfilled hopes can easily be translated into expectations for others, particularly one's own children. Somehow, I suspect, we hope that our feelings of failure or inadequacy will be undone through the achievements of our children (students?). The classic example is pressure on a child to attain a college education or to prepare for a certain vocation. Such pressures are not inevitably deleterious, as we will see in the chapter on vocational choice, though they often seriously block the young person's striving for identity. That an adolescent is a person in his own right and not primarily an extension of the parents with an obligation to do their will is a truth not easily grasped by some parents. In modified form, the college educator is sometimes given to the same type of possessiveness.

We noted earlier that the vitality of the young can arouse anxiety and hostility in us by reminding us of our age and the years gone by. We can also be upset by the adolescent's challenges to our values or ideological stance. At times, of course, our reaction is simply a forceful and legitimate difference of opinion. Other times, however, our criticisms or anger can be masked guilt over the realization that we have been "sold out" on ideals we also embraced in our youth.

Both parents and educators can respond to an attractive young person as an object of sexual interest though we are inclined to suppress this reaction. Paradoxically, the same parent who is overly strict in regulating the adolescent's sexual experiences outside the home sometimes does exhibit seductive and sexually stimulating behavior in the home. These feelings are often partially unconscious and the responses not one-way, i.e., the young person can also have a sexual response. Though these feelings are rarely acted upon--the taboo regarding intrafamily sexuality and the mores governing teacher-student relations are too strong--they can appreciably affect the dynamics of adult-adolescent relationships.<sup>27</sup>

My main point is this: In our reactions to young people, both en masse and individually, more is going on than what we readily perceive. As we go on in our study of youth, we would do well to be alert for unfinished business from our own youth that might presently be shaping our reactions. Such self-awareness can lead to greater effectiveness. Unfortunately, the beginnings of such insights can lead to self-doubt and inhibition. It is regrettable when that posture solidifies because the young need adults who are not only

understanding but firm; they need definite models against which to react. What I am advocating is not passivity or permissiveness or a defensive rigidity. Rather, a firmness based on self-understanding and conviction.

Before leaving this matter of adult-adolescent relations, a sense of proportion will be served by noting that the adolescent also contributes to the dynamics of the interaction. He is a confusing mixture of independence and dependence, his behavior is also the product of some unconscious forces, and, even as adults covet youth, he may resent the adult who seems so free of the confusion and anxiety which trouble him. The clarification of these dynamics of young people is the main goal of the remaining chapters and we can hardly get into that now. But perhaps an illustration will help clarify my claim that the adolescent's dynamics also influence the nature of relations with adults.

Mann and his colleagues have done extensive and unique research on the dynamics of the college classroom. Among other things, they identify eight sub-groups of students, one of which they call "snipers."<sup>28</sup> To over-simplify a bit, such students tend to project on the college teacher many of the unresolved conflicts they have with their essentially authoritarian parents. Because direct confrontation is too threatening to these students, they tend to snipe away at peripheral issues, e.g. details of course requirements. Though the rebellious or at least passive-aggressive nature of this sniping is unmistakably and annoyingly apparent, this student often denies that such is the case, claiming instead well-meaning intentions. In actuality, this



student sees a professor primarily in terms of authority and has to continually test that dimension of the relationship. Perhaps surprisingly, he tends to be hardest on those who seem weak, though indiscriminately he includes among the weak even the "strong" teacher democratically sharing responsibilities with the students. Often, the expressions of the sniper are outlets for considerable and pent-up dissatisfaction with himself but because such students are too defensive to acquire much insight about themselves, they are annoying to work with and difficult to help.

#### WHAT CONSTITUTES ADOLESCENCE?

One of the issues we could have discussed in our earlier series is whether adolescence is even a separate stage. Some argue that all growth is gradual and continuous and that the concept of "stages" is misleading. The other position, without denying the imperceptible nature of growth, argues that both quantitative (e.g. a growth spurt) and qualitative changes (e.g. new developmental tasks, needs, abilities) make adolescence more than just an academic category. Other more pragmatic sorts reason that certain distinctions and categories must be made, however artificially, if only to facilitate and refine thinking, conversation and research. We can't simply and globally talk about "man." Or in our case, we're trying to understand persons who aren't really children or adults.

Such talk is not as pedantic or querulous as it may sound. There is considerable confusion about what constitutes adolescence. Though the term is ubiquitously and unchallengingly used, a precise meaning or definition has not emerged. Many authors of current texts on

adolescent psychology see such a definition as their first task but generally end up, it seems to me, stumbling around for several pages unconvincingly trying to reconcile the physical, psychological and sociological connotations of that term.

There is more agreement on where adolescence begins than on where it ends or what goes on inbetween. Adolescence begins with puberty, a physiological phenomenon which triggers the appearance of secondary sex characteristics, a growth spurt, and changes in bodily proportions. Importantly, the pubescent gains the potential for reproduction.

Puberty marks the advent of adolescence but its onset is not as clear-cut or unequivocal as may have been implied. Puberty tends to occur a year or two earlier in females than males. Secondly and primarily because of nutritional factors, the average age of particularly the first menstrual period has steadily decreased across recent generations. Forces of a more sociological nature seem responsible for the progressively earlier appearance of behavior we customarily describe as "adolescent." "So rapidly has youth matured," observed Time magazine, "That if Booth Tarkington were writing Seventeen today, he would have to call it Eleven."<sup>29</sup>

Finally, there is for both sexes a wide range of variation of age when puberty occurs. Early and late physical maturity causes special problems of adjustment, particularly, because of the normative gap referred to above, for early maturing girls and late maturing boys, and particularly in self-conception. Hamachek offers an extended discussion of the effects of early and late physical maturity.<sup>30</sup>



Although we can discuss the beginning of adolescence by focusing on physical changes, one can not deal adequately with the period as a whole from a physiological perspective. For example, though sexual maturity is technically a matter of glandular and hormonal changes, it is the emotional, social, and intellectual dimensions of sexual behavior which really determine our assessment of maturity and immaturity. The capability of reproduction is a necessary but not sufficient condition of sexual maturity.<sup>31</sup>

Nor will the closely related chronological criterion carry us very far. Traditionally, adolescent psychology texts pick up the developing person at around age 13, a fairly representative age of puberty, and terminate their coverage at age 17 or 18. Consequently, the term "teen-ager" became synonymous with "adolescent." Among the public, that connection still holds.

But to anyone acquainted with the wide range of individual differences, including rates of development, there are a host of problems involved with using chronological parameters. As evidence, note the hodge-podge of legal attempts to regulate the adult prerogatives of drinking, voting, marrying, going to war, and the rest. The legal age differs between states and among the various laws within a state. Even if the laws became consistent, some 25 year olds would not be ready for marriage while some 16 year olds could cast well-informed votes.

Because physical and chronological definitions of adolescence are inadequate, a sociological criterion has often been employed. In brief, that meant that a person left adolescence and entered adulthood when he married and/or assumed full-time employment. Such a criterion,

though off-target for those who remained single or for various reasons were not employed, seemed sensible and proved rather functional. It began to break down, however, when cultural forces caused a rapidly increasing number of young people to postpone marriage and full-time employment in favor of college. For those who went on to graduate school, it was often the mid-twenties before, by existing standards, they left adolescence and entered adulthood.

"Adolescence," when traced to its Latin origins, means "to grow into maturity," and it is in that direction that particularly psychologists have looked for a more functional criteria. But "maturity" also presents problems because it is a hazy and highly subjective concept heavily loaded with value-judgments that are rarely made explicit. The situation is very similar to what Jahoda found in her review of "concepts of mental health."<sup>32</sup>

There is a second problem with using a maturity-based, psychologically-oriented criteria. Rogers, Maslow, Sullivan, Allport and other personality theorists who have and will contribute to our discussion have all offered descriptions of the "mature personality." We will not review them here; some can be extrapolated from previous chapters, others will be articulated in coming pages. But what strikes one most about such criteria is that they represent an ideal level of functioning, they describe a direction not a destination and goals to be approximated though rarely attained, especially in the first third or fourth of life. Valuable as such visions may be, they do not help us clearly define the parameters of adolescence.

There is no easy solution to all these disparities, ambiguities or abstractions. Erikson, certainly one of the keenest observers of

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young people, offers what appears to be a simple answer--adolescence lasts "from puberty to maturity"--but one suspects that he knew better and was momentarily having some fun at the reader's expense.

But the prognosis is not that grim. We are not doomed to being tossed about on a sea of ambiguity. Both in concluding our discussion of adolescence and in organizing our analysis of youth, we will focus on the developmental tasks which the young person must master if he is to proceed toward adulthood and maturity. By making our criteria more behavioral, we will attain a degree of precision and specificity.

This approach will not however, provide clean-cut boundaries between early and late adolescence, or between adolescence and youth, or between maturity and immaturity. This approach will not solve, once and for all, the varying and inconsistent ways people use the above terms. It will provide, however, a fairly clear and well-proportioned view of the psychological tasks challenging the young person.

This approach will not preclude or avoid all the difficulties we noted in the various physiological, sociological, or psychological perspectives on adolescence. All three dimensions are inextricably a part of adolescence and we could avoid the difficulties only at too great a price. For example, adolescence is a psychosomatic phenomenon. It is a psychological phase of development that is initiated and guided by physical changes. The two dimensions are almost always in correspondence. Those who attain physical puberty at an early age usually show parallel psychological changes; those who reach puberty at a later age are similarly late in becoming psychologically adolescent. Only rarely are the two disjointed. Sometimes parents promote premature adolescent or adult-like behavior in pubescent children; occasionally

post-pubescent anxiety is sufficiently threatening to fixate the person to childhood patterns of behavior and emotional response. But ordinarily, the physical and psychological dimensions of adolescence go together.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, it is next to impossible to explain the psychological dimension of adolescence or youth apart from the socio-cultural context. We saw that quite clearly in chapter 1 when we examined the new stage of youth and how it and adolescence were the product of sociological forces. This will be equally apparent in our discussion of the five major developmental tasks of youth, particularly in the formation of the over-arching quest for identity.

Josselyn will help us make one final distinction. After wrestling with the same problems of terminology which we have faced, she makes the following distinction:

Early adolescence, to speak in broad terms, refers to a phase in development and maturation during which there is, with vacillation, an abandonment of childhood patterns of adjustment and, with trial and error, an attempt to utilize new patterns of problem solving. Late adolescence is that period in which new patterns become more crystallized, with relatively consistent although unsure use of them. The first phase is thus predominantly the relinquishing of childhood; the second phase, the structuralization of what will become adulthood.<sup>34</sup>

In summary, then, by focusing on the developmental tasks of the developing person, we commit ourselves to a multi-dimensional criterion. We commit ourselves to taking into consideration a complex set of forces and therefore, a complex behavioral response. As such, adolescence is not so much a biological event or set number of years but a sociological possibility and a psychological opportunity. It is a growth experience which may or may not occur after puberty.<sup>35</sup>



For example, for many persons in the disadvantaged sector of our society, this developmental period of adolescence is virtually non-existent.

I never was a little girl. I never were. I always was grown up. I started cooking when I was seven years old and I was doing housework and taking care of smaller kids under me. I just got married early and regretted it afterwards, but what could you do about it? I was a mother at 14 so this is just all I know....<sup>36</sup>

It is the opinion of the Joint Commission of Mental Health that few young Americans are given the opportunities for a real adolescence, that even middle-class youth are forced into an early, superficial mold so that they have little chance to explore and test out new definitions of self.<sup>37</sup> Though college students are not guaranteed such opportunities, they do enjoy a moratorium which greatly increases their opportunity to work on the developmental tasks. These tasks constitute the essence of adolescence, and will provide the structure for our analysis of youth.

#### DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF ADOLESCENCE

Though our discussion has reflected the haziness and complexity of the child-to-adult transition we call "adolescence," greater specificity and--at least conceptually, if not behaviorally--simplicity is possible. The major tasks of adolescence are not hidden or disguised. Indeed, for many young people, these challenges are often stressfully clear.

All cultures have norms of behavior and individuals at various stages of development are expected to exhibit certain skills and understandings. Certain behaviors are not expected until a certain age;

other behaviors are censored if they persist beyond a certain age. These norms are often elaborate and pervasive. Moreover, though such prescriptive guidelines and time-tables are rarely articulated, written down, or formally taught, they are usually clearly understood.<sup>38</sup>

Though such guides and expectations have apparently existed for centuries in many cultures, the concept of "developmental tasks" is largely the work of Robert Havighurst. For our culture, at least, he made explicit and amenable for scientific study what had usually remained implicit in the socialization process. According to Havighurst, a developmental task is

...a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of an individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness and difficulty with later tasks.<sup>39</sup>

Havighurst formulated lists of developmental tasks for each stage of life. For example, the young child must learn, among other things, to walk, talk, and control the elimination of bodily wastes. In later childhood he must learn to relate to peers and develop fundamental skills, e.g. reading and writing. The failure to master such tasks is generally a serious handicap to the individual for it both reduces his competency for current challenges and undermines the likelihood of success at subsequent tasks. Such deficiencies furthermore, and perhaps more significantly, influence the attitudes others have of him and the view he develops of himself.

Havighurst identified the following ten tasks as particularly significant for the adolescent to complete:

1. Achieving new and more mature relations with age mates of both sexes
2. Achieving a masculine or feminine social role



3. Accepting one's physique and using one's body effectively
4. Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults
5. Achieving assurance of economic independence
6. Selecting and preparing for an occupation
7. Preparing for marriage and family life
8. Developing intellectual skills and concepts necessary for civic competence
9. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior
10. Acquiring a set of values as a guide to behavior<sup>40</sup>

In the years since Havighurst's major efforts, many authors have offered modified variations of the developmental tasks of adolescence. Though a lengthy list of these variations could be compiled, the many appear to reduce to the five major tasks we will now briefly examine. A variation and extension of each will be more thoroughly examined in our analysis of youth.

#### Developing a Clearer Sense of Self

It seems that the foundational task of adolescence is to attain a level of independence which allows for an increasingly clear and unique sense of self. In an abstract way beyond the reach of a child, the adolescent comes to see himself as a separate person, not just an extension of his parents. This view of self, if it is to be functional, must, of course, move towards a realistic assessment of one's strengths and limitations. Furthermore, it is most advantageous if this assessment allows the adolescent to not only say, "I am a separate person," but also, "I am a worth-while person."

This sense of self includes a body-image which, at least in our culture and particularly for the adolescent, is hardly the easiest

dimension of self acceptance. This sense of self involves independent thinking; the adolescent must move beyond the docility of childhood. Eventually it means moving towards economic independence. Perhaps most of all, it requires a coming to terms with the emotional complexities of adolescence and of finding a balance between various extremes--of emotional expression without inhibition versus complete suppression, or exercising autonomy while yet accepting authority. Indeed, it means accepting an often confusing admixture of dependence and independence, both within society's institutions and within oneself.

On each of these sub-tasks, it would be realistic to expect only a measure of the quality described for although these tasks are among the most basic and crucial of adolescence, much of what we have described here remains a life-long challenge. Perhaps the most we can hope for is that the adolescent will begin a self-perpetuating cycle of expectations and results which is self-enriching rather than self-defeating.

#### Developing More Mature Relationships

A second major developmental task of adolescence--another task which at different levels is pertinent to each stage of development--is to develop more mature relationships with others. These "others" include peers of the same sex though the significant change from childhood is the sexual nature of such needs and relationships. Though the changes from prepuber heterosexual interactions to group "dating" to one-to-one relationships may be imperceptible, the behavioral components of marriage, family life, and mature sexuality become inextricably woven into these adolescent activities. Primarily for

cultural reasons, these factors are earlier and more openly acknowledged by the female adolescent.

This task is not unrelated to the sense of self and independence discussed previously for again, the adolescent must find a balance or synthesis between individuality and relatedness. On the one hand is the danger of self-centeredness and a pseudo self-sufficiency; on the other, an over-riding need to belong which often masks a desperate flight from self.

There is a need to learn to give and receive love. That quality of interpersonal affirmation is very strong during adolescence though the fear that such love won't be accepted or returned is often greater. Fortunately, many of the adolescent's needs--for acceptance, recognition, approval--can only be met through interpersonal involvements and therefore such needs provide a valuable impetus. Under favorable conditions, the individual discovers that the rewards of rich interpersonal involvements are worth the risks.

Consequently, he is motivated to develop more mature and effective interpersonal and social skills. The importance of growth in this area can hardly be exaggerated for most human needs and most of the meaningful dimensions of human life are to an appreciable extent woven into relationships with others.

#### Developing a Value-System and Life-Style

A third major developmental task of adolescence is to make at least beginning steps towards a way-of-life and system of values which promise a meaningful existence. Part of the independence of which we spoke earlier is a movement towards inner controls and self-discipline.

Simple obedience to others or a conscience which is primarily based on others' experiences and beliefs is no longer enough. The adolescent must increasingly accept responsibility for his behavior and the quality of his life.

This is no easy task. Certain decisions which have long-term ramifications--a course of study or "track" in high school, for example--must be made before the adolescent possesses the understanding of himself or the outside world which he needs in order to make an optimally wise decision. These decisions are also complicated by a society characterized by religious pluralism, a multiplicity of value systems or ethical relativism. In addition, if his parents have an uncertain posture about the meaning and direction of their own life, he is denied not only clear patterns which to follow but even a stable position against which to rebel. Scientific psychologists remain somewhat neutral about what parents should believe but they have reason to hope that parents will believe something...and that they will believe with enough conviction to hold firm even as they allow the adolescent to explore the meaning of his own life-span.

Regardless of the societal or family context, learning to live with some uncertainty and ambiguity is an inevitable and necessary part of life. The child's black-white perception of issues and individuals is simply not true to reality. Few matters in life are "all or nothing;" we work out our lives in grey areas of compromise and ambivalence. Indeed, the adolescent's own status and dynamics are illustrations of the ambiguity of life upon which he must impose meaning.

### Developing Academic and Vocational Competencies

The fourth major task of adolescence is the promotion of intellectual, academic and, eventually at least, pre-vocational skills. Thanks to newly evolved cognitive abilities, the adolescent becomes more proficient at analytical thinking and reasoning. Such skills become powerful tools as he seeks to utilize his past and anticipate the future. One can readily see how such abilities also facilitate the developmental tasks we've previously discussed. Indeed, there is something arbitrary about any ordering of any list such as this for success or failure in each area significantly influence development in the other areas.

For better or worse, our scientifically-oriented society places considerable emphasis on academic success. To a significant degree, educators man the toll-gates of mobility in our culture and academic competence is a key factor in determining the options an individual has. Furthermore, one's level of success in school appreciably affects one's self image, perhaps the key factor in life satisfaction. Anyway you cut it, what happens in school is of considerable importance--though ironically, for reasons other than educators generally believe.

Similarly and not unrelatedly, "work" has always been a major value in our puritan-based culture. Although vocational matters generally do not directly confront the adolescent, he is faced with the need to select and prepare for an occupation. The haziness one finds in the vocational thinking of high school students and the frequent shifts in program which characterize large numbers of college students seem clear indicators that for the majority of young people, vocational direction is not easily established.

### Moving Towards a Sense of Identity

The final and certainly most widely known developmental task of adolescence is the quest for at least the beginnings of a sense of identity. Ironically, this best-known task is progressively becoming no longer a task of adolescence but of youth if not early adulthood.

A sense of identity requires that the individual pull together much of what we have already discussed. It requires a modicum of success in these other areas; it presupposes a level of maturity and development which, increasingly, can not be expected of the adolescent.

Personal identity requires at least emotional independence from one's parents and a semi-clear view of oneself as a unique being. Sequentially, such self definition is needed if relationships are to involve commitment and be relatively free of anxiety. Identity requires more than vaguely defined values and indefinite life-direction. Moreover, it is hard to imagine a sense of identity preceding intellectual maturity and at least some vocational direction. And in our culture, these prerequisites are rarely approximated during the teen-age years. And even with such attainments, integration does not quickly or inevitably follow.

For some, it comes much later in life if at all. "Identity diffusion" about who one is or even what one wants to be is not uncommon. Nor is a "negative identity" energized by frustration and anger, ostensibly towards others, though primarily a reaction to one's own underlying conflicts.

With identity, a sense of self becomes more clear; relationships less contrived and more free to evolve in unpremeditated ways. Values are clarified and goals are stabilized. Integration brings stability

and as a person moves towards mature identity he becomes less vulnerable to disruption by inner impulses or outer pressures.

"Identity" is the culmination of growth in many areas of life.

In a sense, it's a life-long goal. As often used today, the term becomes almost synonymous with mental health. We will try to retain the developmental, non-paragonal use Erikson had in mind. Even so, identity becomes more and more a task beyond the grasp of most contemporary adolescents. And for these characteristics of modern adolescence--a sense of inadequacy because of delayed independence from parents, insecurity about vocational direction, frustration from delayed sexuality, and a general stress from an identity which can't be crystallized--both the adolescent and society pay a price.<sup>41</sup>

### In Summary

These then are the major developmental tasks of adolescence.

These are the challenges the young person must meet as he moves toward maturity. These are the prerequisites for adult living.

Several observations on these tasks should be made. First, there is a strong cross-cultural, cross-generational element to these tasks. Many of the basic needs of man--to give and receive love, to be recognized as a separate person, to develop a value system--are universal. Nonetheless, the cultural form these needs and tasks assume does change--across time, across culture, even across sub-cultures within a society. The challenges, for example, facing the contemporary adolescent are not the same as those faced a generation ago nor those which will be faced by the coming generation. Obviously, this is something parents and particularly educators must keep in mind.

Secondly, these tasks are not some kind of arbitrary hurdles imposed on the young. Rather, these tasks reflect foundational skills and understandings required by our culture. They also reflect sequential growth. Sometimes, as Hamachek observes, a young person makes a decision--dropping out of school to begin full-time employment and/or prematurely marrying--which essentially confronts the young person with "adult tasks" before he has mastered those of adolescence.<sup>42</sup> Deleterious results often follow. Generally one has to touch all the bases...and preferably in the right order.

Finally, it should be noted that these tasks are not some externally imposed challenges foreign to the inner needs and desires of the adolescent. Rather, these tasks blend well with the adolescent's own needs--for approval and self-realization, for recognition and relatedness. Somewhat facetiously, one wonders if the adolescent would create these "tasks" if they did not exist? Indeed, as we saw in our discussion of the major issues concerning adolescence, it is legitimate to ask whether the adolescent, by internalizing his culture's expectations, appreciably shapes the dynamic of adolescence and creates the very ambivalence against which he protests.

To what extent are the dimensions of adolescence inherent in that stage of development? Which are culturally imposed? Which are self-imposed? These basic questions are far from resolved by current research and theory.<sup>43</sup>

Still, it would be misleading to end with that hazy view. If one steps back a bit, the main business of adolescence seems quite clear. Schneiders says it well:



The basic and most important task of adolescence is to grow up and to mature--physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, morally, economically, and spiritually. As simple and as trite as this statement sounds, it is nonetheless the most profound truth regarding adolescent development. Without a compelling urge to grow up, and to the extent that he fails to do so, the adolescent cannot become the mature adult he must be if he is to assume unavoidable responsibilities, form satisfying relationships, fulfill the roles that will be expected of him, or achieve important goals that he has defined for himself. Maturity is the sine qua non of manhood and womanhood, and thus the achievement of maturity is the primary task which the adolescent must face.<sup>44</sup>

The developmental tasks of youth, our main concern, are to a considerable degree extensions of these tasks, e.g. going beyond mere heterosexual adjustment to the commitment of a marital relationship. The developmental tasks of youth are more complex and challenging if only because they are increasingly worked out in relationship not just to the family but to an increasingly complex and rapidly changing society.

In adolescence, as is true of each stage of development, the individual who has mastered the developmental tasks of one stage can face those of a subsequent stage with more confidence than anxiety. For those who successfully master what their culture expects of them, one can hardly imagine a more exciting game than these challenges of life offer. But for those who feel the censor of peers and authority figures, for those who for some reason fail to develop the skills, attitudes and understandings expected of them, and those who move into youth crippled by lack of self esteem and self acceptance, there is nothing playful or game-like about the developmental tasks of youth and the challenges of the college years. It is a detailed examination of those challenges of youth which we now begin.

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PART III

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

## CHAPTER 4

### THE SEARCH FOR SELF

No one knows for sure what the world looks like to a newborn infant; babies don't speak or write very well and adults can't recall with perfect accuracy. Yet few would dispute William James' speculation that the world probably appears as a "big, blooming, buzzing confusion." For some time, in fact, the young infant does not even distinguish parts of his body from the rest of the environment. In terms of self-awareness, the neonate has a long road to travel.

But progress comes quickly and sometimes humorously. The infant is fascinated with his own fingers and toes and often through the painful surprise of biting them, discovers that somehow those appendages are more a part of himself than are some other things he attacks. More complexly, booties will come off, feet will not. He has the power to affect certain objects yet other people are needed to change his own location.

The process of exploration and discovery, of growth and development throughout childhood is an exciting one. It can be a fascinating experience to read through a child psychology text; it is even more exciting to watch a child, particularly one's own, develop. But growth is not always automatic and continuous; there are plateaus and even regressions. Furthermore, the developmental tasks of childhood are many and complex; there are physical challenges to master, social

interactions to understand, and mental and emotional complexities to come to terms with. I don't know if the latency period was God's plan or Freud's idea but after the demanding years of early childhood, we and the child welcome the comparatively calm years of late childhood. The journey has been an arduous one and the child appreciates the relative absence of new demands and the chance to consolidate the gains he has made.

But there is a rather grim humor in the nature of human development. Just when the child has finally gotten on top of things-- achieved a measure of self identity, arrived at some feeling for his place in the family and the world, developed social and mental competencies--in brief, just about when the child feels that he has made some sense out of the "big, blooming, buzzing confusion"...it starts all over again. During adolescence, greater physical changes than he has ever consciously experienced occur, the capability for abstract thought opens up whole new worlds and undermines much of the thought which had been guiding his behavior, the rules and goals of social interaction under-go major revision, and he is flooded with feelings and emotions which he can hardly understand much less manage.

The research on the "storm and stress" nature of adolescence is admittedly equivocal yet I am persuaded that for at least those adolescents who go on to college, now more than 50%, you would be on target to assume a confusing and anxiety-provoking transition, rather than something they easily take in stride. They are in a period of rapid change; new, still untested abilities and behaviors must be mastered. The expectations others have for them are confusing and

contradictory; their own self understanding is hazy. All of the above factors tend to heighten anxiety. As Stone and Church, two astute observers of the developing human conclude, "Few adolescents feel really in control."<sup>1</sup>

This is not to suggest that the typical college student has not already made appreciable progress or that he is nearly incapacitated by these new demands. Particularly because adolescence begins, in both a physiological and psychological sense, at an increasingly earlier age, even the college freshman has had at least four to five years to work on the tasks of adolescence. It would be silly to imply that he is still baffled by the appearance of pubic hair or embarrassed by voice changes. Quite likely, he has also achieved considerable emancipation from his parents and made important though initial steps towards self identity. In some cases, even underclassmen are impressively mature by any standard.

Nonetheless, in most cases there remains considerable unfinished business. Though a person may have long before adjusted to the physical changes, he may yet carry with him unresolved and maladaptive emotional reactions to such changes, for example, an early or late physical development pattern. The college student is hopefully no longer characterized by childish dependency but, not unlikely, has only moved to an ambivalent or oscillating stage of dependence-independence. Or--frequently the college student has rejected the religion his parents had inculcated, yet not found a satisfying philosophy of life to replace it with. Disillusioned by new, more realistic insights into society and the behavior of his parents and other models, he is uncertain about whom



or what he can trust. Frequently, the college student has a rough idea of what he was and some vague hopes about what he hopes to be but often confusion about what he is now. Although few of the generalizations we will make fit all of the millions of unique students, it has served me well to consider the question, "Who am I?" as both the central preoccupation and paramount task of late adolescence and youth, a reason why I make a paper of that title an option in most of my courses.

Interminable bull-sessions, experimentation with different behaviors and social roles, sporadic shifts in academic major and vocational choice, the great interest in conflicting values and lifestyles, and the intense importance of interpersonal and particularly heterosexual relationships--all of these characteristics can be interpreted in the context of the quest for identity. This quest is complex and multi-faceted; this chapter and the four which follow all seek to explore and clarify different dimensions of that search.

#### SELF AND IDENTITY: CONFUSION OF TERMS

Before proceeding with our examination of that quest and related personality dynamics, several difficulties must be clarified if not resolved. The first has to do with "personality."

Personality is a system; it is a complex composite of many parts. In theory and research, the parts are often identified and separately analyzed. But in real life, the parts function simultaneously and as a whole, influencing one another. Textbook impressions to the contrary, humans do not follow distinct and autonomous paths of development. Consequently, though each of the next four chapters focuses on one dimension



of that developmental search--the search for self, for others, for meaning, for vocational direction, and, cumulatively, the search for identity--each is inextricably connected to the others. The distinctions we need to make are generally dictated by pedagogical reasons, not by the nature of the phenomenon under investigation.<sup>3</sup>

A second problem pertains to the concept of "identity."

No concept will be of more value to us in attempting to understand the behavior of college students but unfortunately, few concepts have been used in such an ambiguous and confusing fashion. Leites<sup>4</sup> has documented the vague and often contradictory way that "identity" has been used in social science literature. When one further considers the fashionable, every-day usage of the term, one can't help but share Schafer's suspicion that it is often used, by professionals and laymen, as a catch-all to glibly gloss over incomplete understanding of the nature and causes of human behavior.<sup>5</sup> "Identity crisis," for example, has just about been rendered useless.

Erik Erikson deserves major credit for developing and emphasizing this important human ability to "experience oneself as something that has continuity and sameness, and to act accordingly."<sup>6</sup> The healthy personality is a unified organization and the healthy person possesses an inner strength based on self knowledge and an awareness of one's relation to society. We will return to that important matter frequently.

Nonetheless, Erikson is also responsible for promoting confusion concerning his most important contribution. Indeed, in the prologue to Identity: Youth and Crisis, written after many years of discussion

on his concept, he deliberately refused to sharpen his definition, claiming that a precise meaning of the term would be a denial of the rich and provocative ways in which it had been employed.<sup>7</sup>

Broadly, then, identity suggests wholeness, integration and persistence. For the person in the present, it connects past experiences with future expectations. Furthermore, it is a psycho-social concept, relating internal dynamics with external realities. Identity provides reference points for a sense of self.

But "self" creates a comparable problem. Although there obviously is a recurring, unifying and unique force in each of us from day-to-day (a "self"), self is as nebulous a concept as that of identity. Opting for it over identity is like avoiding the culvert on one side of the road only to slide into the other. Lowe, for example, has pointed out six major ways in which the term "self" has been used, most of them mutually exclusive.<sup>8</sup> Wylie's comprehensive reviews of research on "self concept" are in some respects even more discouraging.<sup>9, 10</sup> Coopersmith, a highly recognized authority on self formation acknowledges that there is still insufficient evidence to describe what this complex and multidimensional quality may include.<sup>11</sup>

What is really the self? That which is known to the person himself? Is there also an unconscious self? Is it that which can be seen or at least inferred by others? Are there, as William James wondered, "as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him?"<sup>12</sup> Or is there, under the layers of confusion and pretense, an elusive but eventually attainable "real self?" "Self" has, at least, the dubious honor of a longer history than identity of seeking a precise and acceptable place in psychological discourse...and offers a

larger smorgasbord of definitions and descriptions from which to choose.

In brief then, how does identity differ from self? Or, for that matter, from Freud's "ego?" (Erikson does not help any by preferring to use "ego identity.") The close relationship between identity and self is further complicated by circular definitions. Webster defines "self" as "the identity (my italics), character or essential qualities of a person,"<sup>13</sup> while Erikson himself has observed that "identity...suggests...much of what has been called the self (my italics) by a variety of workers."<sup>14</sup> Bertocci, a respected theorist, brings us full circle by claiming that Freud was describing what we know as the self when he talked about the ego.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, there is no simple or consensual way to resolve these ambiguities and circular definitions. There appears, however, to be some valid differentiations which we can make. An understanding of them is crucial for our approach.

When the literature is carefully examined, a sense of self appears to be a perceptual realization generally experienced already in early childhood. Identity, on the other hand, evolves over many years and is rarely realized before late adolescence or early adulthood, if at all. They differ, therefore, in sequence and timing.

Secondly, identity seems based on self; it is a broader, more inclusive concept. Put another way, a sense of self is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a sense of identity.

Given these distinctions, both of which will be further amplified, and the related ambiguities, it seems advisable, before proceeding, to

preview how the seamless whole of personality will be split among this and subsequent chapters and to clarify how we will use "self" and "identity."

This chapter will focus on "the search for self." We will use that term not as synonymous with identity but in its narrower sense. Our emphasis will be on how an individual comes to see himself as a separate being, not just an extension of his parents, and how he haltingly but increasingly comes to value and act on that autonomy. Said differently, we will try to chart how the shifting proportions of needs for dependency and strivings for independence during development eventually and ideally culminate in a sense of inter-dependence with others. We will discuss the effects of both parental behaviors and social forces, particularly as embodied by the students we deal with in a college setting.

Chapter 5, "The Search for Others," will look at the importance of interpersonal relations in general and of heterosexual relations in particular. Though that search will seem comparatively and refreshingly free of the semantical confusions we have just encountered, we should risk observing that reaching out to others is both an extension of self and a component of identity.

"The Search for Meaning," the title of chapter 6, seems more self-evident. All humans seek meaning but it is particularly during the college years that ideological issues and value choices are sensitively and often painfully wrestled with.

Chapter 7, "The Search for Vocation," will emphasize those decisions which have clear implications for how the adult years will be lived: Drop out of college or graduate? Go into teaching or

business? Grad-school or take a job? House-wife or a career-woman? Our challenge will be to understand the external forces and internal dynamics which affect such decisions--decisions which, though they may appear rather superficial and unrelated to personality development, in actuality considerably shape an individual's sense of identity.

"The Search for Identity" of chapter 8 will reflect that broader, more over-arching definition of identity. It will be a cumulative type of chapter, pulling together the more specific themes of the previous four chapters. We will attempt to see a sense of identity as the composite of an autonomous self, of interpersonal involvements, of ideological commitments, and of a fairly stable view of one's place in adult society. We will seek to address a more complete person, a more total personality. As Madison observes, "Personality is to the outside observer what identity is to the person himself."<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, a sense of self will refer to an awareness that we are someone, a sense of identity to the vision of who that someone is. It is that first, prerequisite step that we will now attempt to better understand.

## THE ROAD TO AUTONOMY

### Dependency and Trust

Though the search for identity eventually involves content (e.g. values) and direction (e.g. vocational plan), the initial search is simply for a sense of self, the feeling that one is a unique person, separate from others, particularly one's parents. More positively, it is the desire and ability to stand on one's own feet, feeling relatively competent to handle the demands of life. That type of

"inner strength" is foundational to most concepts of maturity and mental health<sup>17</sup> and seems necessary if the adolescent is eventually going to establish meaningful interpersonal relationships, live by a personally valid value system, meet vocational demands, and carry into adulthood a sense of identity about which he can feel comfortable.

The road to independence is long and difficult. In contrast to many forms of animal life, the new-born human is almost totally dependent on others. Excepting a few simple reflexes and physiological processes essential for life, he can do little for himself. Without others to meet his needs, the infant could not survive--a fact which is not only the initial link in a long chain of dependency conditionings but a clue to the intensity which often characterizes such feelings. (Note, for example, the unmistakable panic which a two-year old exhibits when he discovers that his mother is no longer in the same supermarket aisle.) So, although the human infant is endowed with far greater potential for personal adequacy and effectiveness than other animals, he is initially considerably more helpless and dependent.

Dependency is also more lengthy for humans. It takes a minimum of 13-14 years for a person to attain adult size and capability, and for an increasing proportion of young people, significant dependencies (perhaps only financial though likely other forms as well) exist well into the third decade of life. Were this fact clearly understood and acknowledged, it would not necessarily be troublesome. What does cause difficulty is that from early on, conflicting and inconsistent independent/dependent messages are both sent and received by the individual, his parents, and society. We simply aren't clear about



**the** behavior expected of a person caught in a protracted adolescence.

Independence is associated with adolescence but in its mature **form**, it is as much the product of all the previous years. In a sense, **the** whole course of human life, beginning when the umbilical cord is **cut**, moves towards increasing autonomy. The rate is not always constant **or** even progressive but the over-all direction is clear and the wise **parent** anticipates it. The parent can no more begin to prepare the **adolescent** for independence at age fourteen or a month before he **leaves** for college than one can plant corn the day one's appetite **yearns** for it.

This initial helplessness of the human being likely constitutes **a** predisposition to anxiety or generalized fearfulness. Particularly **since** the work of Spitz and Ribble with maternally deprived infants **(see** chapter 2) clinicians have stressed the importance of this early **period** of instability. Harry Stack Sullivan, perhaps the most significant American psychiatrist, considered this initial anxiety the corner-**stone** of personality development.<sup>18</sup> More positively, Erikson has **made** a "basic sense of trust" the paramount psycho-social crisis of **development**, the resolution of which significantly determines the **nature** of all subsequent "crises," particularly the identity crisis **of** youth.<sup>19</sup> Both theorists emphasize the importance of warm and **dependable** mothering, a view supported by considerable research with **both** humans and animals.<sup>20</sup>

Paradoxically, then, the major psychological prerequisite for **eventual** autonomy appears to be the experience of fulfilled dependency. **That** is the basis of security and trust. Put another way, a human **being** needs to learn to trust others before he can come to trust



himself. More generally, this is when a person develops prototypic concepts of the world as a "good" or "bad" place, of people as dependable or frustrating, and of himself as worthy or unworthy of love and attention. Obviously, these broad expectancy patterns have long-term implications, shaping not only the search for self but our other search-dimensions as well.

#### Autonomy Versus Shame or Doubt

It is not long after the sense of trust-mistrust is initially though not conclusively established that a second challenge of development occurs. Although the struggle for independence begins at birth, it is particularly and usually during the second year of life that a new challenge predominates. As Erikson puts it:

The child is now twelve to fifteen months old. Much of his energy for the next two years will center around asserting that he is a human being with a mind and will of his own.<sup>21</sup>

Two major forces collide during this period. One is the developing competencies of the child which increasingly give him control over his life and the world and people about him. For example, he begins to walk and with his new mobility is able to initiate exploration. This and other abilities allow the child to exercise choice, the primary behavioral basis for a sense of autonomy.

On the other hand, and not unrelatedly, his parents begin placing new constraints on his behavior. As a dependent infant, they were in near total control of the child. Now they are not and to the child's surprise, these same people he has learned to trust and associate with need gratification now begin to impose limits and discipline. He learns that others also have needs and that sometimes their needs collide

with his own. This is the basic lesson and challenge of socialization.

In many ways, the control of eliminative functions--a developmental task of this same period--symbolizes the gratifications and frustrations of this period. Does he do what he wants or what others want him to do? Again in Erikson's words:

...anal-muscular maturation sets the stage for experimentation with two simultaneous sets of social modalities: holding on and letting go.... Basic conflicts (between these two modalities) can lead in the end to either hostile or benign expectations and attitudes.... Outer control at this stage, therefore, must be firmly reassuring.... Firmness must protect him against the potential anarchy of his yet untrained sense of discrimination, his inability to hold on and to let go with discretion.<sup>22</sup>

In a phrase, then, the parent must be "firm but fair," a motto not inappropriate for teachers also to remember. The foundation of trust is not going to be jeopardized by realistic limits and appropriate discipline. Indeed, it is the absence of such limits that spells trouble. The child needs the security of parental supervision for they can be trusted while many of his embryonic skills cannot. The child needs--indeed, deliberately seeks limits; parental supervision means that he will not go too far. The parent who refuses to set limits or fails to enforce those he has set is contributing to a serious lack of security and to a debilitating anxiety. Permissiveness is no friend of children.

We turn now to a consideration of dependency and autonomy during adolescence. More that could be said about these matters during childhood will be discussed in a subsequent section on the role of parents. Also, at a later point, in discussing the behavior of college students, we will see the consequences of some of the above experiences and parallels in what our response (as educators, not parents) might be.

### Dependency in Adolescence

Adolescence is the time when the conflict between the desire to be dependent and the urge towards self-reliance generally reaches its peak. Though much of our understanding about adolescence is fuzzy and uncertain, his strivings toward independence are a clear and nearly universal trait. In Douvan and Adelson's extensive and impressive study, the struggle for independence was seen as the keystone of adolescent-family relations.<sup>23</sup> This drive is the logical and in a sense ultimate extension of the individual's identification process. Or in White's terms, described earlier, this is a culmination of the drive for competence--the desire to test and use new capacities.

There are three main stages in this drama. In the first, the adolescent yet retains considerable dependence on his parents. In the second, he moves into a quasi-independence that, in actuality, seems more like dependency transferred to his peer group. Finally, he emerges in a stage that begins to resemble mature autonomy. We'll look briefly at each stage.

The first stage involves primarily the parents. They are, of course, generally the second major party in these conflicts. Some parents negotiate this difficult stage with the firmness and fairness of which we spoke earlier. Yet that is a thin and obscure line to follow and, to the despair of well-intentioned parents, no guarantee that the transition will be made much easier or less painful. Ironically, quite often the "better" the parents, the more difficult the struggle. There is always some reluctance to leave the dependency of childhood but in the "ideal" family, the pull backward is even greater. In such

a situation, the adolescent has to create dissension in order to generate the energy and justify the effort he needs in order to free himself.

The dynamics of the parents' role in the adolescent's struggle for emancipation are complex and will receive separate treatment a bit later. In brief, parents tend to make one of two mistakes. In some cases, out of negligence, rejection or confusion, they exert no counter-influence, thereby denying the adolescent the security he needs and the firm base against which to push off. Conversely, other parents read the adolescent's healthy drive for emancipation as a direct attack on their authority or a threat to their own need for fulfillment. As a result, they tend to react in a punitive or possessive manner. This both protracts the struggle and likely produces anger and guilt in the adolescent.

As parental influence decreases, the influence of peers increases, and the adolescent moves into the second act of this drama. As the adolescent moves away from the family orbit into the outside world, he begins to look more to his peers for cues as to what he should think, do and believe. To the individual, this transition usually appears as independence though in actuality, particularly during the early teen years, his acceptance of peer ideas and mores is as uncritical as was his identification with his parents earlier. Though the peer group generally demands independence from parents, the pressure is not really for autonomy. Instead, at this interim stage, dependence is transferred from parents to the peer group.

It is important to note that although this demand for conformity is adamant and even rather oppressive, it somehow serves to promote

growth towards independence, perhaps by enhancing the self confidence of the adolescent. Though most peer groups exert strong pressures toward conformity, this experience somehow lubricates the eventual transition to "true autonomy" and eventual interdependence. A more complete discussion of the role of peers is the goal of the following chapter.

During the latter part of adolescence, there is a greater tendency to break out of narrow conformity to all others, adults and peers alike, and a greater desire to think and act for oneself. This process is a slow and erratic one, of course, but unless there has been serious problems at earlier stages, the direction is apparent. He must leave the sources of support that were so important in childhood and early adolescence and, however scary and confusing, must depend more and more on his own direction and competencies. He must work out his identity in the context of society--a society where his role is ambiguous and one which gives him conflicting messages regarding the independence he should exhibit.

In brief, then, the adolescent moves from dependency on his parents through a quasi-independence that is really a dependence transferred to the peer group into a state of emerging autonomy.

We will now somewhat retrace that road to autonomy taking a closer look at two factors which continually entered our discussion--the role of parents and the effects of culture.

#### THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents appear to play a critical role in most dimensions of development and, as we have already noted, the road to autonomy is no

exception. It is, after all, the parents from whom the child must emancipate himself. It is the parents who are on the other end of the child's pushes and pulls and it is they who must be the primary agents of society in negotiating the process of socialization.

Since it is not difficult to make parents the culprits in analyzing the many aberrations of development, it should be reaffirmed that their role is an exceedingly difficult one. In this case, for example, there is no exact time-table to follow in granting increased independence. Children mature at different rates with occasional spurts and frequent regressions; how can one always accurately judge their readiness? When does judicious freedom-granting blur into counter-productive permissiveness? What thin line separates limit setting from over-protection? When and with what risks should a youngster be allowed to test the limits of his competencies? Children need at times to be protected against failure while yet other failings, paradoxically, help build self-confidence in that they nurture the belief that one can survive and even benefit from failure.

What is often forgotten, by children and adolescents but even by parents, is that parents are human. That is, they have their own needs and personality dynamics which significantly affect their role in this process. We have considered why the adolescent seeks to gain independence. We now consider why parents frequently resist those efforts. As we look at those dynamics, the reader may wish to be alert for ways in which the teacher's dynamics operate in a similar manner.



### Why Parents Hold On

One explanation for the parent's resistance to the adolescent's strivings for independence is called the "lag phenomenon." This refers to the tendency for the parent's perceptions to lag behind the developing competencies of the adolescent. The parent is generally well aware of the adolescent's limits and fears that he will not be able to cope with the "real world." In contrast, the adolescent can at times be naive about potential dangers and in his bravado, shows little recognition of his own limits, neither of which reduces parental fears. Add to this the fact that the developmental changes are so rapid that often the adolescent can hardly keep up and we can hardly fault the parent for lagging behind.

A second explanation emphasizes that the adolescent's independence makes the parents feel unneeded and worthless. Most parents derive considerable personal satisfaction from having their children dependent on them. The mother, in particular, may have revolved her life almost exclusively around raising the children so that the loss of that role strikes deep at her feelings of self worth. As Brennecke and Amick put it, "In a society that encourages mothers to live for their children, many women literally 'die' when their children outgrow their strong need for them."<sup>24</sup>

A variation on this theme which fits particularly the father emphasizes the self-assessment which is common during middle age. If the adult feels fulfilled, he likely will not be threatened by his adolescent's potential and future. Indeed, he'll seek to promote it. But if that parental self-assessment exposes a major gap between earlier aspirations and present achievements, if limits to career advancement

are evident, or if the threat from younger, better trained personnel is felt, it is understandable that the parent may resent the vitality of the young and the opportunities that await them. Though the adult's decline in physical energy and cognitive powers is usually more imagined than inevitable, the process of aging, especially in a culture that worships youth, is not an easy one.

Other parents control their children by unconsciously using them vicariously to attain goals they failed to attain themselves. Often they offer and withhold a conditional love, a manipulative technique which not only controls the development of the child but creates guilt over the legitimate desire to emancipate oneself.

Again, we must be careful not to be unduly demanding or critical of the parents. There is a "dual ambivalence" going on. Both parents and the adolescent are in an approach-avoidance conflict. Each side is at war with each other and with itself and each learns shrewd ways to exploit that psychologically complex state of affairs.<sup>25</sup>

The final explanation of why parents and adolescents have difficulty negotiating this transitional period is the simple truth that it is difficult to strike a perfect balance between the adolescent's emerging autonomy and the parent's responsibility. Particularly because serious problems can arise from either too much or too little control, it would take more than the wisdom of Solomon to perfectly synchronize parental control with emerging abilities, to know when to let go and when not to. Perhaps the wonder is that the process goes as well as it does in so many families. Unfortunately, personality theory and research have a tendency to emphasize what goes wrong more than what goes right. In modern societies, some degree of parent-adolescent

conflict is nearly inevitable. Fortunately, both parties are resilient and capable of surviving blunders and collisions.

In summary, parents may have trouble letting go of their adolescent for a variety of reasons--a lagging perception of the adolescent's abilities, resistance to the sense of growing old, jealousy, honest confusion or for a host of other, sometimes subtle, often unconscious reasons. Nonetheless, all but the sickest of parents have many positive motivations as well and recognize that the adolescent's moving away from them, both physically and emotionally, is a necessary prerequisite for him to have the fulfilled adult life they wish for him. Indeed, the proper concern of the healthy, middle-aged adult and the seventh of Erikson's psychosocial tasks is "generativity"--investing oneself in the development of the next generation.

#### Causes of Dependency: Parents and Professors

Although one of the two major explanations of why children experience difficulty in moving from dependence to independence was inherent in an earlier discussion, our present focus on parental needs provides a better context in which to identify the two major theories of dependency.

The first is Freudian-based and not surprisingly, focuses on the first two years of life. These are years when the child is, by nature, highly dependent, especially on his mother. According to this theory, it is critical that such needs be consistently and warmly met so that the child learns that he can depend on others. If this security is achieved, the child then dares to respond with confidence and initiative to the progressively stronger impulses and greater opportunities for

independent behavior. Consequently, the proportion of dependent versus independent behavior gradually shifts from the former to the latter. The paradox, you may recall, is that a child must first be allowed to be dependent before he dares trust a more independent posture. This theory is very compatible with the Eriksonian trust-mistrust crisis discussed earlier.

The second major explanation comes more from the behavioristic camp and, not surprisingly, is based on a reinforcement model. The difference between this theory and the first is diametrical, not just semantical, for here it is not deprivation but over-indulgence which causes problems. In infancy, dependent behavior is likely to be reinforced; parents like a docile and passive child who seems to derive his greatest contentment from their presence. In most cases, the child does; the mother's voice, nurturance and presence generally become associated with the child's greatest gratifications. Such experiences meet the child's needs but also those of the parents.

Somewhat parenthetically, if perhaps for constitutional reasons the child does not enjoy being held and cuddled, it is not uncommon for parents to respond by emotionally rejecting the child. Some research suggests that it is difficult to determine the cause and effect concerning parental rejection and emotional disturbance in children. Either can set in motion a vicious cycle.

Generally, however, both the parent and infant derive rich need satisfaction from the other. The parent, however, is most in control of the reinforcement contingencies and it requires a healthy parent to adjust willingly to the growing child's need for greater independence,

to reward such behaviors, and to derive satisfaction from seeing their child move towards greater autonomy and maturity.

Bluntly put, the child's independent behavior is saying to the parents, "I no longer need you as much as I formerly did." The parent is being asked not only to accept and to increasingly reward such behavior but, at least prior to late adolescence, simultaneously to assure the child of the parents' love. Often that means the assurance that the parent is not letting go totally or for keeps, a message that even the adolescent desperately needs though rarely acknowledges.

These psychological circumstances certainly offer one of the most difficult challenges of "parenting," particularly because in return the parent typically gets sullenness, some hostility, and little gratitude. But at least in some cases, that is the price of authentic love, the genuine concern for another's welfare. Indulgence and over-protectiveness are usually done in the name of love but they clearly serve the parents' needs more than the child's.

To get ahead of our story a bit, educational personnel often confront the same choices and challenges as parents do. We can do little, at least directly, about deprivation in the early years, one source of over-dependency. But we are in the position to reward differentially independent and dependent behaviors. Like parents, our own need to be needed is often best fed by the student's dependency though his own welfare is best served by us reinforcing independence.

There is a time for students to feed on our ideas but are we equally or more gratified when they exhibit independent thought? Can we be satisfied with "instrumental" dependency--others needing our skills and abilities, while helping to free them from "emotional"

dependency? As counselors, it is rewarding when a client comes to us as one who can help with their problems but do we feel successful and not rejected when the student feels he no longer needs us? In class discussions, are challenges to our beliefs and opinions as welcome as supportive comments? Do we give lip-service to independence but teach in an authoritarian style that reinforces dependence? Does the charismatic teacher dare to look beyond superficial and self-gratifying evidence to see whether the developmental and long-range needs of students are also being met? Can we recognize how many administrative policies, despite the rhetoric of the catalog, are really based on operational convenience and sustain, if not promote, docility and dependence?

Neither parents nor educators are super-human and it is human, not demonic, to function in a way that meets our needs. That's part of wise vocational choice. It is less defensible however, if we meet our needs at the expense of the needs of others. This need for independence creates strain on all involved. Whether in a classroom, family or marriage, it is a strong and healthy person who can over-rule his own neurotic tendencies in order to promote the search for self in others.

### The Declining Importance of Families?

The socialization efforts we've been discussing have long been one of the main challenges of parenting and one of the main purposes of family life. One can reasonably expect that to continue to be so. Yet, before proceeding, we should at least acknowledge that there are those who believe parents have lost a great deal of their influence.

**Essays** on "the death of the family"<sup>27</sup> or less dramatically, the impotence **of** parents have not been rare in recent years. Nor have assertions by **young** people that the world has changed so radically that the values **and** perspectives of their elders are no longer functional or as influential.

Young people might be dismissed as myopic observers for they **have** a tendency, to use C. S. Lewis' metaphor, to mistake the nearest **telephone** pole for the largest. But Margaret Mead is no euphoric **teenager** and she observes the contemporary situation from a lengthily **historical** and broadly cross-cultural perspective. In her recent book, Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap,<sup>28</sup> Mead charts **what** she sees as the declining role of parents in the preparation of **young** people for adult life.

According to Mead, most of human history has been a postfigurative **culture** where change was so minimal that parents, even grandparents, **could** not conceive of any other future for their children than what **their** own lives had been. The young, understandably, looked to their **elders** as their best guides to the life ahead of them.

In the cofigurative cultures of recent decades, there is sufficient **social** change, primarily because of technological advances, that the **young** look comparatively more to their peers than to adults for models **of** appropriate behavior. Nonetheless, "the elders are still dominant **in** the sense that they set the style and define the limits within **which** configuration is expressed."<sup>29</sup>

Mead finds neither model adequate, however, to describe a **culture** of future shock. In a prefigurative society, even peers do

**not** represent what the future will be. Parents certainly do not. **That** our society is still elder-controlled and its institutions **rather** postfiguratively-oriented is responsible, according to Mead, **for** the considerable inter-generational tensions.

Others who also assert a decline in adult and parental authority **appeal** to less radical changes, or at least less disputable trends. **Some** emphasize change in the family structure. For example, during **earlier** periods of our country's history, parents derived support from **the** presence of the extended family. In such a setting, there were **other** meaningful adults who usually endorsed the position and values **held** by the parents. But today is the age of the nuclear family; **extended** families are rare.

Still later, after the decline of the extended family but prior **to when** the nuclear family began moving on the average of once every **five** years, neighborhoods had a stability and intimacy which reinforced **common** values. Bronfenbrenner offers a nostalgic though perceptive **account** of life during that era.<sup>30</sup>

A subsequent force of considerable importance, according to **these** declining-authority theses, was a knowledge explosion which **undermined** the parents' image as the source of wisdom and authority. **Recently** and relatedly, the execution of the Viet Nam War, the behavior **of the** police and National Guard during public demonstrations, **closures** of police corruption and brutality, and particularly the **Watergate** affair have certainly not enhanced the way young people **perceive** those in authority.

A final thesis arises out of the forces we have discussed above. **Feeling** ambivalently enlightened and uncertain, modern parents have



allegedly not dared to be firm or decisive, failing, perhaps, to distinguish between authoritarian and authoritative behavior. Or, ironically, many parents seem to fear that their children won't like them (sometimes parents seem to need the love of their children more than the other way around) and consequently become more a "buddy" than a guardian. Unfortunately, their protestations to the contrary, both the child and the adolescent need a parent, not a friend, and a firm one at that. Establishing identity is not unlike pushing off from a dock in a small boat; the best dock is one that is firm and doesn't move. Even in this post-activism time, the best advice to teachers, parents and administrators is to be "understanding but firm." Emerging independence seems to need some parental resistance or the process is prolonged, not avoided.

Is the importance of parents and the family declining? There is much of truth and significance in these trends we have reported and it is hard to deny at least some erosion of authority in the home. Nonetheless, as cogent as Mead's analysis is in places and in recognition that contemporary adults do need to learn much from the young, Conger still offers a good corrective. He submits that there is little evidence to support the notion that the young have little to learn from parents and considerable evidence that parental behaviors still significantly affect the child's chances of becoming a reasonably happy and effective adult with a positive self image and a sense of identity.<sup>31</sup>

Admittedly, sex roles, vocational choices, and a host of other dimensions of modern life may change, making old blue-prints dysfunctional. Yet the real question, according to Conger, "is not whether parental models are any longer important; rather, it is what kinds of parental models are necessary and appropriate in preparing contemporary

adolescents to cope with the largely unpredictable world of tomorrow."<sup>32</sup>

What form then should such parenting take? A conclusive and consensual answer to that type of question has eluded "experts" for decades. Despite the fact that the effect of parental behaviors on a child's development has been one of the most thoroughly researched topics in all of psychology and despite a mountain of related books, no guaranteed blue-print has evolved. Such research has produced some important findings--but almost as many conflicting ones.

Perhaps Rule offers the most hope for "the parental dilemma."<sup>33</sup> After studying the research, he concluded that what matters the most is not so much exactly what the parent does but why he does it. Permissive or restrictive? Autocratic or democratic? Order or persuade? According to Rule, these dimensions are not as important as we have been led to believe. Rather, if the parent (and teacher?) is basically selfless and unexploitive and acts primarily in the interest of the child, the child will sense those motives and respond favorably to them. Although many characteristics of good parents and good teachers can be identified, perhaps this explains why effective and well-received versions of each come in many styles.<sup>34</sup> If Rule is on the right track, the challenge to parents and teachers is clear.

#### THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL FORCES

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

Reinhold Niebuhr

The search for self is no easy journey; the directions are fuzzy and the motivation ambivalent. The young person seeks the challenges

of autonomy yet is reluctant to leave the security of dependency. Parents both hang on and let go. Peers demand independence from parents yet create strong dependence on the group. And larger society is no different, overtly endorsing independence and self assertion in some ways, covertly rewarding submissiveness and conformity in others. Society seems particularly vague concerning the behavior expected of the older adolescent and college student.

The young person can not ignore this confusion since the formation of identity--and a sense of self--is the product of complex interactions between internal dynamics and external forces. Eriksonian crises are psychosocial crises. They involve personal choices and environmental demands. Neither is ever totally absent; each can have a disproportionate and crippling effect.

On the one hand, an individual may be unable to find his "place" in life because of aberrant or retarded psychological development. In terms with which we are familiar, the individual may fail to achieve an adequate sense of trust, autonomy, or competence and consequently is ill-equipped to successfully master the developmental tasks of later life. For example, in their analyses of student activists, Feuer<sup>35</sup> and Bettelheim<sup>36</sup> were devastatingly critical. They doubted that the young were primarily concerned about stated issues, suggesting instead that the activists' behavior was symptomatic of severely arrested development. They saw the activists' hero-worship of the likes of Ho Che Mein as the arrested search for a strong father and their recalcitrant posture not unlike the negativistic two-year old who has not learned to tolerate any frustration.

### Society on the Couch

Without necessarily subscribing to the equally extreme though laudatory descriptions of the activists, one can still argue that perhaps youth have trouble finding their place in life, not because they are immature but because society really has no place for them. This could be argued in quantitative terms, i.e., the labor market has no place for these 8 million young people. The case can also be argued in qualitative terms. Erich Fromm,<sup>37</sup> Thomas Szasz,<sup>38</sup> R. D. Laing<sup>39</sup> and others have all questioned fundamental assumptions of our society concerning who fits and who doesn't, of who is sane and who is sick. Does the trusting and autonomous young person with a clear sense of identity and a personally and painfully hammered out value system find it easiest to find his place in our society? Would the paragon of mental health and psychosocial development move gracefully into the mainstream of adult life? Or is this the very person who deliberately perpetuates his "adolescence," believing that to do otherwise would violate his integrity and undermine his vitality?

Identity emerges from the matrix of personal dynamics and social forces. To this point, we have emphasized the former over the latter. We need now at least a representative sampling of those external forces, particularly those which affect the search for selfhood. Related social themes will be dealt with more incisively when, in chapter 6, we examine the collision of value systems in contemporary America.

Though now over twenty years old, Riesman's The Lonely Crowd<sup>40</sup> holds up as one of the most important sociological books of the century. In brief, Riesman found America in a transition from one basic type of

social character structure to another, unable, at least in lip-service, to abandon the old ("inner-directed") yet equally unable to fully embrace the new ("outer-directed"). The inner-directed man is pictured as operating with a built-in gyroscope which holds him steadily to his course and to the fulfillment of his purpose. His locus of direction and evaluation is internal. These are qualities we ascribe to the people who led our country to greatness and qualities still used by personality theorists to describe "fully functioning"<sup>41</sup> and "self actualized"<sup>42</sup> individuals.

The new American character, according to Riesman, is more "outer directed." Instead of a gyroscope, this person operates by a built-in radar apparatus, ceaselessly receiving and adjusting to signals from his peers and environment. The goal is to belong; the crime is to be different. The forces of mass society are too strong to resist. To the conformer go the spoils.

Fromm offers, primarily through his early trilogy,<sup>43</sup> a more sophisticated analysis which still appeals to young people today. He doubts that people really want freedom or autonomy because they find it too great a burden to bear. Like Hoffer's "true believer,"<sup>44</sup> many unconsciously seek to lose themselves in a larger social movement which will free them from making decisions or accepting responsibility for them. Fromm, who himself fled Nazi Germany, doubts that either Nazism or the depersonalizing consequences of a contemporary technological culture are impositions on totally unwilling people. Rather, these flights into totalitarianism, conformity, or a lonely crowd are flights from authentic selfhood.

This particular mechanism (automaton conformity) is the solution that the majority of normal individuals find in modern society. To put it briefly, the individual ceases to be himself; he adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns.... This mechanism can be compared with protective coloring some animals assume. They look so similar to their surroundings that they are hardly distinguishable from them. The person who gives up his individual self and becomes an automaton, identical with millions of other automatons around him, need not feel alone and anxious any more. But the price he pays is high; it is the loss of self.<sup>45</sup>

#### A New Age?

Now the books we have cited are not current ones and there certainly are those who would argue that the perspectives offered, though once insightful and valid, are no longer true. In Reich's terms,<sup>46</sup> they would argue that Riesman speaks of the era and mentality of Consciousness II. But we, supposedly, have entered Consciousness III. This is the Age of Aquarius, not the Age of Anxiety, and the situation is almost the opposite of what Fromm described. Individuality is revered, phoniness is deplored, and people are urged to "do their own thing"--openly and honestly. America has greened.

Is this a new age? Are the young today more autonomous in thought and action, less affected by social forces, and less likely to be like Fromm's "marketing personality," selling themselves to the highest bidder?

No small number of recent observers of the "youth scene" have suggested so. Gussner, for example, asserts a broad and provocative thesis.<sup>47</sup> He argues that prior to 1950, authority was centered in three places--the home, the peer group, and institutional experience, e. g. the church, schools, 4-H Clubs, etc.. These forces transmitted ideals and moral standards; these forces were the major external

shapers of identity. But during the 1950's, a fourth pole of authority emerged which significantly altered the balance of power and changed the experience of growing up.

This fourth force was the expansion of media and its subsequent alliance with the peer group. Television offered widespread exposure to an unfiltered world and to the disillusioning images of adult authority of which we spoke earlier. Paperback books and long-play records became mass commodities. The Catcher in the Rye, On the Road, and Lord of the Flies were widely read by the young; Elvis, the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and later hard-rock groups became sub-cultural heroes. "Easy Rider," "The Graduate," and "Midnight Cowboy" were films widely seen. Gussner's point: the thrust of these media ran counter to the values of mainstream American culture and thereby created an "authority dissonance." Consciousness III, it is claimed, takes "self" as the starting point; Keniston, for example, found an "intense individualism" and a preoccupation with personal experience among the young.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, the individual who formerly was judged by the authority poles now judges them. Unlike traditional individualism, which emphasized one's own interests, the new individualism has a more existential twist, emphasizing one's own formation.<sup>49</sup>

Are we into a new age? Is Reich's eye keen? Are Gussner's assessments accurate? Have there been significant changes in the search for self and the way society affects it? It's hard to say for sure though it is beginning to appear that the changes of the 1960's were more apparent than real; there was less there, perhaps, than met the eye. Reich and many others were perhaps guilty of counting their eras

before they were truly hatched. Consciousness III, if it ever really existed, appears to have gone by in a suspicious hurry. Recent surveys, when analyzed in total, suggest that contemporary youth retained or quickly returned to a posture and predicament not unlike that which has traditionally been true. In retrospect, the conspicuous "individualism" seems to have been somewhat exaggerated and spurious.

Empirical support for these impressions comes from recent research with Rotter's I-E Scale--an important measure of internal/external locus of control.<sup>50</sup> During the decade from 1962-1971, there was a marked shift in the average I-E score among college students toward a more external direction.<sup>51</sup> Zimbardo speculates that the Viet Nam War, campus unrest, increased crime and mass violence all served to give the population a feeling of powerlessness over the forces which affect our lives. As this is written in the mid-1970's, we are experiencing an energy crisis, food shortages, a high level of unemployment, and general economic disruption, conditions which further promote powerlessness and "externality."<sup>52</sup>

### Society, Women and Self

In recent years, the feminist movement has been a highly publicized phenomenon. Though people disagree on its merits, few would deny its major influence on contemporary society and lives. Furthermore, though people disagree about which assertions are legitimate and where excesses begin, many people recognize that there was much about traditional sex roles, stereotypes, and societal expectations that was at best, unfair, and at worst, debilitating. We already see more options opening to women and enhanced opportunities for self determination if not self



actualization.

In my view, these changes are essentially good and the resulting climate more healthy--for both sexes. Nevertheless, though this movement will alter the nature of a woman's search for identity, it will not necessarily make it easier. Indeed, the women's liberation movement might well make that quest the more difficult. In the past, she "knew her place," but now her place is anywhere. Before it was acceptable for a female to be dependent but today, that is not an attribute of the "liberated" woman. Traditionally her identity was clearly subordinate and related to the identity of her husband, symbolized not only by her taking on his surname but often by identifying herself as, for example, Mrs. Frank Johnson. Before, she generally did not feel the pressure males did to achieve, to "make something of her life;" it was okay to just be a wife and mother. But now she is told that you can not find "complete fulfillment" in the home and that if homemaking is what you primarily desire, you are the prisoner of either chauvenistic forces, personal insecurity, or both. You are less of a person.

The point is over-stated and not a fair reflection of the women's movement. Yet it does suggest the unsettling conflict many contemporary women experience. These conflicts are particularly acute for the college woman. Among them, we might anticipate more, not fewer "identity crises." This is not, note well, a condemnation of the feminist movement. On the contrary, it promises to be a growth-producing force. But no one ever promised that growth was simple, painless or without a price to pay and it illustrates our main point:

social forces, for better or worse, affect the search for self.

#### THE SHAPING OF SELF IN COLLEGE

During the college years, an individual has more freedom of behavior than ever before or, perhaps, he'll ever have again. Relatively free of family-imposed constrictions and unencumbered by marriage, vocational or other long-term commitments, the college student is free to engage in role and behavior experimentation.

The college student's relationship to autonomy is two-edged. His circumstances both favor its development but also, to varying degrees, require its attainment. If he has not to some degree achieved emotional independence from his parents, freed himself from childish needs and conflicts and moved toward greater ego-strength and a more internal locus of evaluation, he will likely have difficulty with the developmental tasks of college years. Trent and Medsker, in summarizing their study of 10,000 high school graduates, report, "What most distinguished the 'experimental' group of college persisters from the 'control' groups of withdrawals and especially non-attenders was the development of autonomy."<sup>53</sup> Elsewhere, the authors argue that if the development of autonomy is limited, the development of identity and the realization of potential are also generally limited.<sup>54</sup>

The development of autonomy is clearly important--for the college years but also for adult life. Jahoda stressed the presence of autonomy in her review of major concepts of mental health.<sup>55</sup> Maslow describes resistance to enculturation and relative independence from their environment as characteristic of self actualized individuals.<sup>56</sup> They listened more to "inner voices" than to the chorus of society.

In the following section we will attempt to isolate some of the steps towards autonomy typically taken during the college years. The following discussion owes much to Chickering's important research.<sup>57</sup>

### Regulation of Emotions

One might say that the psychic achievement of early childhood lies in the mastery of the body, that of the latency period in mastery of the environment, and that of adolescence in mastery of the emotions.<sup>58</sup>

For many, maybe most people, emotions have a sinister reputation. They are seen as mysterious and potentially dangerous. Emotions supposedly can get out of control and lead to all sorts of undesired behavior. We'd do better, the idea seems to be, to trust our thoughts rather than our feelings. And most of education, deliberately or not, subscribes to such a view.

There is some truth to such concerns. Impulsive, emotionalized behavior can be harmful and part of autonomy and maturity involves the shift from external to internal controls of behavior. Yet in a healthy model of personality, the regulation of emotions includes expression as well as suppression; there are appropriate times to exhibit as well as inhibit emotions. For the college student, the former rather than the latter may be the greatest emotional challenge.

Early adolescence is a time when the young person experiences new and frighteningly powerful urges and emotions. He responds in part by erecting strong defenses and rigid controls. As he moves into the college years, these controls are in ascendancy for he generally lacks confidence that he can flexibly and wisely regulate their expression. Sanford is consistent with the research when he describes the typical

freshman as dogmatic, rigid, and authoritarian.<sup>59</sup>

The challenge to the college student is to become more aware and trusting of his emotions. He must come to see feelings as part of himself, as legitimate, and as information upon which to base certain decisions and behaviors. As he tentatively tests and increasingly integrates these emotions, he comes to develop a flexible control-system of expression and suppression.

Sexual and hostile feelings, not surprisingly, offer the most difficult challenge. Impersonal institutions, arbitrary authority and new living situations coupled with his newly acquired cognitive powers frequently provoke strong anger. Sexual energy is at a new height amidst provocative circumstances. Merging sexual needs with affection, respect, and other interpersonal values is a difficult task; lopsided expression (selfish gratification) or suppression (no dating) are not rare responses to this difficult challenge.

Considerable research on personality change during college years, some of which will be reviewed in chapter 8, verifies that indeed there is a general trend towards less dogmatic and authoritarian thinking, greater openness to experience, and more flexible behavior.<sup>60, 61</sup> Such control fosters more openness to new information and the processing of it leads to still more complex and sensitive regulation. Conversely, the lack of emotional management constricts intellectual processes thereby undermining this and other cognitive endeavors. Heath also concluded that when there are deficient emotional controls, learning is impeded and achievement falls short of potential. He says:

The immature youth has a greater sense of being bound up and limited by his own problems; he does not feel himself to be inwardly free.... The arena in which his developmental problems

are being fought is an internal one, rather than in the more objective world in which mastery and achievement is more readily recognized and rewarded.... He too (the immature student) described himself as erratic, bottled-up, impulsively irresponsible, introversive and non-social.... His control over strong internal disruption forces was erratic and tenuous and little energy was available for effective communication and adaptation.<sup>62</sup>

### Building a Sense of Competence

White's concept of competence has been an influential idea from the time he introduced it.<sup>63</sup> Initially, as we noted in chapter 2, it was used to explain the drive towards mastery exhibited already by infants. Increasingly though, it is seen as a major component of motivation for people of all ages. Youth may be a stage second only to early childhood where it is particularly conspicuous.

A sense of competence is the opposite of feelings of helplessness, inferiority, or lack of initiative. It suggests confidence in one's abilities and allows the person to take risks. It is both the result of autonomous behavior and the cause of further extensions of independence. As is true with much of human behavior, either a positive or negative cycle of self-perpetuating behavior is set in motion.

The competence most associated with higher education is intellectual competence. For many educators, cognitive development is the main if not the only business of education. Not surprisingly, numerous studies conclusively demonstrate, for example, progressive increases in the acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking, and other intellectual skills.<sup>64</sup> It is open to question whether colleges ignore not only other important dimensions of personal growth, an issue we will address in the final chapter, but even more important aspects of intellectual competence, e.g. the ability to identify problems, to

synthesize and integrate information from diverse sources and the ability to invent answers rather than just looking them up.<sup>65</sup>

It is important to remember that intellectual development, be it from maturation or education, has utility far beyond "academic work." These mental abilities serve the developing person in many ways. The power of abstract and critical thinking, for example, allows the person to probe an idea in depth, consider questions of ethics and values, and anticipate his possible future circumstances. Significantly, these abilities allow for "mental" trial-and-error explorations of greater range than he could actually engage in and with less final consequences.

There are social competencies as well as intellectual ones. We live in an interpersonal world; most tasks or goals ultimately necessitate interpersonal skills. Social deficiencies which were tolerated or hidden in earlier family life are exposed when emancipation and the quest for autonomy enlarges one's life space and increases one's contact with a variety of people. College circumstances require such skills and tend to promote them, though perhaps not as deliberately or as well as they should. Again, we will return to such prescriptive thoughts in the final chapter.

### Becoming More Autonomous

Although the young person has been moving towards autonomy since birth, the status of this autonomy often remains precarious even into the college years. Both dependency and independence remain evident. At times his behavior reflects almost random or rebellious "independence," other times he rigidly adheres to inculcated guidelines or parental wishes. A common example is the following of a vocational plan which

says more about the parents' needs than his own.

There are two basic forms of dependence or independence--emotional and instrumental. Emotional independence means becoming progressively free of the need for continual reassurance and approval. Initially and primarily, it means needing less of such support from parents. For a time--and for some individuals too long a time--this dependency is transferred to peers, to non-parent adults, teachers or institutions. Eventually, however, the disengagement becomes more complete. The individual may recommit himself to a life-style or value-system not unlike that held by his previous supports, but it should be for his own doing, not still another attempt to win their approval. With mature autonomy, the locus of evaluation should become more internal. In many of the extensive case studies which Madison has done, he sees such differentiation from parents as one of the most valuable consequences of the college experience.<sup>66</sup>

Instrumental independence refers to the ability to cope with tasks and problems without immediately or regularly seeking the help of others. It reflects a confidence in one's competencies and is nurtured by independent efforts. Unfortunately, colleges offer limited opportunity to gain this experience. Work is assigned, procedures are prescribed, and certain right answers are expected. To top it off, the college student typically remains financially dependent on his parents. Generally, the formal academic program of most colleges does little to facilitate mature autonomy and in many ways impedes it. Fortunately, the less structured parts of the college experience do a better job of promoting such growth.

When the road to autonomy is traveled well, the result is not some kind of self-sufficiency but an understanding and welcoming of interdependency. In relation to parents, for example, there is almost inevitably a stage of disengagement. Often it is necessary for the adolescent to physically move from the house in order to establish the necessary psychological distance. Frequently, as a further, rather visible demonstration of that break, the college student will go for weeks or even months without calling or writing his parents. As he comes to see his parents more realistically, there can be doubt, anger, and disillusionment.

But once the young person has demonstrated that he can be independent, he is usually desirous and able to re-establish a meaningful and more mutual relationship with his family. Sure of his autonomy, he can recognize with decreased threat and increased affection the ties that bind him to others, certainly in a family but even in the larger social structure. The Newmans summarize this process well:

At no other developmental stage is the person as likely to be as alienated from his parents as during later adolescence. During earlier stages preceding this period, one feels a psychological closeness to parents because one is dependent upon them. During later stages following this period, one feels a psychological closeness to parents because one is becoming more like them. During later adolescence the need for autonomy supersedes both dependence and identification.<sup>67</sup>

#### OUTCOMES: HEALTHY AND OTHERWISE

Under optimal conditions, as we have noted, the young person weaves his way through the hazy period when he is no longer a child but not yet an adult. He moves from relative dependence to greater independence to a realization of our ultimate interdependence. He moves from the "oughts" of others to a more internal guidance system.



He becomes involved with others, not out of a desperate or neurotic dependency but in a deliberate and selective way. No man is an island and the healthy person doesn't wish to be one.

Ideally, the individual achieves not only self-hood but self esteem. He not only comes to recognize himself as a separate person, distinct from his parents, but comes to like and accept that person.

How different this world would be if everyone's development followed such a timetable, if everyone achieved mature autonomy and self esteem. Unfortunately, such is not the case. College students, for example, exhibit different characteristics and assume different psychological postures than those described above. We will look at such postures or types of students in a more global way in chapter 8 but for now, our attention will be focused on those with problems particularly with the search for self.

### Shame and Guilt

As commonly distinguished, guilt is the result of transgressing some prohibition; shame the consequence of failing to reach some goal or ideal.<sup>68</sup>

Guilt can be healthy if one subscribes to the idea that there are some standards and principles which people should follow. Some argue, in fact, that guilt is necessarily one of the main components in the socialization process. Yet there comes a time when the adolescent must go against that inculcated conscience or at least break away from those most responsible for his control system, i.e., his parents. Perhaps some guilt is unavoidable but it is hardly crippling when the parents support these independent strivings. It's quite another matter

when, verbally or nonverbally, the parental response is a variation of "After all we have done for you..." or "What an ungrateful child!"

Failing to reach certain goals and ideals can lead to shame. Like guilt, it can be the result of idealistic standards, standards perhaps imposed by the parents though more likely based on the typically unrealistic hopes and dreams of the adolescent. Unfortunately, adolescents seem to be unduly sensitive to failure and inclined to see it as evidence of their inferiority and inadequacy rather than a reflection of inappropriately high standards.

When we encounter the "shameful" student in the classroom, he often appears to be anxious, dependent and eager to please. He tends to be very grade conscious and much prefers factual matters to ambiguous ideas. Sometimes his high standards are self imposed though often grades take on inordinate importance because academic performance is still an attempt to win the love of his parents.

He is eager to win our love, too, and seems to respond best to teachers who "care about them." Generally this student is anxious around authority figures because he transfers to such relationships the emotional dynamics of his parental relationship.

### Self Concern and Inferiority

It is a short jump from our previous topic to this one for feelings of guilt and shame easily lead to inferiority and isolation. For example, the student whom we euphemistically call "shy" is frequently a person experiencing considerable inner turmoil, particularly when forced to interact with others or to speak publicly. Full of self doubt and expecting failure, these persons tend to be so preoccupied

with their own fears about their performance and the reactions of others that they bring only marginal concentration to the task at hand, e.g. speaking in class. Self conscious and experiencing acute stress, their mind is not free to pursue productive much less creative thinking. They can not concentrate on the content of another's message much less empathetically tune in to the feelings and attitudes of others. In terms of both the intellectual and interpersonal competencies we discussed earlier, such a person functions at a serious disadvantage, setting in motion a self-defeating cycle which feeds on itself.

When an older person is so sensitive to failure, seeing it not as part of trial-and-error learning but tantamount to ridicule and rejection, one has to suspect a long and early history of ridicule and rejection. You may recall that in Erikson's system, shame and self-doubt were the result if a sense of autonomy did not develop out of the second psychosocial crisis. Self control may have been learned but it assumed an anxious and constricting nature. As Rappoport puts it:

There can be no autonomy without self-control, but that self-control without self-esteem is not true autonomy. The child who acquires some degree of self-control out of fear may see every new choice situation as dangerously threatening. True autonomy will yield a sense of pride and good will; fearful self-control will yield doubt and shame.<sup>69</sup>

#### Hostility: Direct and Indirect

Although rebelliousness is an appropriate and frequent stage of breaking away from parents and parent-substitutes, the young person can become rebelliously fixated in what essentially remains a state of dependency. Despite his loud proclaimers to the contrary, it is still

behavior that is primarily a response to the authority and position of others, not autonomous behavior guided by internal guidelines. Psychologically, there really isn't much difference between compulsive acquiescence and compulsive disagreement.

As a life-style, it often turns into a kind of pseudo-independence which requires defiance of and direct challenge to authority. As such, it is an over-reaction to remaining and unwanted dependency needs. Though the individual denies such an interpretation, in fact, can not consciously recognize it, such blatant and compulsive self-sufficiency betrays a lack of true self-esteem and self confidence. In Shakespeare's phrase, he "doth protest too much."

The ambivalence of his own needs and the ambivalence of his relationship with, for example, his parents is also too threatening to recognize. Therefore, he can not see them realistically--as people with faults and limits whose love and care he nonetheless still desires. Rather, he often must over-react and dismiss them as hypocritical and manipulative tyrants. Rebellion can serve a constructive purpose, as Farnsworth observes,<sup>70</sup> but when it is uncritical, unfocused and not tempered by an appreciation of the point of view and feelings of the people it is against, it tends to be a spurious autonomy and a form of "proving" behavior.

This dissatisfaction with self often expresses itself in hostile behavior towards others, either directly, as described above, or in more passive and defensive ways. Mann and his associates<sup>71</sup> found this type of person a frequent occupant of the college classroom, identifying him as a "sniper" and describing him as picking away at the authority of the teacher. He tends to quibble about the nature of course

requirements and procedures. This type of student is particularly annoying because he tends to deny this hostile intent and avoid direct encounter.

#### IN SUMMARY

We have barely begun our analysis of the individual's quest for identity. Other dimensions need also to be considered and we must resist the temptation to try, at this point, to explain larger patterns of behavior and personality constellations. The variations and aberrations of identity which we can already see developing can best be examined in chapter 8.

This chapter has focused on what we have called "the search for self." As defined early in the chapter, "self" comprises the core of "identity." As such, it is a most necessary but not sufficient condition for identity. The individual must master still other developmental tasks if psychological maturity is to be approximated.

With our focus on mature autonomy and the somewhat overstated emphasis on movement from dependence to independence, we should again make clear that the final posture of the healthy adult is, more specifically, interdependence. As Lindgren observes:

This is the pattern throughout life: each person is to some degree dependent on those around him and is at the same time independent of them. The needs that produce dependent and independent behavior differ markedly in their intensity at various periods in the developmental span of existence, but some aspect of both is always present. There are some things that the "helpless infant" must do for himself, and even the most competent and able adult is to some extent dependent on others and enjoys some aspects of this dependency.<sup>72</sup>

Extreme dependence and extreme independence are both pathological in an adult.

A second danger may be that we have been too negative in our treatment. For various reasons, psychologists are often more adept at explaining how development goes wrong than how and why it goes right. We should be clear--some young people achieve a sense of self with minimal stress and self consciousness. For some, society's mores and expectations are communicated clearly, consistently and even attractively; such young people welcome the chance to move ahead. Others have the good fortune to have parents entering the last third of adult life with a sense of fulfillment and having no need to live vicariously through their children. Emancipation comes early and gradually, never so harshly promoted or strongly resisted that the adolescent loses his sense of security or misunderstands the motives of his parents.<sup>73</sup> For some, it is hardly a quest; there is little questioning. They achieve mastery over themselves and their environment, have some understanding of the process, develop a clear concept of themselves, and rather like what they see. Though relatively unpublicized, such young people do exist, though we must be careful not to confuse them with those who out of anxiety and defensiveness, prematurely foreclose the identity process. This too will be examined in chapter 8.

As we move on to other dimensions of the young person's search for identity, remember that those who have achieved a sense of self have a decisive advantage over those who haven't. Behavior is often self-perpetuating; success feeds on success, failure on failure. Cause and effect become mixed together.

Before the developing person can dare to abandon the security of childhood dependence, he must have some idea of who he is and how others see him, of where he is going and what his chances are of getting there.

Yet he must also have a reasonable degree of autonomy and self esteem before he can meaningfully begin to seek answers to those questions and explore other dimensions of his existence. Inevitably that response involves other people, interpersonal quests we can now consider in detail.

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## CHAPTER 5

### THE SEARCH FOR OTHERS

Man is a social being. He lives his life in the context of others--  
his parents, his siblings and peers, his own spouse and children, his so-  
ciety and culture. Indeed, it is hard to conceive of man as human apart  
from his social context. For example, nearly all of the twenty major  
needs Murray ascribed to man must be met, either directly or indirectly,  
through association with others.<sup>1</sup>

Even as we charted the search for self, it became obvious that  
the journey was not a solitary one. Parents, peers and significant  
others inevitably became involved. It was a sense of self as being  
separate from others and a self concept that was essentially a "looking  
glass" reflection of how we saw others reacting to us. Dependence and  
independence, by very definition, involve others and a sense of trust  
both reflects past relations and shapes future ones. In sum, the  
personality-shaping experiences that we have already examined were essen-  
tially interpersonal experiences.

It is difficult to over-state the importance of interpersonal  
relations. Some personality theorists, most notably Sullivan,<sup>2</sup> come  
close to making such relationships sine qua non of the healthy personal-  
ity. In his opinion, if an individual is capable of establishing and  
maintaining reciprocally satisfying relationships with others, we need  
not be much concerned about his psychological adjustment. Conversely,

if the individual is unwilling or unable to develop such relations, it is a serious symptom, regardless of what other strengths the person may exhibit. Though such assertions are somewhat over-stated, an individual's interpersonal competencies are a sensitive barometer of general psychological health.

Our primary interest in the college student's social nature again suggests the conceptual need for a two-stage view of adolescence or, as will be less confusing in the long run, the stage of "youth." In our organization, a sense of identity is the young person's ultimate developmental task. But involved in that psychological posture is the ability to establish and maintain mature and meaningful relationships with others. Such relations are a major causative force and consequence of an emerging individual identity. Nonetheless, such behaviors can not generally be expected from the teen-aged adolescent. Before he can relate in empathetic and intimate one-to-one relations, he needs considerable interpersonal experience and practice, often in a safer group setting. Put another way, before one reaches individual identity, the goal of youth, he needs to experience group identity, the primary concern of adolescence. Hence the importance of peers.

#### PEER RELATIONS

Relations to peers have a special importance to the developing person. As parents become comparatively less important, peers become more so. And though parents obviously play a critical role in development, it is one's ability to cope with and relate to peers that will essentially determine an individual's effectiveness and satisfaction in life. Most of our life involves relating primarily with equals, with

peers.

Particularly because our educational system is predominantly age-graded, it may be as early as nursery school that the individual is confronted with the challenge of peer relations. Though he has had interpersonal experience since birth, peer relations require new roles and different behaviors. And there is no escaping the challenge. Peers become increasingly important during the elementary years; they assume paramount significance and influence during adolescence. As identity begins to consolidate during the college years, peers lose some of their influence. Yet in other ways, they gain more importance. Particularly for the residential college student (vs. the commuter), and except for brief and apparently rather insignificant contact with professors, his social world is almost exclusively populated with peers. Perhaps it isn't surprising that Jacobs<sup>3</sup> and many researchers since him<sup>4</sup> have found peers, more than faculty or college curriculum, to be the significant factor in changes during the college years.

Although we will examine the role and functions of peer groups in detail a bit later, we can note here that peers are important for at least two major reasons. The first is that because of structural changes in society, as Talcott Parsons<sup>5</sup> and others have noted, the process of socialization has shifted considerably from the family and other traditional institutions to peers and the "youth culture." This is a change, of course, with profound sociological and psychological ramifications, some of which we encountered earlier in our discussion of Mead's "prefigurative" culture<sup>6</sup> and Gussner's "peer-media alliance/fourth pole of authority."<sup>7</sup>

Relatedly but more personally, peers are important to the adolescent and youth because it is primarily among them that he negotiates a long and confusing transition rather bereft of clear landmarks and guidelines. To a significant extent, the young look primarily to each other for direction and support. Consequently, and returning to our starting point, competence in peer relations is a vital developmental task.

Before beginning our analysis of peer relations, three handicaps should be noted. The first is a shortage of sound research and reliable description. Unlike parental influences, which have been exhaustively researched, the effects of peer interactions have been relatively ignored. Until recently, psychoanalytic thought had a dominant influence on the study of human development and thereby directed a disproportionate emphasis on the analysis of parent-child relations. As White further observes,

We owe this curious imbalance to a situation common in the history of knowledge: a breakthrough at one point tends to absorb interest and produces a neglect of other problems that at the moment seem less amenable to study.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, much of the empirical data which we do have on peer relations in adolescence seems remote and dated. Though the inherent nature of both adolescence and peer relations likely remains constant across time, the more overt characteristics (what's "in") and ground-rules change with bewildering rapidity--often because a youth-minded adult cult has adopted the mannerisms which adolescents originally developed as a badge of independence from the adult world. As a result, much that has been written, particularly landmark studies like Hollingshead's Elmtown's Youth,<sup>9</sup> seem rather foreign to the current scene.



Finally, much of what has recently been written now seems severely undermined by misperceptions and exaggerations. With no small amount of Pyrrhic assistance from the mass-media, we were led to accept as truisms the existence of a counter-culture, generation gap, and sexual revolution. Only recently has evidence appeared which suggests that many of us were bamboozled by the media's sensationalism and faulty sense of proportion.

Because of these handicaps, perhaps we would do well to back up and start at the beginning of peer relations.

#### Peer Relations in Childhood

Although relationships with parents are crucial for the human infant, he is less a social being than he'll ever be again. Piaget saw the first 18-24 months of life as the "sensorimotor" stage, suggesting that important maturational changes and the mastery of basic skills were the main business of this period. Admittedly, other people, including peers, are likely to be a part of a rich and stimulating environment we now believe to be crucial during this period. Yet it is not until around age two that a child seems to take an interest in people like himself.

Even then, he is likely to find his peers more curious than satisfying, preferring instead the presence of adults. "Big people" seem to understand him better, are more nurturant, and not so inclined to play with the same toy he wants. During the opening days of nursery school, most children prefer the safety of the adult attendants over the unpredictable behavior of their peers.

But the growing child has no choice. Because of the age-grouped nature of his society, he is going to have to come to terms with these same-sized peculiarities. Eventually, of course, he will come to see and experience the special opportunities and rewards available only through his peers and, consequently, place more value on such relations.

Initially, peer groups hardly qualify to be called that for, psychodynamically, there is little occurring among the members. Be it in the sand-box or the neighborhood, geographic proximity, more than anything else, determines who the child plays "with." The child spends time with those who happen to be there but there is little evidence of the interpersonal or group dynamics which later become so significant. "Parallel play" barely qualifies as social interaction.

In Piagetian terms, the pre-school child is primarily ego-centric. This is not intended to have the selfish connotations it would have in describing an older, self-centered person but rather to suggest that cognitively, the child is simply not capable of getting outside his own perspective and of empathetically putting himself in the place of another, abilities foundational to mature interpersonal relationships.<sup>10</sup> Social relations are also heavily dependent on speech but the pre-school child has minimal communication skills as well. We might also add the abilities to tolerate frustration and delay gratification to the list of qualities important in social interactions but rarely possessed by young children.

The implication is that older children and adults possess such abilities. Such is not, of course, always the case. Adults are not always empathetic and sensitive, many conversations are more like

reciprocal monologues than dialogue, and even some marriages are only more complex forms of parallel play. In some ways, in fact, young children deserve higher marks than adults for there is little evidence among them of the forms of discrimination so characteristic of more "mature" interactions. Young children seem to play together with little awareness of differences in sex, skin color, physical appearance or social status.

As the youngster moves into school and middle childhood, his interactions under-go change, at least as much because of the modeling influence of older children as because of internal changes. Groups take on increased structure and become more exclusive. Older children, especially during the junior high years, can be shockingly insensitive to the feelings of others, deriving as much satisfaction from keeping someone "out" of the group as from being "in" themselves. Few youngsters possess the social security or more important inner security necessary to openly befriend those peers who fall outside the clique's strict criteria of acceptability, preferring instead to enhance their sense of status and acceptability at the expense of the "losers." Such forms of rejection if not overt mockery and harrassment, often responsible for deleterious consequences in the victim, are no strangers to even the high school or college scene. It seems a sad commentary on our socialization processes that many people grow up more adept at reducing the status of others than at utilizing legitimate means to elevate their own.

### The Function of Peers in Adolescence

As peer relations move toward adolescence, several trends are evident. First, the cliques described above become even more distinct and personally important. Though it was important for the child to have friends, there was not the pressure to belong to a distinct group.

Secondly, as the adolescent's activities increasingly take and keep him away from the home, parental control decreases and peer influence increases.

Thirdly, cognitive and emotional growth increasingly allows adolescent interactions to approximate mature interpersonal relations. In contrast to the collective monologues of children, adolescents begin forming intense friendships based on self-disclosing communication.

In brief, peer relations become extremely important during adolescence. We will now take a more detailed look at those changes with a particular eye for the developmentally important roles and functions peer relations serve.

Cliques and crowds. In our culture, distinct cliques seem to be characteristic of nearly all junior and senior high schools. Based on interests (e.g. drugs) or abilities (e.g. athletics), social class or academic performance, most schools have their "jocks" and "freaks," "brains" and "hoods." Though the individual may initially or periodically try to assess his own needs and values relative to the varied group identities, the choice is generally not so conscious or even self-determined. In any case, most students, by virtue of their characteristics, become linked with one such group and bound by its

norms and expectations.

In these small groups, important interpersonal competencies are developed. The individual confronts "different" types of people than he has been exposed to before and new models; he learns that other families are not identical to his own. He learns new norms and standards and gains important insights concerning how and when he affects others. To be sure, the child also used peer relations to develop new learnings and skills; he also tested himself and was significantly shaped by the feedback. Yet the child remained primarily oriented to his parents.

Not so for the comparatively emancipated adolescent who has successfully negotiated part of the difficult road to autonomy we discussed in the previous chapter. Though such a 15 year old, for example, is not likely as autonomous as he believes, important familial ties have been cut. And it is with probably more anxiety than exhilaration that he begins to sense that he "can't go home again," at least not in the same way.

In many ways, then, these small groups replace the family as the small, well-defined unit where the adolescent "belongs," gains status and security, and receives help and support in solving the problems of growth and development. And because the early adolescent retains strong dependency needs, in part because of his yet fluid identity and confusing social status, the peer group offers the much needed stabilization he previously felt at home.

Though these cliques claim the adolescent's primary commitment, it seems likely that the large, loosely knit "crowd" serves more important developmental functions. In such contexts, acceptable behavior

is not so rigidly defined and the adolescent is freer to engage in valuable though at times dangerous experimentation with new behaviors and roles. Here he can try out new ways of social functioning with fewer, or at least less serious risks. He learns new understandings about power and leadership for here, in contrast to the family, they are more earned than predetermined. He can test his own abilities, compare himself with others at a similar point in development, and take freer steps towards deciding who he is or what he wants to be. Unfortunately, such efforts towards self-discovery tend to be timid and conforming. The typical adolescent takes minimal, not optimal advantage of a stage in life which holds more potential for new growth and remediation of past malformations than we have commonly recognized.

In summary, then, though the adolescent cliques and crowds possess considerable growth potential, it is severely constricted by the adolescent's insecurity and the group's pressure to conform. Membership is treated not as a right but a privilege. Since such rejection or expulsion is seen as a catastrophic possibility to be avoided at all costs, the adolescent often becomes enslaved to peer pressure and within a rather superficial and growth-inhibiting value system.

Friendships. Friendships, differentiated here from the more superficial group relations, hold a special place of value among adolescent peer relations. Evident already in late childhood, they grow in maturity and importance. Compared to the rather self-conscious, role-playing, popularity-seeking behavior that characterizes adolescents in groups, friendships allow for a more honest and intimate form of communication. They provide an opportunity to deal with the confused feelings and

ambivalent motivations that we've alluded to often before.

These friendships meet a vital need because much of this emotionally charged inner material can not be shared with parents, primarily because much of it has to do precisely with them, e.g. conflicting feelings of love and hate, dependency and independence. Because of the fear of ridicule and rejection, such concerns can only indirectly, symbolically or symptomatically be the agenda of larger groups. Hence the importance of a "best friend."

Such relations allow the young person to explore and define himself, to check out with another certain reactions, behaviors, and impulses. Or, as a listener, he can expand his range of experiences in a vicarious and less threatening manner. At their best, adolescent friendships approximate an informal brand of psychotherapy involving safety and self-disclosure, insight and growth. As Douvan and Adelson observed:

Friendship engages, discharges, cultivates and transforms the most acute passions of the adolescent, and so allows the youngster to confront and master them. Because it carries so much of the burden of adolescent growth, friendship acquires at this time a pertinence and intensity it has never had before nor (in many cases) will ever have again.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps with less intensity but with more meaning and stability, friendships continue to be important throughout adolescence, providing both valuable psychological benefits and offering a rehearsal for the deeper and more mature relations of adulthood. Interestingly, girls achieve this stage at an appreciably earlier age than boys. Whereas boys' friendships revolve more around mutual interests and common activities, the girls' friendships are based more on talking and interpersonal concerns, perhaps "a precursor of later lifelong interpersonal

orientations."<sup>12</sup>

Despite differences in timing, such relations assume increased priority for both sexes as they approach and enter the college years.

#### Peer Versus Parental Influence

Some measure of tension between peer and parental influence, at least as perceived by the adolescent, seems inevitable. Parents have turned out to be human beings with limits and faults, falling short of childhood idealizations and the excessive standards of adolescents. Moreover, as the person matures, less of his life is under the direct surveillance and control of parents. Peers gain in importance and influence.

As observed in chapter 4, parents have a difficult challenge in determining when to let go and where to set limits. Parents who have invested much in their children and who are concerned about their development obviously take a strong interest in the nature of these peer influences. If peer values and behavior are essentially compatible with the parents' standards, the tension is minimal. If not, conflict results. Parental questions about his friends are seen by the adolescent as intrusive and efforts to discourage or forbid certain activities or friendships are likely only to further alienate the adolescent and increase the time he spends away from home. When the adolescent sees his independence threatened, it may only strengthen his commitment to the disapproved involvements.

When conflicts do exist, the adolescent is torn between conflicting poles. Resolution requires an assessment of the reward and punishment power of each side. Frequently, the parents come out second best



in that assessment for as Moursund observes:

One reason for the peer group's strong influence on its members is the immediate rejection often dealt out to those who do not conform. For parents, withdrawal of love and esteem, or expulsion from the group (the family) is usually a drastic last resort when dealing with their children, but it is one of the first things that may happen when a peer group must deal with an unruly member.<sup>13</sup>

Put differently, though parents generally hold a higher trump card than do peers, they usually can not bring themselves to play it.

Nevertheless, there are several reasons why parents fear peer influence more than perhaps is necessary. In the first place, because of various religious, educational, and socio-economic commonalities, the values of peers and parents often over-lap. More than parents recognize, peers reinforce parental values.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, peers help promote understandings and skills which an adolescent needs in order to become the kind of adult parents desire. He learns to relate, quite obviously, to peers, something necessary but impossible to experience in a family. Furthermore, in contrast to a family where leadership is biologically determined, the growing person must learn to function in groups where social roles are more objectively determined by the characteristics of the people involved.

Finally, research suggests that it is erroneous to assume, as many parents seem to, that peers have more power and influence than parents. Though peers may predominantly shape the nature of dress, language and leisure time activities, parents appear to have greater influence concerning basic and more important moral and social decisions.<sup>15</sup>

The above conclusion assumes a reasonably healthy family characterized by warmth and respect, a family with reward value. However, when a

parent is indifferent to the child's welfare or so dogmatic that he makes no attempt to meet the child "half-way," there is little doubt that the adolescent can adopt peers as his primary reference group.

Parents must recognize other ways that they explicitly or implicitly encourage the dominance of the peer group. Some parents, for example, place so much emphasis on popularity and affiliative success that in effect the parental pressure on the adolescent is towards making it with his peers.

Other parents, paralyzed by the rate of social change, their own uncertainties concerning values and direction, or feelings of personal inadequacy, doubt that they can teach their child what he needs to know. Again in the words of Douvan and Adelson, "We have here something similar to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Half believing he cannot really guide his child, the parent helps the child in his turn to the peer group."<sup>16</sup>

Finally, where there has been parental neglect, exploitation, or other maladaptive forces, peers can offer valuable understanding and support. Peers are often described by parents and others in terms of their potentially deleterious influence. But their potential for good is at least as great and probably more so. Conger,<sup>17</sup> Blos,<sup>18</sup> and others<sup>19</sup> describe peer influences which therapeutically compensate for earlier pathological experiences.

#### WINNING AND LOSING: CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSEQUENCES

Given the importance of peer relations in human development, two significant questions are appropriate to ask at this point. First, what qualities determine the degree of success or failure which an

individual experiences with peers? Secondly, what are the consequences of that peer status?

Our response to those questions will assume a slightly different arrangement. Initially, we will examine the determinants of peer popularity. Secondly, we will look at those "isolates" who appear to fail in this important developmental task. Finally, under the idea of "enslavement," we will analyze the special danger inherent in popularity.

#### Determinants of Peer Status

Various sociometric devices have been developed to assess the social status of group members. In one commonly used form, each individual is asked to list the three or five group members he most admires, likes, or prefers to work with. From that data, a sociogram can be constructed, clearly indicating the frequency and direction of choice and high-lighting "over-chosen" and "under-chosen" members.

Many such studies belabor the obvious, pointing out that bright, friendly, good-looking people find acceptance more easily than do dull, homely, withdrawn or hostile individuals--hardly the kind of revelation which makes one wonder how we ever got along without the social sciences. A little less obviously, many other studies describe the popular adolescent as one who is self-confident without being conceited, likes other people, and is capable of making a valuable contribution to the group's plans and activities.<sup>20</sup>

The following scheme, though it does injustice to the immense diversity among unique human beings, usefully summarizes much of the research on peer popularity. In brief, there appear to be two main types of both popular and unpopular adolescents. One type of popular

person is enthusiastic, talkative, or even expansive. The corresponding unpopular type is seen as overly loud and too socially aggressive. Another popular type has less verve yet is kind, good natured and emotionally mature. His unpopular counterpart is too timid and socially withdrawn. Put simply, both the popular and unpopular types come in either an extroverted or introverted model, the unpopular type in each case being the extreme version.

Feelings of inadequacy, lack of self-confidence and being ill-at-ease in social situations are frequently at the root of both unpopular styles. However, if they surface in over-aggressive or attention-getting behavior, the person usually encounters dislike if not rejection. If those feelings result in a timid and withdrawn style, the person is more likely to be neglected than rejected. In either case, the cultivation of less extreme behavior may lead to greater acceptance. At least on some behavioral dimensions, a middle position seems the safest route to popularity.

Some adolescents, nonetheless, turn atypicalness into a strength. During childhood, leadership is often assumed by a dominant and aggressive child but in adolescence that will not do. Leadership has to be more subtle, more persuasive and less coercive. The leader tends to exemplify the popular qualities; he guides the group's activities, meets people's needs and inspires confidence. "Most group leaders exceed the average of their group in intelligence, scholarship, dependability, responsibility, social participation and socio-economic status."<sup>21</sup> In brief, adolescents, like adults, prefer to follow someone who seems superior. Like cream, leaders rise to the top.

There are practical limits, however, in the value of these numerous lists of adjectives and qualities. For example, the classic study on Elmtown's Youth referred to earlier<sup>22</sup> indicated that many of the characteristics associated with popularity, e.g. intelligence, fashionable clothes, access to a car, actually reduce to socio-economic class. But can a youngster do much to change that key dimension of his life? Do these lists of qualities give the teacher much to work on? A more fruitful path for us to follow might be to see how interpersonal competencies and popularity are related to those dimensions of personality development we have emphasized in previous pages, e.g., autonomy and self-concept.

In chapter 4, we spent considerable time attempting to understand the child and adolescent's quest for greater autonomy. At that time, we discussed the likely concomitants of progress, or lack of it, in that direction. To that discussion we now can add that popularity among peers, the research suggests, is also positively correlated with independence. This principle was clearly reflected in the qualities which characterized leaders--competent, socially powerful, an aptitude for initiating group activities--qualities that seem to certify the importance of developing autonomy and independence. Conversely, considerable research by McCandless and others<sup>23</sup> indicates that dependency, particularly emotional (vs. instrumental) dependency is negatively correlated with peer popularity. If adolescent peers are going to support each other in their fledging and precarious independence, dependency behaviors are annoying and probably threatening to others in the group.

Besides just developing a sense of self, we also stressed the importance of a positive feeling about it, a sense of self esteem.

Although the literature on self concept is substantial,<sup>24</sup> the research is nearly consensual: a positive self concept, regardless of how measured, is highly related to other indices of good adjustment.<sup>25</sup> Of particular relevance to our concerns is the evidence that self-acceptance (low self-concept/self-ideal discrepancy) is related to effectiveness in various social situations<sup>26</sup> and to acceptance of others. Support for the latter point comes from cited research,<sup>27</sup> clinical observations,<sup>28</sup> and from our own behavior. There is often a striking connection between how we feel about ourselves and the tone of our reactions to others.

The warning that correlational relationships are not necessarily cause and effect connections is appropriate here. Like the connection between self concept and academic achievement, it is not clear which is the horse and which the cart. In our case, is it because of a positive self image that a person enjoys interpersonal successes or did the latter bring about the former? Such riddles have been pursued by researchers for years and the best we can say is that such factors reciprocally interact in a self-perpetuating cycle--sometimes vicious, sometimes benign. In a psychological sense, the rich often get richer, the poor poorer. Put another way, the healthy individual is usually best equipped to facilitate experiences which further promote emotional robustness while the maladjusted person often engages in self-defeating behaviors. To attempt to reverse such a negative cycle is a goal worthy of any teacher's efforts.

A second qualification is needed to head off the tempting conclusion that acceptance of others must invariably trigger acceptance

by others. That is, no doubt, often the case; we like others who seem to like us. But as Hamachek carefully delineates,<sup>29</sup> using the research of Fey<sup>30</sup> and the clinical insights of Maslow,<sup>31</sup> the "prototypic well-adjusted person" sometimes evokes jealousy, threat, or the impression that he really doesn't need others, and consequently is less well-received than the more self-disparaging person. Maslow's self-actualized persons were not particularly popular.

Finally, sex-role behavior is related to peer acceptance. If the individual has not learned the stereotypic sex-role behavior of his group or has not abandoned behaviors associated with earlier stages or the opposite sex, he is not likely to be well-received by peers.<sup>32</sup>

### Isolation

When there are winners there usually must be losers. In a sociogram, if there are "stars" who are over-chosen, there must be "isolates" who are under-chosen. Although many of the latter eventually find some group to which they can belong, however marginally, the consequences of this social isolation are generally negative. Whether detached by pathological choice, rejected, or neglected, the failure to make meaningful contact with one's peers is a serious developmental defeat and a losing proposition.

What do isolates lose out on? So much of what we've already discussed as benefits of peer relations. They fail to gain that sense of support so critical for the adolescent experiencing a confusing transition. They fail to gain the substitutionary security and guidance for what was formerly gained in the home and as a result either feel adrift or cling inappropriately to an immature relationship with

their parents. The isolate generally does not attain the new skills others are learning nor benefit from clarifying feedback. More significantly, because the isolate feels he is either failing or being left out of a supremely important experience, he loses out on feelings of acceptance and self worth so foundational for psychological health and effective behavior.

It is beyond our scope at this point to fully reveal the causes behind an inability or unwillingness to establish meaningful peer relations. Faulty parenting is almost always a part of the picture as are two matters we've talked much about--deficient autonomy and low self-esteem. In most cases, one would not have to choose among the above and other factors for they tend to be inextricably and cyclically linked together. Indeed, faulty peer relations join that psychologically lethal cycle in such a way that they become as much a cause of the other factors as they are a result of them. For example, insufficient autonomy impedes interpersonal development while faulty peer relations undermine the development of greater autonomy.

We must be careful, however, not to think of all social isolates as the victim of rejecting parents or ruthless peers. Often times the person is more a victim of himself. Unwilling to give up the benefits of an over-protective home, accustomed to being indulged, unwilling to accept the give-and-take of normal interactions, or because of some other ego-centric posture, many individuals invite the isolation by being unwilling to meet others half-way. By college age, at least, other peers are no longer desperately looking for someone to lean against but more discriminately assessing what the other has to offer a relationship. In these cases, our isolated friend is unwilling or



unable to offer very much.

Other dynamics of the relatively isolated person can best be understood by examining their common reactions to this predicament. One common response is withdrawal. Because the risks of interpersonal involvement appear greater and more likely than any reward, involvement is avoided. Sometimes this person manages to sublimate his drives and meet his needs in semi-constructive ways, e.g., committing all energies towards being an A student, but in general the need for other people is too strong and too fundamentally human to easily circumvent. Nonetheless, because social situations are anxiety provoking, people like this often become expert at developing strategies of detachment if not avoidance. The self-defeating nature of the "neurotic-paradox" is, of course, that the person cuts himself off from the very experiences he needs--in this case, interpersonal experiences needed to overcome his crippling or faulty learnings.

A second possible and related consequence is that well into the college years the young adult remains emotionally tied to his parents. Perhaps he chooses to attend a local college and live at home, either consciously or unconsciously to avoid having to interact with peers. Again, the vicious cycle is that without the support of his peers and autonomy-promoting experiences, it becomes increasingly more difficult to emancipate himself.

A third common reaction to isolation is a retreat into a rich world of fantasy. It is commonly recognized that the person who received inadequate success and gratification in the "real world" is the one who comes to spend an inordinate amount of time in a "fantasy world." In this case, fantasies will likely revolve around interpersonal

themes, e.g. being homecoming queen, dating attractive girls.

Day-dreaming is not necessarily an unhealthy activity. It can add zest to the routine of life and play a valuable role in conceptualizing future activities. The paradox is that the person who does the most day-dreaming is often the person who can least afford such inattention to the challenges of the real world. He is already in trouble on a developmental task timetable and can little afford spending considerable time and psychic energy avoiding his real problems and pursuing imaginary successes.

A fourth but by no means final response of the person who meets rebuff or frustration in his "search for others" is the development of a cynical and snobbish attitude toward social interactions.

They see cliques as snobbish and stupid, the leading crowd as superficial...middle-class values as irrational oppressions. None of these things, of course, is above criticism, but criticism is not likely to stay within reasonable bounds if it must provide a social isolate with self esteem...and ward off the underlying feelings of isolation, ineffectiveness, and resentment.<sup>33</sup>

To continue our theme of self-defeating behavior, such a response is also likely to alienate the very people this person so desperately needs.

### Enslavement

To this point, our discussion has had a misleading simplicity. The reader could easily infer that it is a blessing to be popular with peers and an unmitigated curse not to be. That is not the full story. Like families, peers and peer status can have either a constructive or deleterious effect. Some "loners" can actually be adolescents of precocious inner strength more concerned with excavating and developing

their own unique identity than with blindly fitting in with the peer crowd. Conversely, popular adolescents frequently run a serious risk of becoming enslaved to a compulsive conformity. Indeed, it is the individual with the least self confidence and greatest need for acceptance who is most vulnerable to this enslavement.

It is important to remember our earlier distinction between early and late adolescence. Although the late adolescent or youth gives evidence of a quest for individual identity, the early adolescent is pursuing an intermediate step of group identity. To have a "good personality," to be "accepted," and to have others approve of him is what he really seeks. His own identity is of yet too unstable to stand alone. Numerous studies show that although peer group conformity exists in childhood, it significantly intensifies as the child moves into adolescence.<sup>34</sup>

Conformity is not, of course, necessarily bad. Healthy conformity plays an integral part in a civilized society and much nonconformity is merely proving behavior...and rather conforming behavior as well. Hamachek, at least in part, takes a rather benevolent view of even the slavish conformity of adolescence arguing that it helps the adolescent to belong, seems to give him needed experiences, and ultimately leads to greater competencies.<sup>35</sup>

Hamachek goes on, however--and here gains the company of more observers--to question the criterion, risks and price involved. As Coleman's famous study of adolescents and high schools clearly showed,<sup>36</sup> the standards for popularity and acceptability are often based on superficial and questionable values, e.g., athletic prowess or a flashy

car. More seriously, group pressure can lead the adolescent into delinquent, promiscuous or other unhealthy or illegal behaviors. Peer pressures and a conforming need for acceptance are likely the main explanation for today's widespread drug use.

Perhaps the most serious price the individual can pay is the loss of individuality. Adopting roles that only artificially express his being, he loses touch with who he really is at the very time his grip on that self-understanding is most precarious. The result is a haunting anonymity when he is part of his "lonely crowd" and an even more penetrating loneliness when he is separated from it.

### The Values of Society

As we concluded the previous section, memories of our earlier discussion of Riesman's The Lonely Crowd came to my mind as perhaps they did to yours. That Riesman was not writing primarily about adolescents but adults gives us an important clue in explaining why enslavement imperils the adolescent. In many ways, the young person's behavior and values only reflect that of contemporary American society. Therefore we must not be too harsh in our evaluation of the adolescent. None of us is free from the need to belong. All of us have at some time weakly and inappropriately acquiesced to group pressure. And few of us totally resist mindless conformity to hair style, clothing fashion and the like.

Adults in our society also stress getting along with others, being well-adjusted, being "with it," and having others like you. These goals are not necessarily wrong. Because of the organizational nature of our society, interaction skills are important. The problem

comes when such goals translate into an emphasis on superficial appearances rather than inherent qualities. Though Riesman wrote of "outer directedness" twenty-five years ago it seems still true that many contemporary Americans look primarily to others to assess their behavior and to tell them who they are, rather than to more internal and abstract standards. Benson, a contemporary writer, talks of a "public relations image," and wonders if Americans have gone so far in denying their real natures that they no longer thoughtfully and sensitively assess their own behavior, happiness and identity. Benson speculates, for example, that many adults endure concerts and parties, take certain kinds of vacations, or build basement recreation rooms, not because that is what brings them happiness but because they believe these are things that happy and successful people are supposed to do.

Somewhere just below the level of conscious awareness they feel bored and unhappy but they do not recognize the feeling because they are convinced that these kinds of things are enjoyable. They have so lost touch with their own feelings that they do not even recognize them when they have them.<sup>37</sup>

The adolescent, then, is not much different than the adults he daily observes. Both suffer from alienation--alienation from self and others. Indeed, the same commercial forces which play on adult conformity have in recent years energetically sought to exploit the rich youth market by aligning their Madison Avenue techniques with the adolescent's propensity to conform. As White neatly puts it, making no distinction between adolescents and adults, "Observers who contemptuously liken human groups to flocks of timid sheep seem to have embarrassingly little difficulty in finding illustrations,"<sup>38</sup>

Do contemporary young people give hints of moving beyond unhealthy role playing and an alienating life style? Are they endorsing

and acting upon a higher standard for peer and other interpersonal relations than has traditionally prevailed in our society?

Some seem to think so. Conger, a keen analyst of both child and adolescent behavior, has a qualified belief that young people today exhibit more empathy, genuine concern and a greater tolerance of differences. Furthermore, he believes that the young today put greater emphasis on open, warm, and honest friendships because they perceive such values and relationships as lacking in our society.<sup>39</sup>

Numerous other observers believe there is a larger shift of values. They see evidence that the young are placing less emphasis on self-reliance, success, material acquisitions, and the game-playing such goals require and more emphasis on community, deep interpersonal relations, and emotionally authenticity. We will spend considerable time in the following chapter in analysis of these alleged value shifts for there is evidence on both sides of the issue.

Nonetheless, even if the young do hold to such values, it does not necessarily follow that they can successfully put them into practice. Or, what appears to be the integration into practice can often be a disguise for far less admirable motivations. The Salsburgs make the point well:

Some of the young believe the only meaningful contacts with others are spontaneous ones, but this dogma of spontaneity can often be used as an excuse for irresponsibility.... If you are "spontaneous" and "open," demands for responsibility by a partner can be dismissed as neurotic possessiveness. Doing your own thing can be a rationalization for ignoring the needs of a partner.... The best example is the girl, commonly a member of hip communities or a commune.... She loves and cares for everyone; (consequently) she is responsible to no one in particular.<sup>40</sup>

## HETEROSEXUAL DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONS

Sexuality and relationships with those of the other sex are important dimensions in understanding all human beings, not just young people. Psychologists often use the term "psychosexual" to describe this development and in so doing indicate the intricate interweaving of sexuality with all our personality. Sexuality is complex. It can become linked with guilt, fear, love, achievement, rebellion and dominance; "sexual activity probably elicits more interest, depression, activity...happiness, anxiety and humor than any other human activity."<sup>41</sup>

Though sexuality plays a central role in all cultures, our society seems particularly, almost suspiciously eroticized. By demonstrating so conspicuously our supposed openness with sexuality, we invite the speculation that internally, we really haven't achieved a comfortable and well-proportioned acceptance of our sexual nature.

The Judeo-Christian tradition suggests that the complementary nature of the genders expresses our inherent nature. Recent psychological explanations of masculinity and femininity place increased emphasis on social conditioning. In any case, building more mature heterosexual relations is an important developmental task and an emotionalized preoccupation of many college students. In our search for others, the deepest, most profound and permanent relationship we establish is generally a heterosexual one. Such concerns and commitments, or the lack of them, are the culmination of forces and experiences since childhood.

### During Childhood

Physiologically, the human being is sexed already at conception for the chromosomal structure of the fertilized egg determines the individual's genetic code. Hormone secretion and subsequent tissue development then bring about more conspicuous gender characteristics. And if Freud is to be believed, there are strong sexual overtones to even much of behavior during infancy and early childhood.

Though sexual identity pervades and affects nearly all aspects of development, our understandings of extra-familial heterosexual relationships does not require much attention to childhood. Very young children are not even aware of sex differences. Later, a sense of one's own sex identity is important to the child and the discovery of anatomical differences of considerable importance. Yet the three or four year old seems equally comfortable with playmates of either sex and quite oblivious to sexual differences.

The tendency for the sexes to segregate begins during the late pre-school years and reaches a peak around third grade. Boys particularly go through a stage of loudly denouncing the value or appeal of girls, often rather rashly promising never to marry. Biologically and culturally determined sex roles and sex differences serve to reinforce these cleavages.

Late in childhood and somewhat in anticipation of adolescence, the barriers between the sexes begin to break down. It tends to occur in a rather pseudo-hostile way where mock displeasure really masks a growing interest and ridicule only slightly disguises increased appeal. Most of these pseudo-antagonisms are a defense against anxiety-producing heterosexual relations which are strangely alluring but with which the



emerging adolescent is not yet prepared to cope.

These predominantly same-sex alignments of pre-adolescent years are defensive in the best sense of the word for they reflect his developmental needs. He must still learn important sex-role behaviors and this can best be done in the company of others engaged in the same concerns and efforts. Even later, in the wake of major and rapid puberty-induced physical and psychological changes, his closest relationships tend to be same-sex peers who most closely approximate his stage of psychosexual development.

### Puberty

There is no single criterion for determining when puberty has occurred. Puberty involves a series of changes, most of which occur at a different time and evolve over a varying period of years. When the height spurt is considered as the onset of adolescence, 12 is the average age for girls, 14 for boys. If menarche and ejaculation are taken as the criterion, the average age is about 13 for both sexes. In any case, the important fact to remember is that maturation ages vary widely for normal boys and girls.<sup>42</sup> Although early and late development can have significant psychological ramifications,<sup>43</sup> most adolescents and adults would be best served by the realization that most variations are normal and ordinarily do not presage any sexual or psychological difficulties.

Although many changes surround puberty, the one of primary interest to us, and to the adolescent, is his increased sexual drive. This change is also hormonally induced and yet, like so much of puberty and adolescent development, it is significantly shaped by cultural forces.

For the male, sexuality is more biologically specific, perhaps because his sex organs are more external and more likely to be accidentally, spontaneously, or frequently stimulated, though more likely because sexuality has traditionally been a more accepted part of the male role. Conversely, a girl's sexual drive is likely to be more diffuse and ambiguous because until recently, at least, it was believed that sexuality was not as strong or as important for the female.<sup>44</sup> Particularly since the work of Masters and Johnson<sup>45, 46</sup> such beliefs are under severe challenge, an important contemporary trend we will later examine.

In any case, there is a significant increase in sexual interest and concerns for both sexes during post-puberty years,<sup>47, 48</sup> Fantasies and dreams revolving around sexual themes are common and the adolescent generally has a strong curiosity to seek out enlightening information. Sharing between adolescents often reflects the same search for sexual self understanding though the confusion and guilt surrounding other fears and practices are often kept secret. Masturbation has traditionally been one such practice.

Numerous studies support the belief that masturbation is widespread. It is estimated that among adolescents, over 90% of the males and around 50% of females masturbate. Although shibboleths linking masturbation with insanity, sterility, pimples and other dire consequences are no longer believed as widely as they once were by the young (after all, 90% of males do not turn out to be blind, physically impaired et. al.) the practice of masturbation is not unrelated to difficulties of adolescent adjustment. Though harmless in itself, excessive masturbation can be symptomatic of other maladjustments.

Or, particularly for the male, because he frequently appears powerless to uphold his resolutions to stop, the adolescent develops feelings of inadequacy, shame, or powerlessness about himself.

But adolescent sexuality is not just intrapersonal; it also has a significant interpersonal dimension. The adolescent has a new interest in the opposite sex. And though his initial outreach and subsequent reactions (e.g. "puppy love") may appear insignificant and humorous, such behaviors are the foundation upon which mature sexuality, the quintessence of man's social nature, ultimately rests.

### Dating

Dating is a modern phenomenon. It began in our country during the 1920's and only in recent years has it spread to other industrialized nations.

Dating is the result of numerous other social changes. Whereas marriage formerly followed soon after puberty, the industrial and technological revolutions have created an elongated adolescence. Dating fills that interim between puberty and marriage. The onset of dating also reflected a more open, post-Victorian view of sexuality and the changing belief that the choice of a marriage partner should be more self-determined. Female emancipation, increased leisure time, a higher standard of living, and the development of coeducational institutions, all trends of the 1920's, were also factors in the emergence of dating.<sup>49</sup>

More importantly, as DeJong observes,

The process leading to marriage in any given society is directly related to the nature and purpose of marriage in that society. In the centuries prior to this one, the emphasis was upon practical rather than personal considerations. Though marriage was not loveless, the major focus of husband and wife was

procreation and forming a working team to provide food and shelter for each other and their children. The emphasis was upon what a marriage partner could do rather than on what the person was like.<sup>50</sup>

Probably because of the decline of the extended family and the growing impersonality and anonymity of mass society, the "gratification of emotional needs" function of marriage continues to gain in emphasis. DeJong saw it as a major change early in this century; other observers see it as a current trend as well.<sup>51</sup> This emphasis on need gratification is an essentially healthy one though at times can lead to unrealistic expectations of what marriage or one's partner can deliver.

In any case, dating serves as an important transition from the essentially unisexual world of childhood to the mature, heterosexual relations of adulthood. The transition, however, is slowly and hesitantly negotiated.

The first steps of this transition are usually taken in a mixed-sex group context. These situations allow graduated opportunities to learn new behaviors without the pressure of a one-to-one situation. There, while retaining the security of his same-sex friends, the adolescent gains familiarity with the opposite sex, tests out his own powers and behaviors, and gains valuable feedback on how he is doing. Though these activities often appear superficial if not frivolous, valuable psychosexual learning is taking place. This stage is also generally supplemented by a rich fantasy life which, though carrying the danger of a safer fixation, primarily serves as a vicarious rehearsal of further development.

Over time and with increased familiarity and confidence, pairings are more likely to occur. Initially that may yet be in the "crowd" situation. Before dyadic dating emerges, there may be a second and over-lapping stage of double-dating.

Girls generally exhibit a readiness for dating at an earlier age and in a more serious way. The explanation, as is true of so much of adolescence, seems to have both a physical and cultural component. Girls, of course, reach puberty at an earlier age and are advanced in many other areas of development. But it seems equally likely that the girl's interest and emotional involvement in dating is a reflection that, traditionally at least, her socioeconomic future and life options will be mainly determined by the man she marries.<sup>52</sup> Even during childhood, girls' play and fantasy life tends to revolve more around domestic and romantic themes.

These biological and cultural factors put girls on a different heterosexual timetable and explain why she often exhibits an interest in boys older than herself.

Benefits of dating. Many of the potential benefits of dating can be inferred from our introduction to heterosexual relations and our general discussion of peer relations. Within a ritualized structure, adolescents can learn new social and interpersonal skills. They learn better what it means to be male or female and the many unwritten rules of heterosexual relations. They learn how to build new relationships and how to terminate old ones. And although the serious search for a partner comes somewhat later, they begin to discover compatibilities and incompatibilities that will guide that later search. Dating also

allows for sexual experimentation, both healthy and otherwise.

At its best, dating allows for the developing and testing of emerging identities. The adolescent has previously felt deeply about his own personalized concerns; he now learns how to feel deeply about another. He tests his emotional boundaries. When these processes go well, the individual experiences increased self esteem and confidence and relationships are progressively characterized by a mutual trust, intimacy and concern. There is evidence that dating promotes some of these goals. In contrast to European adolescents who until recently did not experience these dating patterns, American adolescents exhibit "a degree of poise and nonchalance which stands in vivid contrast to the shyness, embarrassment, and even gaucherie of the European youngster of equivalent years."<sup>53</sup>

Criticisms of dating. Unfortunately, it is well open to question whether such positive consequences are the dominant or even most likely consequences of dating patterns. The same ritualized nature of dating which gives the insecure adolescence a measure of structure can also get in the way of the development of genuine and spontaneous relationships.<sup>54</sup> The "dating game" can become a prison of maladaptive superficiality, charm, and sexual manipulation. To use Fromm's term, the adolescent may get trapped into polishing a "marketable" personality rather than developing and sharing his unique identity.

Although that description of dating may appear a bit cynical, such concerns are not totally off target. Particularly when dating begins early, sometimes because of parental pressure, or too early focuses on one "steady" partner, there is a premature end to the

natural process of psychosexual development. Because of such developmental gaps, the young person is particularly vulnerable to maladaptive responses--a pseudo-mature type of poise, the over-emphasis on sex, learning to disguise true feelings, or a constricted view of human diversity. The problem, as Conger observes, is that many of the likely consequences of modern dating are "irrelevant if not inimical to the later development of more honest, direct, complex, deeper emotional relationships."<sup>55</sup> When marriages are based on superficial "dating personalities," an unhappy discovery, about each other and the nature of marriage, is a likely result.

Happily, there is evidence that contemporary young people are less enchanted with conventional patterns of dating, more aware of its flaws, and more committed to establishing authentic relationships. An analysis of such a trend will be our concern in the last section of this chapter. Before we turn to that, however, we will consider the sexual activity and morality of the young. Significant changes are allegedly taking place concerning both activity and morality and an analysis of that will provide a broader foundation for our later discussion of more mature interpersonal and heterosexual relationships.

#### SEXUAL ACTIVITY AND MORALITY

In a sense, "dating" is but a label which encompasses a variety of behaviors. One such behavior is sexual activity.

Sexuality does not stop with the feelings we've previously described. It seeks a behavioral outlet. Almost all young people who date also kiss, some have intercourse, and most engage in a lot inbetween. What the person does sexually and the effect it has on him

are in part a function of his morality.

Some claim there is a "sexual revolution" occurring. Some say it is a revolution of sexual behavior; others a revolution of sexual morality. Still others claim that such changes are illusory. Since people holding conflicting positions on these issues can each cite evidence for their claims,<sup>56</sup> clarification though not certainty will have to be our modest goal in the coming sections.

### Sexual Activity

Ambiguity begins here. It is impossible to state conclusively how many young people are doing what. The answer differs according to the survey, its date, the sampling procedure employed and numerous other variables. Sometimes the results differ for no apparent reason at all except that sexual activity is probably not the easiest topic on which to get reliable answers. Some people exaggerate, some play down, and others don't care to respond at all. Particularly in the area of sexual activity, it is questionable whether those who cooperate with a researcher represent a cross-section of the population in question.

Given those limitations, the following brief summary attempts to do justice to the varied results of the research concerning sexual activity among adolescents and college students.

Dating. Offer's comprehensive study of the teenager appears to offer representative data on this timetable. According to his study, nearly all boys (94%) had reached puberty by the end of their freshman year of high school but only half (55%) had gone on a date. By the end of



the junior year, 77% of the boys were dating yet showing in various ways (infrequency, greater concern for developing competencies) that dating was not of paramount concern. By the end of the senior year, however, 95% had dated and Offer was able to ascertain a "dramatic increase of interest" in relationships with girls.<sup>57</sup> Since adolescent girls typically begin dating about a year earlier than boys, Offer's percentages need to be advanced roughly one year to reflect their rate of social development.

If these percentages strike you as high, keep in mind that Offer was primarily concerned with when adolescents began to date. When Duvall assessed the frequency of dating, one half of the high school respondents were dating less than once a week, not dating at all, or did not respond to that question.<sup>58</sup>

It should also be kept in mind that Offer's data reflects a middle class timetable. Indeed, dating is primarily a middle class phenomenon. Lower class young people, if they engage in ritualized dating at all, do so later and less uniformly.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, intermingling with the opposite sex and intimate sexual behavior tend to occur earlier among the lower class.<sup>60</sup>

Masturbation. Most surveys indicate that nearly all (over 90%) adolescent males masturbate while 50-60% of female adolescents acknowledge their masturbation. Moreover, whereas the male tends to masturbate on the average of 2-3 times a week, the modal frequency for adolescent girls seems to be less than once a month. Most authors seem to agree that if there has been any change in masturbation across decades, it has been in attitude (less guilt and anxiety) not incidence<sup>61</sup> though

It seems likely that the current emphasis on female acceptance of their sexuality may increase both the incidence and the openness to report such behavior.

Masturbation is a widely used release for the adolescent's dilemma, i.e., physical maturity versus social restraints. While most of the dire warnings of the past are no longer appropriate or believed, there remains the danger that particularly the male will become fixated on this less risky and immediately reinforced form of self gratification rather than moving towards a broader, more difficult sociosexual maturation.

petting. Petting is a loose term which covers a wide range of behaviors, from touching outside the clothing to stimulation in the nude to the point of orgasm. Because of the term's imprecision, definitive comparisons with behavior of previous decades is nearly impossible. In general, petting appears to occur at an earlier age today, is done more frequently, and in more intimate ways. This trend began in pre-war generations and appears to be continuing today, especially among contemporary college students.<sup>62, 63, 64, 65</sup>

premarital intercourse. The greatest public attention has centered on the incidence of premarital intercourse. Until recently, a number of respected authorities have maintained that there is little evidence to support the wide-spread belief that premarital intercourse has increased.<sup>66</sup> Based on studies done before and after Kinsey's, it is noted that if anything approximating a sexual revolution had occurred, it is not conceivable as it may seem to many of today's adolescents...it was

probably initiated by their parents and grandparents."<sup>67</sup>

Very recent studies, however, suggest that the percentage of young people experiencing premarital intercourse may indeed be rising.<sup>68</sup> This trend seems particularly evident among college students. Kinsey asserted that among college educated persons, approximately 40% of the males and 25% of the females experienced premarital intercourse. The conclusions of recent studies of the sexual behavior of college students center around 75% (males) and 50% (females).<sup>69, 70, 71</sup>

Two important observations should be made. The first is that while percentages concerning males appear to have reached a plateau, the proportion of sexually experienced females appears to be rising. Secondly, in the majority of cases, at least according to the respondents, intercourse occurs within the context of an "emotionally involved relationship." Particularly for females, "love" comes before "sex."

### Sexual Morality

One can hypothesize that several modern factors have appreciably influenced the sexual morality of the young. First, the general accessibility of contraceptives (especially the pill) and the increasingly open option of abortion has somewhat neutralized the fear of pregnancy, somewhat misplaced emphasis of the "old morality." Secondly, a general decline in influence of the church has eroded a morality of absolutes and line-drawing that was not very durable to begin with. Thirdly, it is claimed that this generation has been raised on a diet of social crises and in a climate of moral sensitivity and critical questioning. The Viet Nam War and Watergate are two commonly cited examples. Consequently, the authority of "authorities" has been

dermined and the young increasingly look to each other for moral  
 rection. Finally, the "situation ethics" movement triggered a  
 culture-wide sensitivity to the weaknesses of moral absolutes and the  
 need to assess individual circumstances.

These are hypotheses. That each was responsible for change in  
 sexual morality of the young is difficult to validate. No doubt other  
 factors were also at work in an interacting and self-perpetuating way.  
 That the young assess sexual behavior in a different way is, however,  
 rather well substantiated.<sup>72, 73, 74</sup>

In the main, the "new morality" focuses on "the quality of the  
 relationship." It favors sex where there is affection and commitment;  
 it does not promote sex without love. Because of this criteria, many  
 of the young question whether sexual behavior can be regulated by  
 absolute rules or judged by others. For them, the morality of sexual  
 behavior comes from the meaning it has for the persons involved, not  
 from the nature of the behavior.<sup>75</sup>

In contrast to adult fears and misconceptions, contemporary  
 young people in general are not in favor of "free sex" or promiscuity.  
 Nothing, at least if taken at face value, the young are more  
 sensitive to the moral dimensions of relationships and sexual behavior.

We will shortly have occasion to return to, expand, and analyze  
 this summary of the new morality. Before proceeding, we should note  
 that these generalizations do not, of course, apply to all young  
 people. Many factors appear to influence one's moral perspective.  
 For example, younger adolescents appear to hold to more conservative  
 attitudes than older youth.<sup>76</sup> College students are less conservative

than their non-college peers.<sup>77</sup> Blacks are less conservative than whites<sup>78</sup> and the sexual attitudes and values of girls almost consistently emerge as more conservative than those of males.<sup>79</sup> Finally, there is some support for the common belief that the young who live on the east and west coasts exhibit a more liberal posture than those of the Midwest and South.<sup>80</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that there is great diversity within each of these sub-groups and considerable over-lap among the groups. Nonetheless, there is an increasing body of data which corroborates the impressions of those who work with youth that there is a rather well-emerged new view on sexual morality.

These changes seem sensible, tenable, and rather clear-cut. One might well imagine that young people are negotiating these changes with an increased sense of moral clarity and diminished anxiety. Such is not, however, the case. We will return to examine the behavioral effects of these moral changes after first assessing whether these changes constitute a "sexual revolution."

#### There a Sexual Revolution?

"Sexual revolution," like "generation gap," is a phrase widely used and perhaps a belief widely assumed in recent years. Do the changes we have described constitute such a revolution?

Some serious social scientists believe they do. Jourard doesn't even argue the point but begins his chapter on sexuality with the sentence, "A sweeping revolution in sexual morality has occurred in the Western world in the past decade...."<sup>81</sup> Triggered primarily by the availability of contraceptive techniques, Jourard cites as evidence

unmarried young people living together, a wide variety of adult "swinging," and a new association of sex with enjoyment, not just with love. Furthermore, pornographic films are shown in nearly every city and sexual matters in literature are explicitly described. To Jourard's list we could add the increasing openness and assertiveness of homosexuals and the pressure to see such orientations as appropriate options rather than deviance, as the American Psychiatric Association recently (Dec., 1973) voted to do.

Some see the "revolution" as essentially female in nature. If, as Mc Neil suggests, premarital intercourse is experienced by "70% of college males, 80% of men with a high school education, and 90% of females with an 8th grade education...it is difficult to see how much revolution could occur in the male sexual experience."<sup>82</sup> Now, it appears, the double-standard is crumbling. The sexual drive and needs of the woman are acknowledged, her right to fulfillment is stressed, and the option of premarital intercourse, with or without love, is increasingly allowable.<sup>83</sup> These views are supported by the sophisticated clinical research of Masters and Johnson,<sup>84</sup> Freedman's research on college women,<sup>85</sup> and surveys of adolescent females.<sup>86</sup>

Though Jourard and others<sup>87</sup> see this alleged revolution as essentially healthy, not all who believe it is taking place applaud its existence. Ferdinand, for example, cites parallels with the decline and fall of Rome.

...And among the sources of pleasure, none was pursued with greater intensity than those of a sexual nature. Both societies had their symbols of eroticism and their ardent spokesmen for the new morality, as well as their outraged critics.... In short, the points of agreement between Rome in the first century A.D. and America in the twentieth century are striking and numerous.<sup>88</sup>

Most social scientists appear to think that "revolution" is too strong a term to describe changes in contemporary sexuality. Most believe that "if Kinsey and his associates were to repeat their studies today they would probably find no more than a slight but steady increase in sexual trends already underway during the 1940s."<sup>89</sup> Reiss, one of the most respected authorities on sexual trends, offers this analysis:

It was in the iconoclastic environment of the 1920s that the permissive standards took root. The generation of people born between 1900 and 1910 revolutionized our sexual customs. The generations born since that time have somewhat continued these changes, but for the most part they have only consolidated the inroads that this older generation perpetuated. Those born in the 1900-1909 decade vastly increased our former sexual rates in almost all areas when they came to maturity in the 1920s--the decade of the sexual revolution....<sup>90</sup>

Finally, McCandless, an energetic synthesizer of research on human development, argues that while "there can be little argument that the state of affairs concerning sex and the mass media is more liberal in the 1970s than it traditionally has been...there is little convincing evidence...that today's youth are significantly more sexually active or promiscuous than were their parents."<sup>91</sup>

Where does all this leave us concerning the question of whether there's been a sexual revolution? In the absence of consistent and reliable data, no absolutely conclusive answer can be asserted. Unfortunately, after Kinsey's historic work there have been no follow-up studies of comparable scope and thoroughness so that Kinsey's results could be used as baseline data. Reliable data for decades prior to they are even more scarce.

Is there a sexual revolution? In the absence of hard facts, answer one gives depends on his beliefs about the sexual behavior

of previous generations.

If one assumes that the members of the generation immediately preceeding us (that is, our own parents) were virginal before marriage, completely faithful to their spouses, and sexually inhibited in general, one would be likely to conclude that society is now engaged in a sexual revolution. If, on the other hand, we assume that the preceeding generation was rather sexually active before marriage, and that there was considerable extramarital activity and other forms of forbidden sexuality, but in the context of much more secrecy and hypocrisy, then we would conclude that the revolution is not in sexual behavior but in truthfulness.<sup>92</sup>

The results of Kinsey and others tends to support the latter view, that is, that today's parents were nearly as sexually active as their offspring are today. At least two factors make that perception a difficult one to assimilate. First, we all have trouble perceiving our own parents as "real human beings" who were once unmarried adolescents themselves. Secondly, surveys of parental attitudes toward extramarital sexuality find a considerably smaller percentage expressing approval than the percentage of those adults who themselves had extramarital intercourse.<sup>93, 94</sup> This disparity might qualify as the modern version of the "double standard."

In summary, there have been changes in this century in both sexual behavior and morality. These changes have been slow; cultural change involving a large proportion of the population rarely occurs suddenly or encompasses the whole population. Quite likely, the greatest rate of change was during the 1920s. Possibly there has recently been another spurt of change though very current analyses suggest that it involved primarily adults (e.g. "swinging"), was superficial, and spuriously misleading, i.e., the changes were more apparent than real. One such survey found young people generally



adverse to casual or detached sex and more committed to "meaningful relationships."<sup>95</sup>

What changes there have been seem to qualify more as "evolution" than as a "revolution." Secondly, the major change had been in attitude and openness, not in behavior, though that too has been affected. And thirdly, the changes have affected females more than males, though again, the latter were inevitably affected as well.

Most analysts appear to perceive these changes as essentially healthy and appropriate. Indeed, much support can be gathered to endorse the "gradual convalescence from the sexually debilitating disease of Victorianism."<sup>96</sup> Wattenberg seems almost reactionary in suggesting that the young "are having sex more and enjoying it less."<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, the young continue to have difficulty in adjusting to their sexuality, in establishing heterosexual relationships, and in coping with the changes we've been discussing.

### Living with Change

Caught in a rapidly changing culture as well as a changing social climate, the young suffer from confusion and conflict. There are conflicts in the "old morality," still commonly inculcated by parents, the church, and educational institutions. There are ambiguities and inconsistencies in the "new morality" which pervades the thinking of the young. And, of course, there are conflicts between the old and the new. Concerning sexual behavior, the young are given few clear guidelines and no definite model to follow.

Incredibly, many of the young still are not even given adequate accurate sex information. Churches have never done a very good job

of sex education. Schools, caught between conflicting and often organized community pressures, have generally either avoided sex education or discharged it with technical, usually biological coverage. Both the church and the school look to the home to fulfill this need, yet numerous surveys continue to indicate that the adolescent receives little or no instruction about sexuality from his parents.<sup>98</sup> A vast majority of adolescents believe they are in need of better sex education<sup>99, 100</sup> and one study suggests that they know a lot less than even they think they know.<sup>101</sup>

In many ways, then, even the college student operates within a vacuum. Old taboos have diminished, fears (e.g. of pregnancy) have been neutralized, and little information, much less "education," has been received. Simultaneously, the media glamorizes a wide range of sexual behaviors. Colleges, meanwhile, have lifted regulations, either out of a belief that a student's sexual behavior is his own business or out of an inability to police such rules. The student is on his own; decisions are his responsibility.

An increasing number of college health or counseling center personnel have recently suggested that the college student is not ready to cope with such freedom. There is even reason to believe that--if it didn't sound so distasteful--students would like to ask colleges to impose more structure and regulation. To understand that, we need to better describe the sexually-related pressures which the college student experiences.

Humanistic thought pervades if not dominates the tone of contemporary life. Part of that perspective is "that human happiness is

the goal of man and that guilt-free sexual enjoyment is a significant part of the good life."<sup>102</sup> Because the media get so much mileage out of publicizing and exaggerating sexual behavior, it is not hard for the student (or adult, for that matter) to believe that everyone is not only "having sex" but having a great time doing so--everyone but himself, that is. Adams reports cases of students feeling "forced" into sex, not because either partner wanted it but because they were alone and somehow felt it was expected of them.<sup>103</sup> There is a fear, either of missing out or failing to live up to some standard. Students today who remain inexperienced fear there is something wrong with them. Virginity is seen as a hang-up, or at least as one author put it, "on the same team with crew-cuts, sensible orthopedic shoes, and Billy Graham."<sup>104</sup> In many respects, the new morality, under the banner of "liberation," has become oppressive. It exerts pressure on the young to engage in advanced sexuality, leaving them with the fear of latent homosexuality, frigidity, or some other aberration if they don't. As one university based psychiatrist asks, "Do young people still have the right to say 'No'?"<sup>105</sup>

At least as serious as the pressures of the new morality are the dangers. There is a glib assumption that sex is natural and easy, like falling off a log. Perhaps based on over-popularized and misrepresented Freudian psychology, the idea seems to be that inhibition is bad and expression automatically healthy. And again, with ignominious assistance from mass media, all sorts of grandiose expectations are suggested. It will be the peak experience of your life!

It usually isn't. Perhaps because of anxiety or tension, perhaps because of shame or guilt, or perhaps because sex without a deeper relationship often seems empty or soon becomes boring, the sexual experience is often a disillusioning one. And not infrequently, either the cause or the result is sexual malfunction. Very current and as yet unsubstantiated reports suggest that males especially are having difficulty coping with contemporary changes in sexuality.

It was one thing to be the aggressor and the woman a more or less passive participant. It was one thing to operate as if sex is what a woman owed the man and that it was his gratification, not hers, that was at issue. But it's quite another matter to have the woman initiate sexual activity. It is still more threatening to be aware of her right (and desire) for sexual fulfillment. It puts more responsibility on the male, even in "casual" sexual relations.

This new type of woman and these new rules of the game appear to be threatening to many males. It puts more emphasis on performance, perhaps the most debilitating idea to associate with mutually fulfilling sexuality. A woman can fake an orgasm but a male can not fake an erection. All this is part of why the sexual concerns of males are increasingly frequent problems encountered in college counseling centers.

Females have not gotten off easily either. Though sex differences are likely more cultural than innate, and therefore may be slowly disappearing, girls have traditionally thought more about "love" than "sex," or at least preferred them to occur in that order. Still today, women express a greater desire than men for sexual activity to occur

within the context of a romantic, stable, or otherwise "meaningful relationship."

From what we have discussed of recent changes in sexual behavior and morality, it would seem compatible with female preferences. Why then the problem? (The difficulties we're discussing are experienced by both sexes, though the former more by males, these perhaps more by females.) One problem is that the new morality is not really any clearer than the old line-drawing rendition. How much commitment does there need to be? How much caring? affection? meaning? There is, of course, some of each in nearly all relationships. "Love" is an attractive candidate for the supreme moral criterion yet it would be hard to imagine a more hazy and frequently misperceived quality. And what does sexual involvement mean when a relationship breaks up instead of culminating in marriage? For many, that is where the problem (e.g. guilt) begins.

The pseudo-sophistication of the "new morality" and the "hang-loose" veneer of contemporary youth may make such questions appear frivolous. In actuality, shame, guilt, and depression are no strangers to today's young.<sup>106, 107, 108</sup> And this should not surprise us. Cultural patterns change slowly and human behavior of one age is always more similar than dissimilar to that which preceded it. Given the philosophy we have been describing, it is not hard for a young person to get more deeply involved, emotionally and sexually, than he is prepared to handle. Even college students today are more a product of conventional morality than they are aware of and unanticipated feelings of guilt, anxiety, and depression frequently break through

the "liberal morality" they have only superficially assimilated.

Put still another way, we must be cautious in assuming that most young people have incorporated the alleged and highly publicized changes. Take something tangible: the greater availability of contraceptive devices, especially the pill. Though Jourard makes that a major factor in asserting that "a sweeping revolution in sexual morality" has occurred,<sup>109</sup> the facts indicate that the great majority of unmarried girls who have intercourse use no contraceptive technique whatsoever<sup>110, 111</sup> and that the increased availability of birth control procedures has not reduced the incidence of premarital pregnancy or venereal disease among adolescents.<sup>112</sup>

Our analysis of youth's attempt to cope with these changes has so far emphasized the negative features. This is not without reason. For example, Barclay, who has dealt closely with hundreds of college students through his course on human sexuality, observes that for many the struggle to come to terms with sexuality is a more painful than pleasant journey.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, for others it is more pleasant and a case can even be made that today an increasing number are developing a healthy sense of sexuality and more mature heterosexual relations. Preliminary reports on the effects of coed residence hall living arrangements are almost uniformly positive. Such arrangements, now offered by over 70% of colleges and universities, appear to lead to more realistic understandings of the opposite sex and healthier, more natural relationships.<sup>114, 115</sup>

Other research on less structured cohabitation, a common phenomenon among college students, suggests that it leads to few problems

and increased personal growth and maturity.<sup>116</sup> It should be added, however, that such findings are yet tentative and at times suspiciously euphoric. More current clinical impressions suggest that deleterious consequences might be more common than has been reported.

In any case, the young need assistance with their new freedom. As described earlier, the young function in something of a vacuum; adults, including college officials, have perhaps assumed too much a "hands off" position. As some have suggested, perhaps the young are even asking for more structure and constraint. Without the fear of sin, the excuse of a curfew, or the protection of rules, the young have little to hold on to except their tenuous identity in resisting social and peer pressures. They are forced to operate by adult standards but without adult coping mechanisms, structures, or relationships.

#### EPILOGUE

The need for relatedness appears to be a profoundly complex and important human need. Evidences appear during the childhood years and become more conspicuous and motivating during adolescence. Interpersonal needs become yet stronger during the college years, in part because of maturational development, but also because the familiar family context is replaced by the often impersonal world of higher education. Feelings of loneliness are widespread among college students.

Fortunately, the college student generally attains new capabilities which can be translated into interpersonal competencies. There is, or at least can be, in White's terms, a "freeing of personal relations."<sup>117</sup> Less driven by his own needs, particularly that for self definition,

and with greater ability to empathize, he can better respond to people in their own right. More secure of his own identity and with less fear of being confused or even somehow swallowed by a close relationship, he can respond more spontaneously and authentically.

Yet "openness and honesty," "love," and other mottoes of the young are easier to talk about than to implement. Self-doubts remain, others often seem more accomplished, and the temptation to mask real needs and feelings is strong. Even among "exceptional" young people at Stanford and Berkeley, Katz and his associates found little depth to their interpersonal relations,<sup>118</sup> though the desire and potential was there.

Sexual needs and energies are potent during the college years and easily become aligned with interpersonal dynamics. Though sexual behavior is engaged in for a variety of reasons, often nothing more than the momentary pleasure, not infrequently it appears to be an attempt to break through the haunting isolation which the student experiences. It is an attempt to bridge the gap between oneself and another, to somehow make contact.

The hope is not altogether misguided. Sexual relationships are first of all interpersonal relationships and sexuality is a profound way in which humans communicate and come together. But there are no short cuts. When sexuality lacks an honest and mature interpersonal base, the experience is often empty if not disillusioning. Despite the intensity of adolescent sexuality, the need for relatedness is not so easily met.



It never has been. Though the college student is frequently discouraged in his "search for others," he is generally on an appropriate timetable and making more progress than he may believe. The interpersonal efforts we have described in this chapter all lead toward relatedness. But these efforts are not enough. There are other dimensions to the search for identity and growth in those other areas must also be experienced before relatedness is likely or perhaps even possible.

Development is reciprocal. The interpersonal efforts we've been discussing lead to a sense of identity even while an increased sense of identity facilitates interpersonal maturity. That is why we will return in a later chapter to the higher levels of interpersonal relatedness which characterize at least some college students. And when such relatedness couples with mature sexuality, the individual comes close to experiencing the quintessence of interpersonal fulfillment.

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## CHAPTER 6

### THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

Man needs a cause or purpose larger than himself. Man needs meaning; without it life is close to unlivable. As Lewis Mumford has said, "Without food, man can survive for barely thirty days; without water, for a little more than three days; without air hardly for more than three minutes; but without hope he might destroy himself in an even shorter time."<sup>1</sup> Studies on the reactions of prisoners of war have long supported this hypothesis.<sup>2</sup> Some pioneering research has also related this "spirit" to the incidence of physical and mental illness and the consequent prognosis.<sup>3, 4, 5</sup> Clearly the quest for meaning--for a philosophy of life that makes life worth living--is vital to man. It qualifies and transcends most other questions and choices.

I want to be cautious with superlatives. When we discussed a "sense of self" in chapter 2, we treated that as foundational for psychological man. In the previous chapter, we underscored the importance of interpersonal relationships by seeing them as a nearly indispensable part of the human experience. We are formed, deformed, and transformed by our relations with others. Nevertheless, without minimizing those emphases--man is complex enough to have several vital dimensions--we will seek in this chapter to better understand another and perhaps still more crucial stage in the quest for identity: the search for meaning.

This quest is, of course, life-long, not the private domain of adolescents or other young adults. Indeed, it is a quest which spans the history of man, not the life span of one man. Despite dogmatic claims to the contrary, no one knows what the meaning of life is. So singular and consensual interpretation will likely never be found and that is why people hold to different value systems. In the meantime, man's unavoidable imperative, be it a blessing or curse, is to seek a meaning and purpose to which he can commit a life. As an aged and tired-sounding Robert Frost said, "All there is to life is getting a meaning into a lot of material."

#### MEANING AND ADOLESCENCE

Though this challenge to find meaning is life-long, it is normally felt most intensely during late adolescence. Part of the reason is maturational or innate. As we will see a bit later when we examine Kohlberg's Piaget-based view of moral development, it is usually not until adolescence that the developing person has the cognitive capability for abstract or "philosophical" thought. In contrast to the simple life and life-view of childhood, the adolescent increasingly perceives and experiences the rich complexities of life. He begins to see in himself and others potentialities far more exciting than he previously imagined. He also confronts, again in himself and others, disillusioning realities. Never before--and unfortunately for many, never again--have many adolescents felt so alive.

### Cultural Forces

The explanation of why this challenge to find meaning is felt most intensely during adolescence has cultural as well as maturational causes. We have noted at several points that few developmental tasks have a strictly innate timetable. Rather, a given society determines when certain challenges must be met. In many preindustrial cultures, a child becomes an adult at age 13 or 14 with little transition in between. But in our culture, adolescence--and increasingly, the newer stage of youth--serves as a more lengthy transition. It is a time for exploration and experimentation of one's own abilities and the alternatives of life. It is the time to formulate a life system which hopefully will give meaning and significance. The adolescent is expected to choose a vocational direction, marriage partner and to make other decisions which will, to a great extent, set the course and determine the meaning of adult life. Though Erikson describes this period as a "moratorium,"<sup>6</sup> a psychosocial state of neutrality, and though to adults this period sometimes appears as irresponsibly aimless, much of importance is happening.

It is almost inevitable that such exploration will conflict with the established patterns and mores of adult society. The modern-sounding yet ancient quotes concerning the disrespect of the younger generation, to which we alluded earlier, suggest that such conflict has been almost universal. Adults are understandably inclined to wish that such conflict could be avoided but in actuality, it serves a valuable purpose. Adolescents need solid positions against which to react. Such conflict is necessary for their growth. More significantly,

and this brings us to a second and more contemporary cultural factor in our explanation, this friction between the old and the new is how societies change and grow.

The young have always had that growth-producing effect on the larger society but there seems today to be an appreciable change in degree and direction. To extend our friction metaphor, in the past the rapidly spinning wheel of youth would quickly grind to a halt against the inertia of the larger, heavier wheel of adult society, causing little motion. But today, it's more as if the larger wheel deliberately seeks to pick up much of the movement of youth. The old seek to copy the young, to be like them. Recent trends towards longer hair and colorful clothes are but obvious symbols of the more important shifts in values and ideology that we will later examine. Today, perhaps more than ever, the young are harbingers of cultural change. As Clark Kerr put it:

The students in any country are usually going in the same direction as the country itself, only the students are a little quicker and go a bit farther. So if you want to understand students, you better try to understand the country. And also, if you want to understand the country, you better look at the students because they are a very sensitive weather vane that will tell you the way things are pointing.<sup>7</sup>

Margaret Mead, though an experienced and wise observer of numerous cultures, nonetheless dared in a recent book to go further than Kerr in asserting that we have entered a prefigurative society. Her main point is that in contrast to the more traditional, postfigurative society where children learn primarily from their forebears, adults must now learn from their children. Put less dramatically, traditions from previous generations have a decreasing influence on the values

and patterns of society and particularly of the young.<sup>8</sup>

But we have gotten ahead of ourselves and perhaps some widely quoted authorities on youth, like Mead, have gotten ahead of the data. Before we proceed, several summarizing observations will promote a better sense of proportion.

(1) Although adolescence is crucial in individual development and though adolescents play an important role in societal development, development can and does occur at other times and in other ways.

(2) Although the young, during the late 1960's, did hold more initiative in our country than many recognize and though their influence remains strong, the balance of power clearly remains with "the establishment."

(3) Although youth are important and deserve our best attention, our recent preoccupation with the young has likely triggered spurious changes and self-fulfilling prophecies. At times this generation seems narcissistically self-conscious of the hearing they get.<sup>9</sup>

(4) Although the "revolution of the young" caused significant and, in my view, generally positive effects, better research than could be done during the sound and fury of the 1960's indicates that the young did not develop and articulate a totally new value system or morality. Rather, their privileged circumstances allowed them to act on and make visible values held by many adults.

So in contrast to much that has been written and said in recent years, the burden of the young is not quite so awesome. Adults and societal institutions are not totally inept and morally bankrupt, the apocalypse is not just around the corner, and the salvation of the world not fully on youth's shoulders. There is no need to exaggerate the role of the young. The challenge to find a meaningful and

functional set of values is, in reality, difficult enough.

### Impeding Factors

The adolescent's search for meaning has never been easy. We have a tendency to insult people of the past by over-simplifying life of previous eras. Nevertheless, there are features of contemporary life which make the individual's search for a meaningful value system perhaps more difficult than ever before. We will make brief observations on four such factors: society, parents, higher education and psychology.

Mainstream society is not only characterized by a future-shock rate of change but also by confusion and disillusionment over values. Our era has come to be known as the Age of Anxiety and we have elevated emotional disturbance to the number one health problem. We have rejected many traditional beliefs and behavioral patterns in favor of faith in scientific and technological potentialities. But now that such values have proven to be no ultimate basis on which to place our hope, we wander around in an anxious world unable to commit ourselves fully to either the old or the new. Valuelessness seems to have become a sign of the times.<sup>10</sup> Such themes may have become sociological cliches but the important fact remains that the young can not derive from mainstream society the direction and stability they once could.<sup>11</sup>

Nor from parents for they too reflect the malaise of the social (dis)order. We talked earlier about the adolescent's need for a solid position against which to push. But too often today, when push comes to shove, parents move--because of a misguided view of permissiveness, their uncertainty about what is right or best, or out of a desperate attempt to feel their child's love by avoiding his displeasure. Moore

speculates that "this is why most rebellion today has shifted its target from parents to the more clearly discernible institutional issues of social justice, depersonalization, and freedom of expression."<sup>12</sup> Various research corroborates the idea that college students are far more negative in attitude toward non-parent authority figures than towards their parents.<sup>13</sup>

Thirdly, it can be argued that colleges no longer stimulate or facilitate youth's quest for meaning as they once did. In part this is because college administrators and professors are also affected by the social forces discussed above. But it also reflects a change in higher education. Early in our country's history, nearly all colleges and universities were church-related and primarily committed to the integration of knowledge and religious questions. They took a specific ideological position. Today, however, an increasing majority of students attend public institutions. Such schools are understandably and wisely restricted by law from inculcating sectarian beliefs. That is as it should be. But it appears to some observers that higher education, in attempting to honor that mandate, has moved away from even serious considerations of meaning, purpose, and value. That was and more quietly remains behind the dissatisfaction of many college students; it is also a view shared by such eminent thinkers as Clark Kerr<sup>14</sup> and Paul Tillich.<sup>15</sup>

I am not favoring a return to what was often a provincial and academically dishonest brand of higher education. Rather, a greater recognition of youth's need to grapple with value-questions, an admission that values already pervade the facade of academic objectivity, and that

it would be to everyone's benefit to do consciously, systematically, and fairly what is already being done haphazardly and covertly.

Though such concerns will be further explored in the final chapter, I should make explicit a key distinction which has been implicit in this discussion. To assert that values are important, to each individual's development and therefore to anyone seeking to understand human behavior, is not the same as asserting what those values should be. To avoid the later, one need not avoid the former. Perhaps, in fact, we should not avoid either. There may be more benefits and fewer dangers than we have assumed in the straight-forward "teaching of values," if done openly and fairly.

Indeed, it is perhaps because of the impersonality of educational institutions and personnel that the "effects of schools/colleges" research is so embarrassing. Put more positively, more change is reported in colleges where student-faculty interaction is common<sup>16</sup> and where students are exposed to the value-clarification struggles of more mature models.<sup>17</sup> Already in 1940, Kingsley Davis argued that the young can best develop meaningful and functional values by direct contact with social realities.<sup>18</sup>

When education is too detached and the young develop values and ideals apart from the real world, eventual contact with "social realities" frequently leads to disillusionment and cynicism. We will return to these concerns in the final chapter when we examine in greater detail some implications and recommendations for higher education.

Finally, the help which psychology could offer young people on this quest for meaning has been undermined by many of the same trends



which characterize the academic world, the main one being a strong desire to be scientific and objective. Such an emphasis has, of course, much in its favor yet has led to a reductionistic and deterministic bias which has made psychology the poorer.

Humanistic psychology arose in reaction to just that narrow vision of human behavior. While recognizing the value of both psychoanalytic and behavioristic perspectives, psychologists in the "third force" are concerned that attention also be given to the "higher" though more elusive aspects of human existence, among them the search for values and meaning. It is not coincidental that humanistic psychology grew rapidly during the alleged "spiritual emptiness" of the 1960's<sup>19</sup> or that students, at least in my experience, seem to prefer a third-force emphasis.

Although most humanistic psychologists assign a key role to man's search for meaning, Victor Frankl is the only well-known psychologist to make that his central theme and man's major motivating force. Frankl's theory, born out of a Nazi concentration camp experience, has attracted a devoted though small and not particularly influential coterie of followers.

In summary, we have tried to isolate some characteristics of contemporary society, parents, higher education, and psychology which make the young person's search for meaning even more difficult than intrinsically it must be. Despite the collegian's typical bravado, there is evidence that these handicaps are taking a toll. Although the students' quest for meaning, significance, and commitment are strong, skepticism, disillusionment and apathy are often the result.<sup>20</sup>

Kavanaugh has labeled this the "grim generation."<sup>21</sup> Even with a lengthy moratorium "from life," many of the young can't seem to find a life worth living. Escapism into drugs continues to be widespread and suicide has become, after accidents, the second greatest cause of student death. "Is there life after birth?" is more than a facetious play on words when asked by the young.

#### MEANING, VALUES, AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Our chances of better understanding this search will be improved if we can isolate some components of meaning. "Meaning" is an elusive and equivocal concept. Cohen speaks of the "notorious obscurity of the word 'meaning'"<sup>22</sup> and The Meaning of Meaning lists 16 categories into which a myriad of definitions can be placed.<sup>23</sup>

Two concepts will help us. "Values" will enable us to relate this search to more conscious thoughts and observable behaviors. "Moral development" will integrate these concerns with the essentially developmental emphasis of this thesis.

The concept of "values" can be as abstract and equivocal as "meaning" but it need not be. For our purposes, we can consider a value as that which a person sees as desirable, as worthwhile, as worth pursuing and preserving. As such, values obviously shape goals, choices, indeed much if not all behavior. Values are affected by conceptions of the kind of person one is and what one would like to become. Values determine how we choose to use our time and they give direction and purpose to our lives. In short, a value system embodies what one considers "meaningful."

It should be noted that values are not always conscious. Moreover, there is often an alarming disparity between self-reported values (professed) and those which actually shape behavior (operative). Such distinctions are important but need not concern us at this point of our discussion.

The formation and formative influence of values has not been studied thoroughly by psychology. Though we apparently are outgrowing the naive belief that we can conduct value-free inquiry, there still seems to be confusion on the difference between studying the values people hold (a legitimate enterprise of science) and determining the values they should hold (not the business of science). Consequently, we will also welcome illumination from research done in the adjacent area of moral development.

More and more systematic work has been done in the area of moral development than on the matter of values though it too is hardly a psychologically over-worked topic. Like values, it seemed more the domain of theology, not scientific psychology. But as one psychologist observed:

The barbarities of the socially conforming members of the Nazi and Stalinist systems and the hollow lives apparent in our own affluent society have made it painfully evident that adjustment to the group is no substitute for moral maturity.<sup>24</sup>

That the Nazis were also highly educated while morally retarded has also shaken educators into rethinking their traditional curricular perimeters.

### Theories of Moral Development

The three major theories of moral development emanate from the major theoretical positions we examined in chapter 2. Furthermore, the

basic processes used to describe moral development greatly resemble those used to explain behaviors we have already discussed. Consequently, a terse treatment of those theories and processes will suffice here.

Psychoanalytic thinkers emphasize in their explanation of moral development the concept of identification, primarily with the same-sex parent. In brief, the child internalizes the standards of his parents, his super-ego is developed, and internal controls and guilt accomplish what previously required external regulation and admonition.

Behaviorists, it comes as no surprise, typically explain moral development by using principles of conditioning and learning. Ordinarily, though with many exceptions, the behavior of the child is reinforced or extinguished in ways consistent with what society and particularly the parents see as moral or immoral. As a child grows older, he is expected to make finer discriminations and more perceptive generalizations in his behavioral responses.

Both of these theories are helpful but inadequate and it remained for a cognitive-developmental theorist, Lawrence Kohlberg, to extend significantly our understanding of moral development and to specify methods for facilitating its growth. Kohlberg's position, heavily based on Piaget, is that as cognitive processes become more advanced and complex, the individual is commensurately capable of more complex moral thinking and, presumably, more advanced moral behavior. Put another way, moral development is correlated with intellectual capacity and chronological age. It reflects the child and adolescent's attempt to respond to new insights and experiences and to continually work out a more consistent framework within which to interpret them.<sup>25</sup>

Kohlberg postulates three levels of morality--pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional--with two stages within each level.

I PRE-CONVENTIONAL - Largely determined by physical consequences

Stage 1 - Punishment/obedience orientation: Obeys rules largely to avoid punishment

Stage 2 - Naive instrumental hedonism: Follows rules to obtain rewards, concrete reciprocity

II CONVENTIONAL - Role conformity, response to expectations of others

Stage 3 - "Good boy/girl" orientation: Tries to please others and avoid disapproval

Stage 4 - Law and order orientation: Respect for rules and authority which are seen as fixed; conformity

III POST-CONVENTIONAL - Autonomous acceptance of moral principles

Stage 5 - Democratic social contracts: Agreed upon by individuals and can be modified; utilitarian

Stage 6 - Universal ethical principles, e.g. Golden Rule: Conforms to avoid self-condemnation; have validity apart from group endorsement

(Kohlberg's model is expanded in many primary and secondary sources. A widely reprinted article originally published in Daedalus, "The Adolescent as a Philosopher," offers an expansion compatible with our discussion.<sup>26</sup>)

As you may recall from our earlier discussion, cognitive developmental theorists see their stages as sequentially invariant. That is, each stage must be experienced by the developing individual for each stage is uniquely emergent from the preceding one. The rate of development, however, is strongly affected by the individual's experiences.

A key distinction to keep in mind is that cognitive development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for moral development. The grasp of moral principles which Level III thinking requires can not be achieved without the formal-operational thought of Piaget's highest

level of cognitive development. However, not all who have reached formal operations test out at Kohlberg's post-conventional level of moral development.

Kohlberg believes that, within limits, moral development can be promoted. Although it is dependent on certain maturational timetables and though the individual can not by-pass any of the six stages, the rate of development can be facilitated. One key way that a child is helped to move beyond his egocentric and simplistic black-white conception of right and wrong is when parents take time to explain the reasons behind moral decisions and behaviors.<sup>27</sup> By modeling and verbalizing moral principles, parents promote the child's moral development. Broadened social experience also exposes the individual to the relativity of the moral guidelines which shape others' behavior.

Another approach presently being used in many schools is based on the use of hypothetical stories which illustrate moral conflicts.<sup>28</sup> For example, is it right for a husband to steal when he cannot afford the life-saving drug his dying wife needs? (These stories are also the basis for Kohlberg's assessment of the respondent's moral stage.) Grappling with such moral complexities can be growth-producing, particularly if the person hears the responses of others operating from a more advanced stage.<sup>29</sup>

Although we will move on from here to a consideration of why college students are such likely candidates for significantly increased thinking about morality, values, and the meaning of life, we should note a major pedagogical implication inherent in what we have just discussed. If human motivation is not so much a desire to return to

homeostasis but to move upward to ever more complex levels of awareness and response, and if this progression is not automatic but requires the provocation and stimulation of slightly more advanced thinking, the challenge to teachers seems clear. We will now attempt to clarify at least part of that challenge.

### Forces of Change

Rather than speaking directly and immediately about the actual search for meaning, we have spent considerable time laying a foundation and setting a framework. Before proceeding, we should briefly summarize that context.

We have begun to discuss "values" more than "meaning" finding the former more accessible both to us and the adolescent. We have described a value system as that which gives purpose and direction to a person's life, and that which he sees as worth doing with his time and ultimately his life. Furthermore, we have taken an excursion into the area of moral development in order to better understand the new abilities and awareness which the adolescent brings to bear on his choice of values and his search for meaning.

We have briefly noted that some psychologists explain this development primarily in terms of identification--the developing person seeks to become like those he admires. (It was not mentioned but should not be over-looked that college professors often serve as such models.) Other theorists emphasize principles of learning--systematic rewards and punishments shape the emerging moral perspectives. (This shaping also occurs in higher education.) Finally, we have found Kohlberg's explanation of cognitive and moral development particularly

helpful in explaining the adolescent's new powers to think abstractly, introspect, empathize, entertain hypothetical possibilities and to consider the rights and views of others.

Put in different terms and moving beyond a summary of our earlier discussion, the growing person moves from egocentrism to allocentrism<sup>30</sup> and from a heteronomous morality (simply accepting what is handed down to him) to a more autonomously determined system. The adolescent is more aware of moral questions and more capable of dealing with them. In brief, he becomes what Kohlberg describes as a "philosopher."<sup>31</sup> These new skills are no luxurious novelties but indispensable equipment for meeting the developmental crisis which forms the framework of this work: the quest for identity. In Erikson's works, "I would...claim that we have almost an instinct of fidelity--meaning that when you reach a certain age you can and must learn to be faithful to some ideological view."<sup>32</sup>

The necessity of an ideological view can be seen in another way. The child's world is comparatively simple. It makes few demands on him, he lives rather unquestioningly (even if not always cooperatively) within a set of rules determined by others, perceiving few of life's ambiguities and relatively oblivious of complex moral choices.

But complex choices are very much the lot of the adolescent, the quintessential one being simply the many possible ways of living life. Many factors are involved in the component choices but nothing is more central than values. These values often are, if not mutually exclusive, at least in conflict. If one wants freedom in a vocation, he usually must give up some security. If one wants to focus on helping others,



he likely won't make a great deal of money. For a woman, especially traditionally though still now, the choice has often been a career versus a family. For all, it is no longer the day to day world of childhood but, with the new ability to envision one's life span, trying to anticipate roles and circumstances decades away. There are many conflicting pressures on the adolescent, not the least being an ostensibly increasing division between parental and peer values.

Conger complicates the matter still further by perceptively observing that value conflicts are often disguised ways of dealing with underlying and usually unconscious intrapsychic conflicts.<sup>33</sup> Basing his discussion on the extensive research of Douvan and Adelson<sup>34</sup> and the psychoanalytic insights of Anna Freud,<sup>35</sup> Conger observes that what may appear as a perfectly rational concern over important matters in their own right (and often it is just that), can at other times be a camouflaged response to feelings of aggression, sexual impulses or displaced hostility. As Douvan and Adelson put it:

It is often difficult to disentangle the interaction between genuine conflicts and values and the personal dispositions which lead the youngster to use the "conflict of generations" motif in resolving some part of the adolescent crisis; and it is easy to be "bamboozled" by the rhetoric which these conflicts occasion.<sup>36</sup>

In short, new cognitive abilities, increased societal demands, and intrapsychic conflicts all help explain the adolescent's preoccupation with moral values.

Keniston's review of considerable research<sup>37</sup> will further help us to tie our sub-topics together. In particular, he was interested in what effect current socio-cultural forces had on the likelihood of an individual attaining Kohlberg's post-conventional level of moral

reasoning. He isolated three such social catalysts, all of which seem to particularly apply to the new developmental stage of youth.

(1) A prolonged period of disengagement from the institutions of adult society appears to facilitate moral development. Conversely, when a person takes a job or gets married during the late teens, one lessens the opportunity of critically confronting conventional morality and increases the risks of departing from it. This helps to explain why research finds higher proportions of post-conventional thinkers in industrial nations (vs. primitive societies) and in the college-bound middle class (vs. lower class, non-college youth).<sup>38</sup>

(2) Confrontation with alternative viewpoints is also related to the development of post-conventional thinking. Perry's studies indicate that with college students, exposure to the conflicting views of either professors or peers challenges conventional thinking and pushes the student to higher levels of thought.<sup>39</sup>

(3) A third catalyst for moral development, according to Keniston, is the discovery of corruption and hypocrisy in the world. This is particularly disillusioning when it is observed in those from whom one learned conventional morality. Almost inevitably, this would include one's parents.

There is evidence that all three of these factors are at work today in greater magnitude than previously. In order:

(1) There has been a trend in recent years for more young people to go to college for more years. Consequently, more young people are experiencing disengagement from adult institutions at the very age when they are most capable of questioning existing beliefs and, free from the responsibilities or work, marriage or parenthood, most inclined to do so.

(2) Relatedly, this means widespread exposure to alternative viewpoints. Many colleges and professors deliberately confront and chip away at what they see as provincial or simplistic thinking. Even in dormitory living a student is likely to be exposed to moralities and values different from what he had here-to-fore taken for granted.

In modern life, it is not just the college student who is faced with alternative views on life and forced to question previous beliefs. Television alone, and there are other factors like jet-age travel, brings almost any individual into contact with ideas and cultures he previously would have barely known about. This cross-cultural implosion helps stimulate moral development.

(3) The third factor, cynicism and the awareness of moral inconsistency and hypocrisy, is certainly in evidence. Exposing ways that individuals and institutions fail to live up to their ideals has long been a part of higher education but in this post-Watergate era, even the wider society lives in an age of cynicism.

In an age of debunking, conventional morality tends to suffer; individuals are pushed to higher levels of moral development or to moral regression. The data suggest that student protestors, for example, are disproportionately drawn from just these two groups: primarily the morally advanced but secondarily, the morally regressed.<sup>40</sup>

Keniston's observation alerts us that moral growth is not as automatic or guaranteed as some of our discussion may have implied. We need to look more closely at some of those pitfalls, distortions, and regressions.

#### Pitfalls, Problems, and Unanswered Questions

The cognitive developments and social forces we have been discussing appear to increase the possibility of post-conventional morality.

However, there also seems to be increased danger that at this critical juncture in development, the adolescent will be overwhelmed by the confusion and anxiety. As Conger observes, "formal operations" is a two-edged sword.<sup>41</sup> It frees the young person from rigid, stereotyped thinking and thereby enriches his search for values. But on the other hand, overwhelmed by new insights, he may feel adrift on a sea of almost infinite alternatives with little way of choosing one set of beliefs over another.

The least serious and at times almost amusing consequence of the adolescent's new powers is his excessive self-preoccupation and hyper-morality. Enamoured with his new potential for self-consciousness and abstract, principled thought, he carries both to extremes while naively believing that no one has ever been so sensitively self-aware or so perceptively attuned to the ideals and corruption of society.<sup>42</sup>

More serious is the aimlessness to which Conger alluded. For most, that period of aimlessness is transitory and normal but for some it can become chronic. Put another way, the disillusionment with and the abandonment of conventional morality does not always lead to post-conventional thinking. Often, a regression to a pre-moral or extremely relativistic position occurs. Such individuals question the need and validity of any rules. "Who is to say which is better? Each must do his own thing." Such a moral perspective, not uncommon among the young today, often is temporary but there is a danger of it becoming chronic.<sup>43</sup>

Another maladaptive response to the temporary confusion and anxiety is made by those who, unsettled by the loss of security they

felt under an unquestioned heteronomous moral system, "escape from freedom" by rigidly re-embracing conventional levels of thought. Earlier we referred to a similar phenomenon as "premature identity foreclosure."

Since our primary interest in these chapters is to clarify the components that make up the search for identity and to establish that there is a meaningful relation between identity and these various searches, Conger does us a valuable service by synthesizing three different studies in such a way as to show the relationship between moral development and identity formation.<sup>44</sup>

Initially, he uses Podd's four identity-status categories:<sup>45</sup>

- (1) Identity Achievement - Those who had gone through an identity crisis, had resolved it, and had found new commitments
- (2) Psychosocial Moratorium - Still in an identity crisis with only vague commitments
- (3) Identity Foreclosure - Those who had experienced no crisis but were committed to goals and values of parents
- (4) Identity Diffusion - No commitments regardless of crisis

Subjects were then grouped, using independent measures, according to their level of moral development: conventional, principled (Kohlberg's post-conventional) and transitional. The "transitionals" were further subdivided into those who were characterized by a mixture of conventional and principled thought (moving from Level II to Level III) and those who appeared to be in the "regressive" state we alluded to earlier, an "instrumental hedonism" not unlike Kohlberg's Stage 2 of Level I.

The key findings were this: Roughly two-thirds of the principled subjects had identity achievement status. However, nearly 60% of the conventional subjects fell into the identity foreclosure category. In

other words, many of the morally conventional students had never, according to this research, encountered a significant period of identity crisis or questioning. Furthermore, none of the morally transitional subjects were in transition with regard to identity issues as well as moral issues.<sup>46</sup> In general, that correspondence--between moral development and identity maturity--appears to exist at each of the levels. Such research supports an important premise of this chapter.

Before leaving our discussion of pitfalls and proceeding to a look at what values college students actually hold, it might be well to isolate four major concerns or unanswered questions in the area of moral development.

(1) One problem is simply that, at least on the basis of Kohlberg's research, a large percentage of people never attain moral maturity. In one study of middle class American males, 50% were at the conventional level, 27% at post-conventional, with 23% still at the pre-conventional level.<sup>47</sup>

(2) Even if an individual is capable of highly principled moral thought, it is questionable whether principled behavior necessarily follows. Kohlberg cites evidence that it does<sup>48</sup> though much of the research since the famous Hartshorne and May studies<sup>49</sup> suggests otherwise.

(3) It is doubtful whether moral judgement or behavior is as much a unitary trait as Kohlberg and others seem to assume. Most of us exhibit a wide range of moral responses depending on the situation, role, or people involved. Though Kohlberg's contribution is most valuable, he may not give enough weight to numerous other factors which influence moral behavior.<sup>50</sup>

(4) Finally, there are many dimensions of human development. High moral development not accompanied by comparable development in other sectors of life is often dangerous. History is replete with examples of fanatical zealots who, because their moral values were not matched, for example, by compassion and empathy, committed great crimes in the name of moral principles. Such lopsidedness was illustrated by college activists who shouted down opponents of the Free Speech Movement and later hurt and killed (e.g. University of Wisconsin) people as part of the anti-war/"peace" movement.

#### VALUES OF THE YOUNG

##### Generation Gap: Myth or Reality?

Few people today would question that there has been and likely still remains a generation gap. There have been so many magazine articles and television specials on the topic that the reality of such a gap seems like an over-worked truism.

Common sense seems to support the idea of such a gap. Young people don't seem to believe in the values of their elders. They dress sloppily, seem unpatriotic, and apparently don't see the sense of working hard to get ahead. Coming from the other direction, the older generation can't see the value of rock music, drugs, and other things which interest the young.

Perhaps there is a generation gap today if only because 65-70% of the adolescents and parents in representative national surveys believe there is.<sup>51</sup> Yet the same surveys and other more perceptive research indicates that the generation gap has been exaggerated by the

mass media and that the gap is neither as wide or unique as many, including parents and the young believe.

For example, a number of comparatively sound studies<sup>52, 53, 54, 55</sup> yield the following rather surprising results:

- (1) A majority of adolescents say they get along fine with their parents and enjoy their company.
- (2) When asked whether their upbringing has been too strict or permissive, over 80% felt it was "about right."
- (3) A majority (65%) believed that their parents had strong moral values and lived by them.
- (4) Over 3 out of 4 adolescents believed that their parents' way of life had brought the parents "personal fulfillment." (This is but one point where there is paradoxical if not diametrically opposed data.)
- (5) The majority of subjects said they agreed with their parents' values and ideals.
- (6) Only 9% of the parents believe that the differences between themselves and their children were very great...yet believe a gap exists, apparently between other parents and their children.
- (7) In an up-date of the Yankelovich surveys, 67% of college-age youth believe that "hard work always pays off."<sup>56</sup>

Although there is conflicting data on most of these points, perhaps because of the unreliability of self-reports, and though there are some important differences between the generations which we need yet to examine, it nonetheless appears that the generation gap between parents and the majority of adolescents has been exaggerated.

How can we explain these surprising disparities between this data and the widely held stereotypes...or even expectancies we might have from our discussion of rapid social change? Conger offers four possible explanations.<sup>57</sup>



(1) Much of the quasi-research which influenced public opinion was based on non-representative samples. In particular, there was a tendency to generalize from the conspicuous, controversial and articulate "activist" or "hippie" minority. The "generation gap" was, according to Adelson, the creation of "pop sociology."<sup>58</sup>

(2) Parents have a tendency to describe "the younger generation" differently than they describe their own children. Similarly, adolescents tend not to describe their own parents as they do "the older generation." Both research and public opinion has confused and confounded those interesting differentiations.

(3) There is a tendency to misread as "new" generational differences which have existed for centuries if only because both adolescents and parents are always occupying positions in the life-cycle which are "new" to them. That quotes from Aristotle or even ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics on the disrespect of youth are mistaken for current pronouncements reflects that myopia.

(4) We tend to underestimate the ability of older people to change. Although systematic data are not yet in, there is reason to believe that adults have also agonized over the traumas of the recent decade and have appreciably changed their beliefs and values.

To Conger's list, we might add a fifth factor. A type of "dual ambivalence" exists in most parent-adolescent relationships. Each has mixed feelings about the changes taking place, in part because the middle-aged parents are likely experiencing their own "identity crisis" and "value clarification" process. The complex character of this ambivalence is rarely recognized and frequently creates a misleading polarization and communication gap.<sup>59</sup>

In brief, there is something of a generation gap. To an extent, this is part of a universal and inevitable phenomena; the young and the old have always perceived life differently. Child rearing ideas are understandably based on the parents' own experiences of a different age; just as understandably, the young sense that much of their parents' wisdom is not quite in touch with present realities and future likelihoods. Quite likely, ours is a period when that collision is even more pronounced than in past eras.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, for some young people and parents,<sup>61</sup> the gap is as wide and deep as even the most dramatic reports of mass media would suggest. But for the majority, the gap appears to be less extreme than we have been led to believe.

#### Values of the Young: The Majority

I have argued that the differences between current generations are not of the nature and magnitude commonly believed. This is not to say that the young are not characterized by appreciable and important value-changes. In fact, Yankelovich, the head of an organization which has been doing an annual series of technically sound surveys of the young, believes that such changes merit the label of "revolution," arguing further that such changes affect a broad cross-section of the young, not just a small minority.<sup>62</sup> Support for that view comes from the fact that it is difficult to identify values of the alleged "alienated minority" which have not significantly affected the value posture of the majority of youth. What differences there are are more quantitative than qualitative.

Numerous specific contrasts can be derived from the many available studies. However, when one stands back, the detailed differences

appear to form a constellation of at least six major characteristics of contemporary youth.

(1) The young have a different view of materialism. They do not so much reject it as take it for granted; they do not oppose it so much as suspect that it isn't enough to bring personal fulfillment. Therefore, they ask of work not that it just bring material reward and social status but that it be meaningful and fulfilling.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps this value-shift is reflected by a decreasing percentage of college graduates entering the business world with a majority now heading for vocations in human services. We will examine more closely these attitudes towards work in the following chapter, particularly since the recent scarcity of jobs for college graduates has triggered what appears to be another value-reversal among the young.

(2) The young place more value on interpersonal relationships as the source of human fulfillment. "Openness and honesty" has become a cliché but to the young, those qualities are seen as needed correctives to the synthetic and superficial relationships common in our culture. "Nine out of ten contemporary adolescents--whether younger or older, affluent or disadvantaged, conservative, middle-of-the-road, liberal, or revolutionary--are in agreement about the importance of...(true friendship and love.) No other values are as strongly or consistently held."<sup>64</sup> This quest for community can be seen in part as a response to their feelings of alienation, from the security of childhood and from modern society.

(3) After surveying college seniors from every type of campus, Hadden saw the growth of privatism as the most striking feature. He observed

a trend of the young to reject "meaning and authority outside of the self."<sup>65</sup> For example, in terms of sexual morality, there is an

increasing feeling that individuals should be allowed to "do their own thing." Good and evil are seen as more relative and situational.

(4) Perhaps because of television, the young appear to be more socially aware than previous generations and, if not more idealistic, at least

more aware of the inconsistencies between the words and the deeds of our society.<sup>66</sup> For example, a Gallup poll showed the young to be more

concerned than adults about discrimination in our society and more willing to accept school and neighborhood integration.<sup>67</sup> One can speculate, of

course, whether such attitudes will continue to be held when they become adult property owners or even whether at this time there isn't

a critical disparity between (self-reported) ascribed and operative values.

(5) The young are more of a "now" or present-tense generation.<sup>68</sup> To

them the future seems so unpredictable, the past such an unreliable

guide that there is a temptation to emphasize the present. Consequently,

for all their precocity in other areas, many of the young are disrespectful and ignorant of the lessons to be learned from history and often lack

the sense of proportion which will be needed if their keen insights are

to benefit society. Some observers, of course, reject such polite

analyses in favor of one describing spoiled kids and indulgent parents

who have been allowed to "live for the moment" free of any creed except

"if it feels good, do it!"<sup>69</sup>

(6) Finally, the young have less faith than their elders in the ability of social institutions, particularly government, to solve the major

problems facing us today. A great majority believe that the military, political parties, big business, and government itself are in need of at least moderate reform.<sup>70</sup> A 1973 Unidex survey reported that nearly 80% expressed "dissatisfaction with the state of the country," one of the strongest responses ever to one of their survey questions.<sup>71</sup> Again, however, one must wonder if the attitudes of many adults, especially since Watergate and the collapse of South Viet Nam, have not moved in this direction as well. Very current though unscientific analyses suggest that they have.

These then are some rather shaky generalizations of how "average" young people, particularly college age youth, differ from their parents' generation. They have the weaknesses of other generalizations--numerous exceptions, persons from each group falling at all points on a continuum--and then some. The research is, quite frankly, equivocal if not contradictory. Attitudes and values are always elusive matters on which to get a firm grip but in this age of rapid change, they seem even more slippery. Since much of the pertinent research was done, youth have become, at least on the surface, almost apathetic while adults have become increasingly open to what previously were radical critiques of society. Perhaps all this supports our earlier idea that the young are harbingers of eventual societal change so that perceived differences, unless researched immediately, will not test out even a few years later. Conversely, by the time research on attitudes is disseminated, the results might well not match current perceptions. Indeed, current perceptions suggest that adults have become more "liberal," the young more "conservative." Consequently, the "gap" is becoming even less conspicuous.

### An Alienated Minority

We have observed that the majority of young people do not hold values which are foreign to those of us who are older. Where there are differences, it is often more a difference of priorities or of ways to implement such values. And as youth become more mature and compromising even while adults are significantly affected by the sub-culture of youth, those differences lessen still further.

There are, however, a sizable minority of young people for whom the previous descriptions do not fully apply. It is difficult to estimate the size of that minority. Although most studies estimate that only about 15% of college students joined activist organizations or were involved in overt protests, many others evidenced varying degrees of support.<sup>72, 73</sup>

Although campus radicals, hippies, and other assorted unconventional-als are now less conspicuous and publicized than in recent years, there still remains an important segment of youth who do not identify with the goals and nature of American society. In a word, these are alienated youth.

We will not give extensive coverage to this segment for several reasons. First of all, the literature on them is voluminous and readily available to the interested reader. Indeed, the problem is that an inordinate amount of the attention on youth in recent years has focused on this minority to the exclusion of more normal young people. Secondly, this is in both number and influence a shrinking minority. Whether the "right issue" could again trigger a similar phenomenon remains a moot question. It appears that it would not though in the spring of 1975,

proposed cuts in student aid at several eastern universities did cause demonstrations and the take-over of campus buildings.

A final reason for not extensively discussing this radical segment of the student population is that because of the elimination of the draft and related factors, a smaller percentage of this minority is now in college--and college students remain our primary concern.

Still there is more than historical reason to try to understand this minority. First of all, they still exist on campus. Secondly, the alienated and activist youth magnify perceptions, values, and dynamics found also in the more moderate majority. More directly, this minority has impregnated the majority of youth with at least a toned-down version of their more extreme ideology. As noted earlier, the value differences between the minority and the majority are more quantitative than qualitative. Finally, this vocal minority has appreciably affected the American society which has been such a pervasive factor in our analysis.

That a significant segment of privileged, middle and upper class youth would feel alienated is in itself a rather paradoxical phenomenon. We can understand the alienation of the poor--hungry and deprived of much of what they see others enjoying. We can understand it in other minorities--cut off by discrimination from their fair share of society's goods. But this is an alienation "that has few apparent roots in poverty, exlusions, sickness, oppression, lack of choice or opportunity."<sup>74</sup> The research clearly shows that activists came largely from middle to upper class, largely professional homes and had not experienced economic deprivation or the major injustices of society first-hand.<sup>75</sup>

"Alienation" is a hazy and over-used concept today. Even as it is found in college students, it has multiple causes and expressions. We will not be able to fully explore that complexity though some of the expanded ideas of other chapters play a key role in that explanation.

In almost misleadingly concise form, one explanation goes like this: Alienation has its base in an almost universal developmental estrangement--the adolescent must leave a childhood world in which he seemed at the center. Ordinarily, this need not be traumatic for he will form new interpersonal ties and derive increasing fulfillment from using his developing competencies. But, as we have periodically noted, this is a society characterized by a bewildering rate and extent of change. Even adults have difficulty finding "their place." More crucially, the adolescent may not really have a place to find--at least a meaningful one.<sup>76</sup> He is relegated to an increasingly lengthy period of limbo, only in part called for and filled by necessary preparation for life in a complex, post-industrial society. This produces feelings of meaninglessness and alienation, from self and from society.

In explaining this alienation, we should not be overly analytical. For some, such estrangement from society (and from other youth) is simply the result of real and honestly held value differences. We do the more authentic rebels an injustice when we explain away their posture in "psychological" ways. Put bluntly, their position is a deliberate and "explicit rejection of traditional American culture."<sup>77</sup>

Before I try to summarize the values this minority does subscribe to, some differentiations within the group must be made. Although we have been discussing the minority in toto, there are significantly



different sub-groups.

Numerous typologies have been advanced. Some systems have as many as 8-10 sub-groups and, taken together, over 50 "types of youth" could be listed, though some categories would overlap. We will have to untangle some of that when we discuss forms of identity in chapter 8. For now, two important distinctions will suffice.

First, though both "activists" and "hippies" might be alienated minorities and do share some common values, there are also important differences. In simple terms, one seeks to change society, the other to drop out. Keniston contrasts these modes of alienation as "alloplastic" and "autoplastic."

Secondly, among the activists, there is a major difference between moderate reformers who seek to work within the social order (e.g. voter registration) and the more radical dissenters who deliberately violate the law (e.g. bombing buildings). Horn and Knott label the former "evolutionaries," the latter "revolutionaries."<sup>78</sup> The reader will do well to keep such differences in mind though unfortunately, such distinctions were not made in much of the research we must rely on. This has resulted in confounded and equivocal conclusions.

Other categories and finer distinctions are possible but the main point is that the young respond to their alienation in varied ways. Generalizations are difficult to make but our purposes will best be served by attempting to clarify values common to all subgroups. The interested reader has his choice of many more detailed and differentiated analyses but will find few as perceptively and helpfully done as Keniston's Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth<sup>79</sup> and Youth and Dissent.<sup>80</sup>

### Values of the Young: A Minority

The following seven values capture the heart of the "minority" youth position. You will notice that they are not totally unlike the values of the majority, often only a more extreme position. Further, keep in mind that these are largely proclaimed values, not necessarily values which characterize their behavior.

(1) There is a strong emphasis on self-expression and self-discovery.

Individuality is worshipped and rules and mores which interfere with this self-expression are rejected. The "privatism" discussed earlier is extended to a naive, almost classically Romantic vision of the "free life." People are to "be themselves."

(2) The moderate's emphasis on relationships ("friendship and love, openness and honesty") is also extended. Looking "honest" means to many wearing no bra, make-up or artificially groomed hair styles. The minority emphasizes intimacy and because of their faith in human nature (at least in their own) believe that requires the elimination of roles and the absence of pretense. Furthermore, people should not live as individuals or even in artificial units like the nuclear family but in large groups, in community.

(3) The banner of egalitarianism flies high. "Power to the people" who will be affected by the decisions. Put another way, Jencks and Riesman saw an anti-authority bias as the salient feature of this segment of youth.<sup>81</sup> The minority believes that no institution or individual deserves respect simply by virtue of position; respect must be earned. Further, there is a suspicion that power corrupts and that individuals have a propensity to use it to promote self-interests. Ironically, this

insight did not appear to save many leaders in the student movement from that very pitfall.

(4) Cooperation is encouraged; competition is disparaged. Society, however, is seen as more competitive than cooperative.

(5) More than the moderates, this minority rejects the Protestant ethic and the idea of delaying gratification for future gains. There is an existentialist-like emphasis on being. This helps explain, among other things, the appeal of drug-induced experiences at the risk of future consequences.

(6) Relatedly, there is a preference for sensory experience over rational knowledge. Putting more faith in personal, even mystical experience than in scientific evidence, these students have sent more than one scholar back to his office in a state of mild to severe depression.

Recalling our earlier discussion, it is not beside the point that in a usually less extreme and more eclectic form, humanistic psychology reflects (and probably helped to create) the same epistemological trend. Some years ago Rogers wrote: "Neither the Bible nor the prophets, neither Freud nor research, neither the revelation of God or man can take precedence over my own direct experience."<sup>82</sup> This helps to explain why third-force psychology appears to have the greatest appeal to the young.

(7) Finally, though not exhaustively, there is an emphasis on being close to nature and on living in harmony with it. Preservation of the environment is valued more than economic growth. Yankelovich, the director of numerous studies of college students, isolated 18 components of the student movement's philosophy but sees all as variations of a new

value on nature and the natural.<sup>83</sup> We will look later at Yankelovich's evaluation of "the new naturalism."

#### ASSESSING THE YOUTH MOVEMENT

How should we assess these emerging values of youth? Are they calling us to our moral sensibilities and to a more fulfilling life style? Or is their thinking immature and unrealistic and their behavior a disconcerting if not pathological response to these uncertain times?

Our response reflects our own values, of course. Indeed, such personal prejudices and emotions have clouded and prolonged the debate. As Yankelovich observes, invoking Whitehead's belief that "great ideas often enter reality in strange guises and with disgusting alliances,"<sup>84</sup>

Those who are offended by the long hair, the rioting, the open sexuality, and the challenge to authority see only strange guises and disgusting alliances. Devotees of the counter-culture, on the other hand, romanticize the movement and greet each strange new guise it assumes as the inspired expression of a great idea.<sup>85</sup>

#### Critical Perspectives

Advocates of the young see them as sensitive and accurate observers of contemporary life. They argue that the young saw the quagmire of Viet Nam for what it was well before most of the country came to a similar view. The young emphasized the need for self understanding and deeper interpersonal relations before millions of adults echoed that belief by joining the encounter/sensitivity movement. Furthermore, the young are given credit for initiating much needed reforms in higher education. In short, it is argued that the values of the young are a more fulfilling expression of what it means to be human and a needed corrective to many trends and motifs of contemporary culture.

Many such endorsements are little more than unsubstantiated and uncritical laudations. But not all. Yankelovich, no euphoric cheerleader but a sound researcher, believes that the counter culture embodies "a great idea...which promises to fulfill inherent human needs... (and is) capable of transforming man's relationship to himself and society."<sup>86</sup>

Yankelovich does not deny the disturbing or even ugly dimensions of the student movement but finds them consistent with Whitehead's analysis of the slow, circuitous, and error-laden development of other great ideas. Without invoking the rhetoric of a "sick society" or the "innocence of youth," and well aware of the empirical data, Yankelovich still offers a generally positive assessment of the student movement, identifying three major themes or contributions of the "new naturalism:"<sup>87</sup>

(1) It calls for the restoration of community at a time when many human bonds have been broken. He argues that the great human victories since the Middle Ages--Protestantism, individualism, rationalism, science, and industrialization--were all gained at the expense of community. He believes that community can bring personal intimacy, emotional depth, and social cohesion in place of the isolation, loneliness, and vulnerability of contemporary life.

(2) The new naturalism has a greater appreciation of the non-rational. Yankelovich argues that the young are not so much against logic, reason, or science as they are for additional modes of understanding. Western man naively equates logical thinking and rationality with truth but the counter culture senses that it is not so. Says Yankelovich:

The counterculture grasps this important truth (that reason is sterile when done in an experiential vacuum) even though it chooses to ignore the complementary truth that direct experience

undisciplined by technical reason can also be a treacherous master leading to slovenly mysticism and ultimately to a breakdown of communication. Both forms of thought are as necessary to create understanding of reality as both sexes are needed to create new life.<sup>88</sup>

(3) The new naturalism reminds us of the sacredness of nature, the interdependence of all living things and man's imperative to live in harmony with nature versus the industrialized concept of dominating nature for short-term gain.

Critics of the student movement have been more publicized if not more numerous, perhaps because they could give intellectual respectability to what much of the public felt but could not articulate. Bruno Bettelheim, a psychoanalyst and child psychologist, and Lewis Feuer, a philosopher and historian, are two such critics.

Bettelheim sees the activists as immature and undisciplined products of permissive child rearing. Raised on a self-demand feeding schedule and allowed by parents to adopt that as a generalized expectation of life, these young people, according to Bettelheim, never learned the need to delay gratification or tolerate frustration. He further asserts that they are fixated at the temper-tantrum stage; they want everything now! Consequently, the long delays built into modern adolescence provoke their rage. In brief, according to Bettelheim, the activists really disclose more about their own pathology than that of society.<sup>89</sup>

Feuer<sup>90</sup> acknowledges the altruistic and idealistic dimension in the activist's motivation but thinks it is outweighed by strong and largely unconscious hostility which is primarily oedipal in origin. He sees the student movement as essentially a revolt against symbolic

fathers, e.g. college administrators, institutions, or the older generation in general. The stated issues are really smoke-screens; the real issue is "the conflict of generations."

Feuer argues that this internal conflict between altruistic and hostile motivations shows itself conspicuously. The activists violate the democratic process they claim to be saving. They berate the affluence upon which their very mode of living is dependent. And they make heroes out of father-figures like Ho Chi Minh and Mao, even though such authorities jail if not kill students who behave as they do.

Even those who are essentially positive in their analysis of the youth movement offer some criticisms. Yankelovich faults the activists for an exceptionally naive, uninformed, and ultimately counter-productive attempt to apply Marxist prescriptions to contemporary America. Kozol,<sup>91</sup> though he shares many values with the counterculture, criticizes the young for championing one cause...then another...but never really following through with any. He and others wonder if such behavior does not betray needs and motivations less noble than students prefer to ascribe to themselves.

There are, then, quite different views on student activists. But these are just opinions. However prominent or persuasive the critics may be, these views remain speculative. We turn now to a review of some pertinent research in hopes of more definitive assessments.

### Research Results

First the good news, then the bad. Although the research offers inconsistent results, it tends to favor a positive analysis of student activists and an encouraging interpretation of their influence on

contemporary society. Reflecting the over-all theme of this chapter, Blom concludes that activist youth have been "strongly dedicated to the attainment of positive meaning to life" and that answers to the moral and ethical questions they pose are essential to the future of a workable society.<sup>92</sup>

The bad news is that the quality of much of the research is questionable and that more recent, better controlled and more representative studies suggest more cautious and qualified generalizations.

The reasons for the inadequate research are of more than tangential interest to us for they illumine some of our larger concerns and say something of importance about our understanding of college students--or lack of it. Initially and basically, the student dynamics of the 1960's were unpredicted and unexpected by social scientists. Therefore, they were unprepared to do the systematic and carefully designed research which the complexity of the student movement required.

The students of the 1950's were characterized as passive and security-oriented, uncommitted and even unconcerned about value questions.<sup>93, 94</sup> Moreover, the prediction was for even increasing middle class conformity and decreasing individuality, for more "organization men"<sup>95</sup> and a larger "lonely crowd."<sup>96</sup> "Not a single observer of the campus scene as late as 1959 anticipated the emergence of the organized disaffection, protest, and activism which was to take shape in the sixties."<sup>97</sup> Even in the early 1960's none other than Keniston said, "For one, I see little likelihood of American students ever playing a radical role, much less a revolutionary one, in our society."<sup>98</sup>

Consequently, the studies we have from the 1960's, upon which most conclusions have been based, were generally hurried efforts to



measure a new phenomenon under changing conditions and in an emotionally-charged atmosphere--something like having four strikes against you. Controls were often poor and the samples were disproportionately drawn from Berkeley, Harvard and other elite campuses. So--we accept the research with caution.

Nonetheless, the research reflects an impressively positive consensus. In contrast to much public opinion, activists were found to be more intelligent, independent, sensitive, morally mature, and more tolerant of ambiguity.<sup>99, 100, 101</sup> Conversely, Horn and Knott used nearly twenty possible symptoms of psychopathology but in their wide review of the research could find no evidence to support Bettelheim's "pathological" description of activists. Rather, they found activists to be higher in self respect, self-sufficiency and concern for others; lower in ethnocentrism, dependency and possessiveness.<sup>102</sup>

Recalling further Bettelheim's views, there is evidence that parents of activists were more lenient, warm and democratic<sup>103</sup> though more principled than indifferently permissive.<sup>104</sup> Many studies have suggested that such methods of child rearing foster closer identification with parental values and expectations.

This identification appears to have taken place and helps explain a remarkable and consistent finding of the research: The values, social philosophies, and political views of the activists are very similar to those held by their parents.<sup>105, 106, 107</sup> Rather than the angry, generational conflict which Feuer suggests, many of the young apparently were acting out the semi-liberal values of their middle to upper class, largely professional parents.<sup>108, 109, 110</sup> Keniston suggests that

such parents were not so much distressed as secretly proud.<sup>111</sup>

If this similarity of values is true, the young perhaps represent more a subculture than a counterculture. Or put even more flatteringly, perhaps the young do not so much reject parental and societal values as stand for a behavioral return to values to which adults only pay lip-service.

Over-all, then, the research favors a generally positive assessment of student activists though the findings are not conclusive. More recent and better designed research hints that more cautious and qualified generalizations need to be made. Kerpelman, for example, argues that the variables of activism (vs. non-activism) and ideology (left/middle-of-the-road/right) have been seriously confounded in most research and that when he used the resulting subgroups, he found none of the differences in intelligence, responsibility, seriousness of purpose, perseverance or emotional stability which others have reported. Says Kerpelman:

The notion that left-activists approach being "psychological noblemen," as posited by some investigators, or the opposite notion put forth by less sympathetic sources that left-activists are maladjusted and playing out authority conflicts, are both probably exaggerations and over-simplifications.<sup>112</sup>

#### LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Youth's quest for meaning and values worth revolving a life around goes on, as ever it will. What form will that search assume in the future? What trends are evident now?

Predictions are few; previous extrapolations proved to be embarrassingly erroneous. Yet some tentative observations can be made.

Yankelovich claims that a look to the future requires a key distinction between the political and cultural dimensions of the youth

movement. From his perspective, the "political revolution is over for the foreseeable future while the cultural revolution--the new naturalism--will continue to grow at an ever-increasing tempo."<sup>113</sup> Rejecting Revel's better known view<sup>114</sup> that the political, cultural and moral revolution are but a single revolution, Yankelovich believes that the political dimension was but one of the "strange guises" which all emerging "great ideas" (the new naturalism) assume.

A second, less speculative observation is that campuses today are calmer and protests fewer. College students appear to have a renewed interest, though perhaps not satisfaction, in academic work, if only to prepare for a competitive and rather grim job market. "The silent generation," a phrase used to describe students during the 1950's, is increasingly heard.

To some observers, suspecting that an understandably needed respite has evolved into a deep apathy, students have become too calm. Supposedly disillusioned with previous efforts, they have adopted a what's-the-use attitude and have retreated to a privatism which seeks primarily to enrich one's own life.

Other observers offer a better documented interpretation. The cause of civil rights, the initial cause of modern activism, has come a long way. The war in Viet Nam has concluded. There have been significant reforms in high schools and colleges. Furthermore, the young have confronted violence in themselves (e.g. the University of Wisconsin bombing) and in others (e.g. Kent State) and have decided that there must be a better way.<sup>115</sup> In brief, the young have become more mature and realistic. Throwing a brick through a window does not

stop wars; working through the political system can effect meaningful change.

One hopes that the latter interpretation is the more accurate for we will all benefit if it is. The student movement was a mixture of the rational and irrational. It did speak to valid and empty issues with equal fervor. But when the dust settled, it became clear that the young had wrestled honestly with moral and ethical questions, that they had dramatized real problems and had identified important inconsistencies. That they produced few workable solutions is also true though that seems a bit unfair an expectation to have for inexperienced youth. Hopefully such contributions will come if indeed the young are now ready to assume positions in the institutions of society.

Is the system willing to meaningfully incorporate the young? Or, as we will face in the following chapter, is it able to assimilate millions of new workers? Will the young see the inevitable necessity of institutional processes, even in the amelioration of the problems they so vigorously identified? Will the young increasingly see that problems, and certainly solutions, are usually more complicated than they generally and initially appear? Can those with an activist-mentality retain their sensitivity and commitment while divesting themselves of those dynamics which were destructive to themselves and others? Or in apathy will they--and we--lose both? Can the young retain their idealism even in a recessive economy where the competition for employment is fierce? These are some of the key questions to keep in mind as youth continue their search for meaning.

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## CHAPTER 7

### THE SEARCH FOR VOCATION

"Identity" is not an easy concept to clearly delineate. We noted earlier in our discussion that Erikson, the chief architect of that concept, has deliberately painted broad and rather hazy boundaries and that other social scientists have used it in a wide variety of ways. The general public's usage of "identity," perhaps because it is often used to disguise an incomplete understanding of the behavior and dynamics under discussion, has blurred its meaning still more.

In our quest for an understanding of identity, we have approached it from several directions. Hopefully these perspectives have been of clarifying value. Still, significant pieces of the puzzle remain missing. The business of identity, in ourselves and others, is complex and elusive.

Though such cautions against over-simplification are appropriate, there is an equal danger of over-stating the mysterious dimensions of identity. It is not as if identity is some kind of ethereal concern, unamenable to human perception or scientific inquiry. Identity is not some free-floating concept without concrete moorings upon which to fix. Indeed, it is the primary goal of this chapter to explore one such mooring--vocation. It is the thesis of this chapter that identity is directly and meaningfully tied to the work one does. Interestingly, when a person has to briefly identify himself or introduce another, he

usually does so in terms of his work.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK

If everyday experience did not verify the style of identification described above, one might speculate that people would rather say something about their values or religious position. Almost by very definition, such matters are what one considers most significant and enduring. But no--people refer to their work.<sup>1</sup> Why does it have such importance?

At the simplest level, our work determines how we spend from one-third to one-half of our waking hours. It determines the nature of our daily activity and regulates our physical, mental and emotional expenditures. Our job is a primary factor in determining our standard of living, where we live, and whom we associate with. Furthermore, our occupations greatly affect the potential for mobility and advancement.

Work seems to play a key role in determining not only who we are but also how we feel about that self; work shapes not only our self concept but also our self esteem. Each job seems to have a status or prestige rating and though such ratings are unwritten and never directly taught, there is an incredibly strong consensus in our culture about just where on the hierarchy each job is placed.<sup>2</sup> This status factor is not related simply to doctors, lawyers, or other high-status professionals. A recent Labor Department study indicates that for both the poor and the rich, blacks and whites, those with high or low status jobs, self esteem is significantly shaped by the work one does.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting that the concept of "work" appears to have negative connotations for most people. We talk as if it is drudgery,

as something one has to do. We talk as if it is something we would not do if given a choice even while we seem to know, at a not much deeper level, that such is not so. For example, when a diverse group of people were asked if they would continue working if they inherited or won a sum of money sufficient to live comfortably without working, over 80% said they would continue to work.<sup>4</sup> Recent experience with lottery winners and newer research corroborates that finding.<sup>5</sup>

Somewhat parenthetically, if work is such an important part of our identity, perhaps we can better understand why unemployment can be so traumatic and why a form of identity crisis is common at retirement. More to our concern, if a job so influences how others see us, and how we see ourselves, it is not surprising that the adolescent senses both an internal and external pressure to come to terms with this important part of life.

### The Pressure to Choose

The choice of a vocation is a central issue in the lives of the young. It was not always so, of course, because a person did not always have a choice. In times past, one's vocation was more determined or assigned than chosen. A boy was generally expected to follow his father's footsteps; a girl was to prepare for a life as a homemaker.

But today the young person confronts an ever increasing and often bewildering array of options. He has freedom; he has choice. Conceivably, any of the approximately 47,000 jobs listed in The Dictionary of Occupational Titles are possible for him. Yet he's fortunate if he knows much about even ten of them. This freedom may be a blessing, though hardly an unmixed one.

Contemporary adults generally do not seem very aware or sympathetic of this confusion. Though most adults no longer subscribe to an "assigned vocation" theory, many seem to believe that somehow an occupation is foreordained, that there is one best vocation for each individual, and that the search need not be all that confusing. They are impatient with the uncertain adolescent, particularly if they are paying for his college education. Questions and comments from relatives and even school personnel, though well-intentioned, often add to this pressure.

In childhood the question goes, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" During college, "What are you studying to be?" The clear implication is that the person should have a clear and specific vocational goal. Should such an answer not be forthcoming, the adolescent is often made to feel as if he is being irresponsible and aimless. I suspect that I was not the only person who soon learned to recite an answer that placated friends and relatives while masking my own sense of uncertainty.

These pressures, on college and non-college youth, are not surprising in light of the fact that in the eyes of society, an adolescent is not considered an adult until he begins "adult" (full-time) work. Marriage (and perhaps parenthood) is, of course, the second major criterion society uses to separate adolescents from adults but vocational status, not marital, appears to be primary. The full-time employee who appears to have made a long-term commitment to his work, even if he is unmarried, is more likely to be perceived as an adult than the person who is married but not employed, e.g. a married college or even graduate student.

Pressures also arise from within the adolescent. He does not enjoy his indecision, anxiety, and, at least in some cases, sense of failure and recognizes that he will not gain relief until certain decisions fall in place. Erikson himself recognized that "it is primarily the inability to settle on an occupational identity which disturbs young people."<sup>6</sup>

In short, vocational pressures and plans play a key role in the adolescent-to-adult transition. As Allport put it:

The core of the identity problems for the adolescent is the selection of an occupation or other life goal. The future, he knows, must follow a plan and in this respect his sense of selfhood takes on a dimension entirely lacking in childhood.... Long range purposes and distant goals add a new dimension to the sense of selfhood.<sup>7</sup>

### Difficulties in Choosing

We have already alluded to one source of difficulty in vocational choice, that is, the incredible number and variation of job possibilities. Furthermore, the field of options is in constant and often rapid flux. In a technological culture, new jobs are always being created and some old ones eliminated. Even the more enduring ones present problems. For example, in recent years, the supply and demand of teachers and engineers has oscillated more rapidly than individuals and institutions can respond to.

Secondly, in contrast to previous generations when vocations were often passed on, today's young person has to assume far greater responsibility for his occupational direction. Yet he has less to go on. He has had little contact with older workers; he has seen fewer models. Indeed, he has often had little exposure to work--period.



Vocational choice is, in brief, a merger of self with the world of work. But the young person is not just unfamiliar with the world of work; he is also far from sure about his "self." Typically he is still hazy in his awareness of his interests, abilities and values, even though these are dimensions of identity most accessible to awareness and psychometric assistance.

Even if he is moderately aware of such qualities of himself, it is no easy challenge to envision how these different "parts" can be synchronized or extended via vocational commitment. There often appears to be quite a gulf between his hazy ideals or subconscious needs and the realities of life. Mature identity, as Erikson so often emphasizes, is a psychosocial phenomena; it is the product of a self that has come to terms with society. But this confrontation can be a painful and disillusioning one for the adolescent may experience his first glimpse of why the adult world (potentially including himself) can not totally operate on the ideals he has secretly vowed never to forsake.

From the perspective of many adolescents, to fit into "the system" seems more like losing his identity than gaining it. We who are older may be tempted to grin at what now appears to us an exaggerated, even narcissistic fear but if we are serious about understanding young people, we can not minimize or condescendingly dismiss such fears. The fear of "loss at self" is at the heart of the most intense existential anxiety known to man. Our belief that real identity and fulfillment are found through involvement with the real world gives us a strong base from which to approach and work with young people but we should not forget that such a commitment often requires something of a "leap of faith."

A less extreme feeling which makes this step a difficult one for many of the young is the premonition that to become an adult is to "settle down," another phrase with negative connotations. To make a choice--and we will look at this in detail later in our discussion--seems tantamount to closing doors, to reducing options, to amputating life's possibilities. From their perspective, it appears as if such people stop growing. Although there is an element of truth in such fears and though some focusing begins to be inevitable, such "settling down" need not be done in a growth-constricting way. Although choosing either a vocation or a marriage partner involves potentially long-term commitments, it need not be at the expense of growth or identity expansion. For many adults, such commitments and stability open the way for new growth and involvements. As White wisely observes, quality of life can be found at least as well in depth as in breadth.<sup>8</sup>

Understandably, to the adolescent or even the college student, not infrequently characterized by considerable identity diffusion, such a perception is rare. To him, there is an invisible life attached to each vocational choice, a life he fears may not be compatible with his "real self."

So there is a reluctance in adolescence to making decisions and commitments. There is something of a grandiosity, a belief that one can be anything, or maybe more accurately, that one is meant to be something, a certain but yet unknown type of person. And so there is a hesitancy. Because most adolescents no longer subscribe to a "one and only" theory of mate selection, many find it liberating to understand that there are also a variety of careers that could provide

satisfaction. There are clusters of jobs that are based on similar values, talents and interests. To choose a "field" is not as constricting as it often seems to the young person. The duties of psychologists, for example, cover a wide range of content, contexts, and emphases. There generally is time later to determine a specialty which maximizes one's talents, interests and fulfillment. Indeed, in today's fluid and evolving world of work, it makes more sense to talk of "career development" than of "vocational choice."

Still, for our discussion and in working with the young, we can not gloss over that certain concrete decisions must be made. Moreover, most choices preclude other options. To be pre-law means you can't be pre-med; to be a conscientious pre-med may mean that you can't play on the basketball team. Life is opening doors but it also includes closing doors, doors which admittedly would likely have allowed quite another life to emerge. It is the mature individual and rare adolescent who can consciously and comfortably make such decisions.

Two ineffective and unhealthy responses to these dilemmas are frequently exhibited by high school and college students. The first is to refuse to make such decisions, particularly of the door-closing nature. It is an unwillingness to really take responsibility for the direction of one's life. But this is, of course, a self-deluding posture because failing to respond decisively is still a response and, just as inexorably, channels one in certain directions.

The other faulty response reflects, at least on the surface, quite the opposite dynamics. This person, rather than fearing that his emerging identity will be swallowed up or somehow constricted by

a misguided decision, is all too eager to trade in the anxiety that accompanies the quest for identity for a sense of direction. Although society applauds and reinforces the high school senior or college sophomore who "knows what he wants to be," I believe that in many cases "premature identity closure" merits greater concern than the college sophomore still exploring many options.

#### THEORIES OF VOCATIONAL CHOICE

Theories of vocational choice are a comparatively modern phenomena for until recently there was little choice. The family and circumstances into which a person was born greatly determined what work one eventually did.

Although there is undeniably more choice and flexibility today, a point we emphasized earlier, we must be careful not to over-emphasize the extent of that freedom and self-determination. College students notwithstanding, one's lot in life is still significantly determined by the "accident of birth"--genetic equipment, the nature of one's family, socioeconomic circumstances, etc..

Nevertheless, there are now numerous theories of vocational choice. We will review several of the most influential. However, since our coverage will be neither extensive or intensive, the interested reader may wish to remember Osipow's Theories of Career Development, the most comprehensive of such reviews.<sup>9</sup>

One prominent theory has been developed by Donald Super.<sup>10</sup> In brief, Super emphasizes that the individual seeks and later maintains a vocational role which offers the greatest possibility for the expression of his self concept. Since that concept has developed over the years

of childhood and undergoes critical revision during adolescence, matching it to a vocational role is a long and difficult task. Super's propositions seem reasonable though his own research suggests that the vocational preferences of most high school students are not realistic, consistent, or clearly reflective of his theoretical description.<sup>11</sup>

Ginzberg, an economist, has developed another widely cited theory.<sup>12</sup> He believes that the individual passes through essentially three stages of vocational development--fantasy, tentative, and realistic. In the fantasy stage, roughly until age 11, the child's occupational thinking is not restricted by realities about himself or the occupational world. The child believes he can become whatever he wants to be; his planning is emotional more than practical.

During the tentative stage, roughly corresponding to adolescence, the vocational thinking has a more introspective quality. The young person begins to consider, usually in this order, his interests, then his abilities and educational aptitudes, and finally his goals.

During the realistic stage, according to Ginzberg, the individual integrates the above facets and works out compromises with the realities of the world. Hopefully, in combination with actual work experience, this leads to a commitment to a specific and realistic occupational goal.

Though Ginzberg's ideas seem to have a type of face validity, very few individuals appear to develop so systematically or rationally. Though he does recognize that vocational choice is a developmental process that occurs, not at a single point, but over a long period of time, he seems to lend some support to the mythical idea of a right

vocational choice rather than emphasizing the variety of careers that could bring fulfillment.

Other theorists speculate that the process of vocational development is not so rational but rather the product of complex personality dynamics, including many elements of which the person is unaware. Such hunches have led to an investigation of parental behaviors and child rearing practices. Anne Roe is the prominent theorist in this category.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, after a decade of studies she was forced to conclude that her major hypotheses were not substantiated.<sup>14</sup>

How sound and helpful are theories of vocational choice? It is my impression that, in contrast to ten years ago, there is less enthusiasm and more disillusionment with them. The business of vocational choice appears to be more complex than we had assumed; vocational development less straight forward.

On the one end, vocational choice has become more life-long and continual; critical choices continue to be made well after adolescence. Looking in the other chronological direction, there is increasing suspicion that we have over-emphasized the choice and under-emphasized the critical role of developmental experiences. Perhaps what appears to be choice in adolescence is more the playing-out of childhood antecedents. That issue is, of course, simply the reflection of the larger freedom-determinism issue, perhaps the most basic issue in personality theory if not in all of psychology.

Put another way, Roe might well have been on the right track. Her failure to validate her hypotheses may say more about the complexity of personality variables than about the correctness of her hunches.

Personality factors undoubtedly do play a key role in vocational choice and development, as our subsequent discussion will illustrate. But in the absence of sound longitudinal studies, such hypotheses are very difficult to substantiate.

Which factors from childhood might turn out to be of increasing importance in understanding vocational dynamics? White's significant work on competence and "effectance motivation"<sup>15</sup> continues to attract the attention of an increasingly wide range of investigators. As you may recall from chapter 2, White observed the child's tendency to be curious, to explore his environment, and to cope and deal successfully with it. Murphy<sup>16</sup> has recently made a strong case for such varying activity levels being related to vocational productivity and adjustment, though again, we will have to await longitudinal research to conclusively establish that connection.

Some longitudinal evidence is already available. For example, projects done at the Fels Research Institute<sup>17</sup> suggest that achievement motivation is not only stable over time but also related to later achievement in adults. This motivation, characterized by curiosity, a desire and persistence to accomplish, and a willingness to delay gratification appears to have its roots in childhood, particularly in certain child-rearing patterns. Parents who themselves are models of achievement, who build a firm base of security in the child by first meeting dependency needs but then encouraging and rewarding efforts towards independence and mastery produce children with high achievement motivation.<sup>18</sup>

Although the research appears close to establishing meaningful connections among the topics we have been discussing, clarification will

also come from increased focus on the individual's early school experience. In school, a person faces rules, competition, and evaluation. He must learn to control impulses and respond to authority structure. Such experiences also shape his image of self and of the outside world.

In Eriksonian terms, vocational theorists have not paid enough attention to his fourth stage--learning industry as opposed to inferiority. In this stage, supposedly mastered between age seven and adolescence, the individual learns to work and derive enjoyment from it. However, Constantinople<sup>19</sup> found that a substantial number of college students still wrestle with this developmental task. Perhaps even some adults never resolve this tension while others do so only by becoming over-achievers or "workaholics."

In brief, all these factors have important ramifications for our understanding of vocational choice and adult productivity. In general, however, theories of vocational choice seem not quite up to the task. Perhaps, by Osipow's own admission, the process is so complex, idiosyncratic and broad that no single theory can ever totally and accurately account for any individual's choice. Instead, as he recommends, we may need a "...collection of miniature theories, each dealing with circumscribed, explicit segments of vocational behavior, to be woven into a broad theory after the smaller theories have been shaped by empirical findings."<sup>20</sup>

#### ACTUALITIES OF VOCATIONAL CHOICE

In a recent study, Katz and his associates studied multiple facets of change in thousands of college students, following them over a four-year period. As part of this study, students were asked, "To



what extent has your planning for your life's work involved you in a struggle of conflicting feelings and thoughts?" Over 80% responded "very much" or "moderately." He also asked, "How sure are you that your present choice of career or occupation is the most appropriate for you?" To this, 70% were "very sure" or "moderately sure."<sup>21</sup>

On the surface, these results are very heartening. It appears that college students have a difficult conflict, make a choice, and then feel quite secure with it. Unfortunately, such a conclusion does not synchronize with the findings of other investigators or even the over-all impressions of Katz and his associates.

In speaking about vocational choice, Katz confesses that they had naively assumed that there would be straight-forward development--from vague conceptualizations in the freshman year to relatively firm directions in the senior year. This happens, of course, but according to Katz, more because of pressures from college policies than because of identity configuration. Indeed, the incompleteness of identity, even during the senior year, was one of the main conclusions of the Katz project. That the majority feel "sure" about the choices they do make might well reflect more their need to reduce cognitive dissonance than their likelihood of future vocational satisfaction. Such cynicism unfortunately seems justified by other research in this area,<sup>22</sup> some of which will be later revealed when we talk more prescriptively.

We have already established the idea that vocational choice is often made at a time when the individual's image of himself and the world of work is at an early stage of clarification. We will increase our understanding both of what goes wrong and what we might do to

enhance that process by examining in more detail the actual basis on which those decisions are made.

### Stereotypes, Prestige, and Fantasy

College students seem unduly influenced by superficial occupational stereotypes. O'Dowd and Beardslee did extensive research on vocational perceptions and selections of students and uncovered insights in a number of related areas. First, there is an amazingly strong consensus on the prestige-rating of occupations. Secondly, vocational choice is more based on that prestige-rating than on factual information on how one enters the field, what one's duties will be upon entry, or a realistic appraisal of supply and demand. Thirdly, college students have strong stereotypes of most professions and these images, though primarily oriented to the perceived personality-types and life-styles in these professions (not their actual work) are very influential in vocational choice.<sup>22</sup>

For example, there was strong consensus that doctors are "stable and confident" and have "pretty wives and happy homes." Scientists are "emotionally shallow," artists are "sensitive," and accountants "uninfluential, of limited intelligence, and socially withdrawing." Although such stereotypes may have a rough similarity to actual differences among occupational groups, it is a dubious basis on which to base personal choice. Individual differences within an occupational group are much greater and differences between such groups are much less than we customarily believe. Furthermore, such thinking seemingly indicates a belief that one can not shape the role or modify the stereotype but only be molded by them. Such feelings of powerlessness perhaps

explain why in recent years, even with a very tight job market, many of the top liberal arts graduates have refused to interview for jobs "in business." Why? Well, "businessmen are insensitive to the needs of others." In other contexts, critics complain of a generation of young people supposedly spoiled by Spockian child rearing into believing that they can change things "on demand." Such feelings of potency are certainly not evident here.

Prestige also appears to be a powerful factor in vocational choice. For example, in the widely publicized "Project Talent" study, 62% of high school boys were aspiring to jobs that make up only 14% of the labor force.<sup>23</sup> Everyone wants to be a chief; few choose to be Indians. Lest you think young people have become more realistic, one report on the 1973-74 Yale University freshmen claims that 52% plan to be doctors, another 37% lawyers.<sup>24</sup> That doesn't leave many aspirants, of course, for the other 40,000+ jobs described in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. In reality, only an infinitesimal percent of all such freshmen will enter medical or law school though even then, there is already a widely publicized surplus of lawyers and a predicted end to the shortage of doctors. Perhaps the movement towards legal, medical and other paraprofessionals will offer a partial solution to that collision of desire and reality.

Many observers have also noted that vocational thinking is often long on fantasy and short on fact. Would-be special education teachers envision the day when the sheer intensity of their love will reverse the fortunes of countless emotionally disturbed youngsters. Pre-law students anticipate the time when, day-in-day-out, like Perry

Mason, they'll be persuasively winning dramatic court battles. Trite but true, in the absence of significant contact with working adults, the heroes of television and film likely shape occupational images more than realistic job exposure and information.

Now fantasy has a place--perhaps even an under-emphasized one. I wouldn't care if all my tests pointed towards being a C.P.A. or research chemist; those jobs trigger no heroic fantasies in me and I'd be willing to accept that as an important indicator. But fantasies aren't enough. Teachers are not always transforming lives; working with retarded children means daily contact with smelly kids and runny noses. Much of the work of a lawyer is dull, dusty and methodical. One is not likely to be satisfied with his job unless the daily, more routine duties also supply a modicum of fulfillment. But such realism is not particularly evident in the vocational thinking of college students according to the research and my own experience.

#### Vocational Information, Tests, and Experience

More realistic occupational information is plentiful but of uneven quality. Much becomes dated quickly. Guidance counselors can be of real help though too often they too are poorly informed or prisoners of the same stereotypes. Other information can be found in libraries though one must be alert to that produced by companies or organizations interested in promoting a certain field of work for often it glorifies the positive considerations while minimizing the negative.

For comprehensiveness and fairness, it is hard to beat the Occupational Outlook Handbook put out every two years by the United

States Department of Labor. This handbook realistically describes hundreds of job fields, gives up to date information on training and employment possibilities as well as direction on where to find more information.

Vocationally related tests are often used and can be helpful. Interest inventories like the Kudar and Strong can help an individual clarify what he enjoys doing and compare himself to individuals who find certain jobs satisfying. Aptitude batteries can identify strengths to be built on and weaknesses which perhaps should be avoided, though it should be noted that some limitations can be overcome by a strong desire to achieve. Various personality tests have more ambitious goals though consequently can be less valid than tests with a more restricted scope.

Tests have limited potential. The interpretation by the counselor is crucial; even more is the attitude of the client. On the one hand, college students often respond as if tests magically deliver infallible assessments and insights. "But the tests said...!" Sometimes such an attitude reflects a desire to shift responsibility from oneself to the tests or the counselor. On the other hand, people often resist learning certain things about themselves, ignoring or distorting unfavorable feedback even while using other results to support misconceptions about themselves.

Tests are more likely to help than interfere with the student's search for meaningful direction though the odds are not as good as we might hope for. Super, though knowledgeable and appreciative of what tests can do, offers the sobering observation that "personality traits...

show...no practical differential relationship to vocational preference, entry, success, or satisfaction."<sup>25</sup>

Somewhat parenthetically, we face here still another bit of evidence (cf. chapter 2) that the time-table of human development is less innate and more culturally determined than we have generally assumed. For example, after reviewing the research on interests during adolescence, Kuhlen<sup>26</sup> was not alone in concluding that interests had solidified sufficiently by then so as to predict adult interest patterns. But that was in 1952, before the comparatively recent emphasis on higher education. Today, in contrast, the instability of interests appears to extend well into the college years.<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately and not infrequently, a college student seems to place more faith in almost any approach to solving his vocational problem than in his own ability to sort out key issues. Often a confused state or poor decision seems to be not the inevitable result of an impossible challenge, nor the consequence of laziness, but the result of a lack of confidence that they can make sense of an admittedly complex state of affairs. Though it may require some patient assistance on our part, the student should be reminded that in his 18-20 years of being alive, he has had numerous experiences which provide important and highly reliable clues. Does he enjoy working with people more than things? Does he prefer words or numbers? A structured or more informal situation? Leading or following?

Even when students begin to think in those terms, they need to be challenged to refine such thinking. For example, if your experience is anything like mine, a large percentage of students report that they

"like to work with people" or "get along well with people." Disregarding for the moment that for some that may be a generous self-assessment, such a student can be challenged to clarify such thinking. As Kalish phrased it:

The question here is who are these people you like to work with and get along with so well? Are they primarily people you can control? Or people you want to work with? Or people you want to sell to? Or people you want to advise and help? Are they normal people? Mentally ill? Physically handicapped? Are they older than you or younger? There is little doubt that the ability to get along with others is useful, but you need to be aware of who these others are, under what conditions you want to be with them, and what relationships you wish to have with them.<sup>28</sup>

To some knowledgeable observers, it is not more tests or information which the young need but more actual work experience. Like Katz, they also were forced to conclude that the American college does a poor job of assisting youth to learn the work-related insights and skills conducive to effective adulthood. Two recent Carnegie Foundation reports, for example, deviated from the usual prescriptions for higher education in recommending more work opportunities and experience, more linkages with the vocational world.<sup>29, 30</sup> James Coleman, a recognized authority on youth, author of The Adolescent Society and the famous, controversial "Coleman Report," has echoed a similar recommendation ("less school, more work for ages 14-24") on two different occasions.<sup>31, 32</sup>

We are accustomed to such talk in regards to lower-class, non-college bound high school students but the observers mentioned above have in mind the needs of all adolescents, including upper-class college students. Corroborating evidence comes from other sources. In recent years, increasing numbers of graduates from Harvard University (and other colleges) has taken jobs as mailmen or manual laborers. Asked why, they reply "To find myself."<sup>33</sup> After 22 years of socialization?

After 16-17 years of schooling including four years at one of the best universities in the country? Many young people, apparently, use their affluence and academic detachment to buy an isolation from the world of work. And higher education has generally been a willing party to such foolish and self-defeating behavior.

In summary, the vocational decision-process rarely seems to follow a theoretical model. This would be quite acceptable if individuals were inclined to follow a more personally valid route. Unfortunately, most observers note a more haphazard and accidental process. That persons can have perfect freedom of choice or that each person could find the optimally fulfilling position if he only tried are obviously illusions. There is no sense in denying the limitations built into each person and our societal structure. There is merit, however, in striving for at least a middle position where realistic self-assessment and industrious investigation of the world of work leads to better choices on some basic vocational decisions and directions.

#### SEX ROLES, WOMEN, AND WORK

Although much of the previous discussion was intended to apply equally to males and females, it likely was not free of sexist overtones. Though I wrote "he" and "his" in the neuter sense, most of us find it easier to think of work in relation to men than to women. We have been conditioned to believe that work and vocation are more a part of man's identity, thereby implying that "housewife" is not a vocation, that running a family really isn't work, or that women generally don't aspire to be "more" than that. Such thinking is a reflection of faulty cultural sex roles.



Sex roles expectations exert their influence from an early age. Boys are generally treated in ways which produce greater autonomy and aggressiveness; they get the message early that they are expected to be competitive and to eventually hold a steady job which will support a family. Girls tend to be more dependent and affiliative and are conditioned to prepare more for nurturant and home-oriented roles. In particular, girls lose out on the cultivation of achievement motivation, a critical variable, as we have already seen, in vocational development. As Garai and Scheinfeld report in their summary of research on sex differences:

To attain masculine sex identity, boys need identification with a vocational goal, preferably one that is characterized by a meaningful or prestige-conferring activity. Girls, on the other hand, tend to attain their feminine sex identity primarily through intimacy in interpersonal relations--i.e., success in marriage--whereas identification with a vocational goal appears to play a secondary role in their quest for identity.<sup>34</sup>

Some of this is changing, of course. Social forces are reducing the distance between sex roles; relatedly, there is a decreasing recognition of certain jobs as "masculine" or "feminine." Moreover, women are demanding and increasingly receiving equal opportunities. There is still discrimination, some of it subtle, though more conspicuously, much of the discrimination seems to be in the favored sense. It may be easier today for a woman than a man to enter many occupations and training programs.

These facts have crucial implications for our discussion of identity. Traditionally, a woman's identity was largely a derived one, based primarily on the achievements and status of her husband. Identifying oneself as Mrs. John Hoffman symbolizes that; the husband-centered conversation among many women illustrates it. We tend to

derogate such women today though if we are really serious about women's rights, we must also respect the right to choose the more traditional feminine role.

Increasingly, however, vocational choice is as important for women as for men. Some women, and there are indications that this may be an increasing number, choose not to marry. Others marry but choose not to have children or to work longer before getting married or having children. Others wish not to wait until the children leave home before returning to work but return when the children enter school or even soon after birth. Any way you cut it, with longer life spans and smaller families, the majority of a woman's life is available for outside work if she so chooses.

For most women, the adult role still centers around being a wife and mother. But although such responsibilities are varied and demanding, for many women, particularly those with a college education, such duties are too limited. She wants more.

Such a woman encounters difficult obstacles, not only in society but in herself. Socialization has shaped her to assume a relatively docile and unassertive role and to feel conflicted when she seeks achievement and success. Ambitious, competitive, and certainly aggressive behavior is seen as masculine, not only by males but also by females, a point supported by Horner's story-completion research on a hypothetical female medical student.<sup>35</sup>

In brief, there is a pervasive and crippling "fear of success" which undermines female achievement. There is a hard-to-avoid fear of social rejection from a culture conditioned against the woman who seeks

an occupation of high status and authority. These internal and external obstacles, the conflicting cultural expectations, and her own ambivalence significantly complicate the situation of the capable woman today. There is evidence that more women are "succeeding"<sup>36</sup> though perhaps only by paying a stiff price in conflicted feelings, frustrations, and guilt.

Guilt comes into the picture because traditional sex roles have assumed moral over-tones. Guilt is felt primarily by women with children for there is in our society a stigma against mothers who work, especially during hours or years when their children are not in school. The pros and cons of "working mothers" have been debated heatedly. Although research suggests that children with working mothers have slightly more adjustment difficulties, a more significant factor in determining the over-all effect on children seems to be the happiness and emotional stability of the parents.<sup>37</sup> Put another way, if the mother really desires to work and finds fulfillment through it, the children will likely be better off than if she is denied that opportunity. This points to the larger matter of life-values and the role of work in fulfilling them.

Before turning to such considerations, the Newmans offer a good concluding sense of proportion:

Current efforts to expand single-sex-dominated professions to include members of the opposite sex have the short-term effect of exposing more people to this tension between occupational role and sex role. In the long run, it is to be expected that the presence of both sexes in every career would alter the nature of that career sufficiently so that its sex-role connotations are minimized. This will lead to an increasing independence between sex role and occupational role.<sup>38</sup>

## CULTURE AND WORK: REALITIES AND VALUES

In the past, work and family life were far more intertwined. A far larger percentage of our population lived on farms--typically a family enterprise; many other men had a small business within the house or from a shop connected to it. It was customary for a son to assist his father from an early age and eventually to take over the business. In contrast today, many youngsters never spend a day with their fathers at his work. Many would be hard pressed to even describe what their fathers do. There is a detachment that wasn't formerly there.

A more serious detachment or gap appears to be growing in terms of work values. Traditionally, in our culture, the Protestant work ethic has prevailed. It held that it was man's duty to work, that God blessed industrious efforts, and that the way to success, measured primarily in money and property, was through hard work and frugality. Allegedly, many college-age youth no longer subscribe to such beliefs, seeing the American way as too competitive, exploitive and profit-oriented, at the expense of more important human needs and social values.<sup>39</sup> Such a view was highly publicized through Reich's Greening of America.<sup>40</sup>

As we noted in the previous chapter on values, such generalizations must be viewed with caution and qualification. There is no doubt that a small but at least until recently increasing number of young people are intensely disenchanted with "the system." They see capitalism in terms of exploitive and debilitating forces and want little to do with it unless major reform takes place.<sup>41</sup> In a less intense and extreme way, a larger number of the young share some of the disillusionment and critical attitude.<sup>42</sup>

Nonetheless, many of the same surveys indicate that the majority of American youth still hold to many of the traditional "work ethic" beliefs. For example, 52% of college students and 70% of the larger number of high school adolescents believe that hard work leads to success and wealth and that such goals are worth striving for.<sup>43</sup>

Although such findings--and they could be widely expanded--may seem comforting to traditionalists, our purposes will not be well served by hiding behind these somewhat superficial reports. Although the job-competitiveness of the current recession has made college students comparatively silent and job-oriented, there remains a strong and perhaps increasing though hidden current of disenchantment and apprehension.

There remains wide-spread skepticism concerning American values. Many young people have sensed an emptiness in their parents' lives. Though contemporary young people are not as unmaterialistic as they often believe--parental affluence allows them the ironic luxury of certain delusions--many have closely observed fathers who were financially successful but only at the expense of their family's welfare, personal happiness, and much else in life which matters. Young people today tend, at least in their ascribed values, to reject vocational success as the only basis for self-respect. They would prefer to develop other roles more fully.

Though what we have said may imply that contemporary youth value work less, in a real sense, they value it more. They expect more out of work than their parents did; they want it to be more than just a way to make a living. They expect to be able to use their full abilities, to be creative, and to serve mankind. They don't want to work just to "make a living" but to live through their work. They want

work to be expressive not just instrumental. They want work to be a calling, to be a vocation in the broad, almost religious sense of the word.

Contemporary young people may be setting themselves up for severe disappointment. Though work need not be mere drudgery, it is doubtful that most jobs can meet such a high criteria. As Keniston observed:

Work...in technological society...requires a dissociation of feeling, a subordination of passion, impulse, fantasy and idealism before cognitive problems and tasks. As breadwinners, most Americans neither find nor even seek "fulfillment" in their jobs. Work, split away from "living" by convention and tradition, becomes instrumental, a dissociated part of life that makes possible, yet often vitiates, the rest of a "living."<sup>44</sup>

It is also unfair and misleading to suggest that it is only the young, not the older generation, who desire their work to be expressive and fulfilling. There have been too many reports of increased boredom, absenteeism, and other expressions of worker dissatisfaction to allow that erroneous thinking. Herzberg's widely publicized theory of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators<sup>45</sup> and McGregor's "X" and "Y" theories of management<sup>46</sup> offer belated recognition that all workers, not just the young and college educated, are first of all human beings, with all the rights, privileges and needs that go therewith.

The young person today, if he is not to suffer a chronic case of cynicism, must learn to view work realistically. Not all jobs allow for meaningful identity-expression and no job can continually provide a sense of satisfaction. As a nurse supposedly once said, "Every job has its bedpans."

Conger identifies a more serious problem:

Ironically, however, it appears that in the long run, the most critical problem for American society may turn out to be, not the refusal of some young people to participate in the System, but the capacity of the System to provide the numbers and kinds of jobs that an expanding population of young adults will need. Present trends are not encouraging.<sup>47</sup>

Unemployment among the young is generally 4-5 times that of the adult population; for minority youths, twice as high as that. Simply getting a job has long been a problem for the unskilled or poorly educated but currently, as an over-production in certain professional and technical fields combines with an economic recession, we face the specter of unemployment or underemployment of even the college educated. Again from Conger's astute perspective:

One of the economic problems of a high-technology society appears to be that, on the one hand, it demands highly specialized, frequently nontransferable skills, whereas on the other hand, it also generates rapid shifts in technology and in the economy generally that may make these skills obsolete in a relatively short period of time.<sup>48</sup>

#### BASIC DECISIONS

When some experts are asserting that 80% of the jobs in our society do not require post-high school education<sup>49</sup> and when many individuals with college or even advanced degrees are forced to accept such jobs, the logical question to ask is, "Why go to college?"

#### Whether to Go to College?

We have witnessed in recent decades an expansion of higher education hardly imaginable in other cultures or previous eras of our own. For a time in the 1960's, a new community college was opening on the average of once every two weeks. Today, in rough numbers, over

80% of American youth graduate from high school, 50% of those go to college, 50% of that number graduate, of which about half go on to graduate or professional schools. In some high schools serving affluent suburban areas, over 99% of the students go on to college. Clearly, for many young people, whether to go to college is not much of a decision.

Traditionally, the quick reaction has been, "Of course, jobs today require increasingly sophisticated education." Plausible as that sounds, it appears not to be true. Borow and others agree that the majority of jobs in the United States do not require college education.

Why then do millions choose to go? The reasons are many, often obvious, and sometimes complex. We will focus most on those reasons which are part of the conscious rationale of parents and young people, though it should be noted that some reasons are below their level of awareness.

One of the basic even if unspoken reasons is simply that there is nothing else for millions of young people to do. In our increasingly automated and computerized society, there is no meaningful (excepting school) or necessary place for the young.<sup>50</sup> From a time when even children were so needed in the labor force that they had to be protected by law from long hours and exploitive practices, we have moved to an era when even 18-22 year olds must somehow be kept from the labor force. Even with millions of the young in college, adult unemployment rates are high, those of the young astronomical.

A traditional and more conscious reason for going to college has also been an economic one. There is a widespread and almost



unquestioned belief that a college degree is a guarantee for higher, perhaps double life-time earnings. It is argued that an educated person is less likely to be unemployed, more likely to get the promotions, to earn more, and to derive greater need fulfillment and personal satisfaction from his job.<sup>51</sup>

Numerous studies indicate that there is a good deal of generalized truth in such beliefs, i.e., there does appear to be a strong correlation between years of schooling and income. Lassiter's study is but one of many such reports.<sup>52</sup>

Nonetheless, there are serious methodological problems with most of such studies. The first is that correlation does not mean causation. Relatedly, such studies fail to hold constant numerous other factors which might well be the primary cause of income disparities. For example, at least traditionally, those who go to college generally come from more affluent families, have higher motivation levels, have more influential personal contacts, and greater access to jobs. After an exhaustive and highly respected study, Christopher Jencks concluded that financial success in the United States depends mostly on social class and old-fashioned luck, not years in school.<sup>53</sup>

More precise analyses of economic costs and benefits also bring the old "more earnings" argument into question. For example, the disparity in salary between a Ph.D. college teacher and a worker at General Motors is not great. When one then considers the rising costs of 7-8 (or even 4) years of college plus the lost wages and related investment potential of those years, it is highly unlikely that the former will be appreciably ahead financially, even over a life-time.

So far, such arguments have not had an appreciable effect on the public. Jencks' study was not widely disseminated by the popular media. Other dissenting voices have also addressed primarily professional audiences.<sup>54</sup> Very recently, however, a best-selling author, obviously aiming at the mass market, has resurrected many of these arguments in a strident and popularized manner.<sup>55</sup> In general, Bird argues that higher education promises far more than it can deliver and that diplomas, while costing far more, are worth less than ever before. It will be interesting to note whether the other benefits of a college education will be sufficient to continue to attract large numbers of young people if some of the economic benefits prove to be illusory and are publicized.

There are, of course, other benefits of college attendance. (Why people should go to college is a different issue than why they do. The latter is our concern here; the former question will be implicitly addressed in chapter 9.) For centuries now, from Plato to Hutchins, proponents of a liberal arts education have argued that we must look beyond pragmatic considerations, that education must and can enrich "the whole man." Such talk, though at times only the pretentious rhetoric of college catalogs, is not without basis--as a philosophy of education, to be sure, but even in terms of educational outcomes. Sanford compared freshmen and seniors at Vassar and found seniors to be more tolerant and flexible, less authoritarian, more realistic and self confident, more inclined to reject stereotypes in favor of their own perceptions, and less cynical about people.<sup>56</sup> Lehmann found similar changes in his study of Michigan State University students.<sup>57</sup>

Less empirically but more directly related to our concerns, the adolescent may hear parents or older siblings place high value on the intangible, non-academic ways they grew from their college experiences. Moreover, such changes can also be translated into more pragmatic considerations. Many employers want a college graduate, not for the actual results of the formal curriculum, but because colleges screen and promote other dimensions of behavior.

### Parental Influence

Parental influence is a key factor in the college-or-not decision. Given their choice, many adolescents would opt for the immediate gratification of a job that paid enough to finance a car and new clothes. As we noted in chapter 6, there is a tendency among young people to live more in the present. Nevertheless, either directly or indirectly, many young people are affected by the aspirations of their parents. Numerous studies and common observation suggest that this achievement motivation is strongest among the middle class and particularly felt by first born children.<sup>58</sup>

A common problem is that this parental influence will not be just to go to college but also pressure to prepare for a certain vocation. Parents who perhaps because of their immigration, lack of educational opportunities for themselves, the matrix of the depression years, or more subtle psychological reasons were not able to fulfill their own adolescent dreams, often wish to fulfill them vicariously through their children. Not infrequently, this is to the latter's detriment. Parents do not always get high marks at recognizing that their children are separate individuals with their own interests and values, not extensions

of the parents.

Since the above danger is rather well understood if not always recognized, note should be made about the opposite danger, i.e., that the young person, acting from a need to demonstrate independence, will reject a highly appropriate vocational plan simply because it is what his parents wish. Parental plans need not be in violation of a child's interests or aptitudes; indeed, such plans likely embody familial values which have also been inculcated into the young person. Moreover, the pursuit of such a plan might well carry greater parental support, both financially and psychologically. Neither docility nor over-reaction to parental desires is usually the wisest route.

Interestingly, for some professions, the number of sons who follow in their father's footsteps greatly exceeds what one would expect by chance. In one study, 44% of physicians' sons chose medicine and 28% of lawyers' sons chose law.<sup>59</sup> Similar results have been obtained for other professions. This phenomenon has been accounted for on several grounds: (1) identification with the parent's interests and values, (2) more familiarity with father's occupation, (3) parental motivation if not pressure, and (4) advantages in access to training programs.<sup>60</sup>

These and other factors we have discussed help to explain why investigators have found a strong relationship between social class and college entrance. In "Project Talent," perhaps the best known of such studies, in each ability-level quadrant, three times as many upper-class students (vs. lower class) went to college.<sup>61</sup> This reflects lower levels of aspiration, the relative lack of opportunity, and the absence of the delay-gratification value. It also reflects reality.

The poor do not always have the option of sacrificing immediate pay-offs for long-term gains.

In brief, to choose to go to college generally means to extend youth and postpone adulthood. It means to delay independence, vocational choice, and for a decreasing majority, to delay marriage. Theoretically it ties in with delaying gratification though in actuality, it is hard to imagine more gratifying circumstances and experiences than those of the college years.

### Dropping Out

The decision of whether to drop out of college is in many respects the same as whether to go to college, though made at a later point in time and with additional reasons. It is a decision made by many students for only 40% of freshmen graduate on schedule. The majority of those who leave say they intend to finish but only another 20% do.<sup>62</sup>

Why do students leave college? One obvious reason is academic difficulty--sometimes to the point where the college makes the dropping-out decision for the student. What we do know about learning difficulties--and it is not enough--is readily available in other sources and is beyond our purview here. Since academic performance in college is correlated with high school grades and scholastic aptitude scores, we can assume that it is the product of many of the same factors which explain learning, or the lack of it, during the earlier years.

Surprisingly, the majority of students leave college for non-academic reasons.<sup>63</sup> Some are sociological--family troubles, marital, military or vocational plans. Some leave for economic reasons; they

simply can't afford college. A few leave because of physical illness.

Psychological factors are often behind a student dropping out of college. Occasionally that may be a serious emotional disturbance; more likely it is an off-shoot of immaturity, anxiety, rebellion, social inadequacy, or lack of independence and responsibility.

Often the problem is described as one of "motivation." Perhaps they are in college only because of parental or social pressures and therefore find it hard to be goal-directed. Numerous studies have shown, not surprisingly, that students are most motivated and conscientious when they are personally committed to some plan or purpose. Unfortunately, as Summerskill notes, we really "don't know what kinds of motives do indicate future college success. In fact, we don't even know how to discern student motives with much accuracy."<sup>64</sup>

Although the drop-out is usually seen as a failure, by others and himself, that is not always a fair assessment. Dropping out, and the difficulties preceeding that decision, often force some painful but potentially valuable self-assessment. Such insight can lead to better direction in life or a more profitable college experience should he later choose to return.

Army veterans, though their reasons for an interrupted college career may be different, are a good advertisement of this point. Products of maturing experiences and often possessing a strong sense of self, they return with either a sense of direction or the personal stability needed to realistically test a range of career alternatives. For similar reasons, an increasing number of educators today either recommend something other than automatic entrance into college immediately after high school or endorse the practice of "stopping out," a

more deliberate departure from college in favor of work, travel, or other explorations of self and options in the contemporary world. Though the public tends to applaud the person who already in high school knows "what he wants to be," there is reason to believe that vocational choices made later are actually superior.<sup>65</sup>

Katz offers the refreshingly different view that those who "drop into place" may pay a more serious price than those who "drop out." In studying primarily students at Stanford and other prestigious schools, he came to know well the student who had been under pressure since the beginning of high school, and probably before, to "work hard in order to get into a good college." After that, he had to work hard in order to get into graduate or professional school; then, to do well in order to get a good position. The challenge is not just to "work hard" but to do so in order to meet external and often arbitrary standards. From Katz' view, education conditions the "good" student to accept the inevitable demands of the system at the price of losing touch with oneself. It is no wonder that the "freshness of approach and passionate involvement of the adolescent are rare qualities in the adult world."<sup>66</sup> Katz hints that some "drop out" in order to avoid the psychological suicide of prematurely "dropping into place."

### Choosing a Major

We need not say much about choosing a major for though it is an important decision, by being the symbol and focus of vocational choice, it embodies much of what we have already discussed.

Ideally, the choice should reflect the thinking and self-assessment which has gone before and the vocational plan and personal goals

of the future. In actuality, as we have noted, it does not always work out so neatly. Frequently the sophomore is unsure of how to read either the past or the future, himself or the world of work. But the college forces a choice.

For those students who see college primarily in terms of self-enrichment rather than vocational preparation, the pressure is not as great. One can then choose courses on the basis of interest and reputation. A compromise is to select a flexible major (e.g. sociology) and general liberal arts program which could eventually lead in many directions. Nonetheless, to partially avoid an ostensibly restricting choice is still to make one for it immediately precludes fields which require a specified undergraduate program, e.g. medicine and engineering. One can not keep all doors open or avoid all long-term ramifications. And that can be the source of considerable anxiety.

Today's students receive conflicting advice. They are warned about being under-trained and about being over-trained. They are encouraged to specialize in order to be trained for certain jobs; a liberal arts degree, some claim, is no longer enough. Yet in doing so, they risk finding no openings in that field or having their specialized training soon become obsolete. But to be broadly educated is, others argue, to risk being uncompetitively equipped for particular jobs. That they themselves as well as the occupational world are always changing simply complicates those attempts to predict the future.

Earlier in discussing vocational choice, we observed that (1) there was strong agreement among college students on the prestige-rating of each occupation, (2) their vocational choice was often more



prestige-based than reality-determined, and (3) there was a clear stereotype of the person attracted to each occupation.<sup>67</sup> I know of no parallel research on the choice of majors though if one has taught particularly at the small college level, he knows that parallel images do exist, e.g., philosophy majors are intellectuals, education attracts many mediocre students, etc..

In the absence of better motivation, or perhaps overriding it, students pick majors on the basis of such considerations. Perhaps that is more sound and less foolish than it initially appears for it can be a way of identifying with an image of what one perceives himself to be or wants to become. The latter can be a road to personal growth and a way to further integrate vocational choice with identity development.

#### VOCATIONAL CHOICE AND IDENTITY

We have seen that the quest for vocational identity is a difficult one for it both reflects and shapes many dimensions of personality. A pervasive theme of this chapter has been that the relationship between identity and vocational choice is reciprocal. That is, the nature of the emerging identity and the influential vectors behind it do much to determine what the vocational choice will be. Reciprocally, that vocational choice often has the effect of drawing together the various vectors, crystalizing identity, and appreciably shaping many aspects of life, e.g. socioeconomic status, power and prestige, self image and esteem. These two processes are simultaneous and inextricably connected.

One way to illustrate the inter-relatedness of identity and vocational choice is to simply hi-light the relationship of each of the preceeding three chapters to the matter of vocational choice. In

chapter 4, the emphasis was on the search for self--the development of competencies, increasing independence in both feeling and behavior, the self concept, and the presence or absence of self esteem. Each of these, in turn, shapes how an individual perceives who he is and what he can do. Career choice based on such perceptions leads to a sense of personal integration.

Relationships with others, the focus of chapter 5, also give the individual valuable data for his vocational considerations, telling him about both his desires and abilities. Do I want to work closely with people? If so, what kind? In what sort of relationship? When am I effective? In what kind of relationship am I comfortable? Again, whether an eventual career is satisfying or dissatisfying might well be primarily determined by whether the job is compatible with one's range of interpersonal needs and skills.

There can be little doubt that the individual's developing value system, the focus of chapter 6, plays a key role in vocational choice. Indeed, there is an increasingly strong demand by young people that a job be, not just a way to earn a living, but a means of fulfilling one's basic values. Though such a demand does at times lead to unrealistic expectations of what a job can be, the desire that vocational commitment be an expression of one's value system is a reasonable and psychologically valid one. Work plays too central and pervasive a role in life to allow for substantial incongruence between one's value system and vocational identity.

It is unfortunate that the relationship between values and vocational choice has received minuscule attention compared to, for example, the matter of vocational interests. More seriously, research relating

vocational choice to the identity process is meager,<sup>68</sup> despite its obvious and important interrelatedness in human development.

According to Erikson, the adolescent's most passionate striving is for fidelity.<sup>69</sup> This includes ideas in which to believe but also efforts in which to invest. He needs commitments which help to unify the past and present and future. Because of the psychosocial nature of identity, he wants to express himself in a way valued by society. A vocational plan if not commitment is the most likely way to do this.

We have in our discussion encountered many reasons why the determination of such direction is a most difficult challenge. The adolescent's options are numerous, our society is complex, and the world of work is in constant flux. He also, as we have noted, has difficulty in assessing his own qualities.<sup>70</sup> The adolescent can not be left to his own coping devices. He needs sensitive and informed assistance, help that appears to be too rarely available for most young people in contemporary society.

The adolescent needs assistance but he is hardly a passive or helpless victim. The individual himself generally has a strong desire to move ahead. The healthy person who has been in one state long enough experiences a healthy type of tension. To use Chickering's delightful terms, he doesn't enjoy the feeling of being all dressed up but having no where to go; of having energy but no destination. He is no longer just asking, "Who am I?" but "Who am I going to be?" No longer just, "Where am I?" but "Where am I going?" It's time to clarify purpose and direction.<sup>71</sup>

With such concerns, the adolescent needs assistance. He needs help primarily in the two areas we have already stressed--in assessing

and defining himself and in better understanding the world of work.

How can this be accomplished? Consensus appears to be forming around one major recommendation: involvement in more actual work experience.

Matteson argues it this way:

Youth needs experience with real people in the real world of work.... It is a shame to waste youth's most creative years in thinking about work but not really doing any.... Education without involvement is always second-hand education, at least once removed from reality. This seems especially dangerous in adolescence, when intellectualism is already overused as a defense mechanism. Symbolic processes develop to their peak in adolescence. It is easy, in the academic world, to become so involved in symbols and words that one learns words about words and thoughts about thoughts and loses contact with direct experience. Adolescents need the opportunity to conceptualize experience; they also need some direct experience to conceptualize. Learning only from books and lectures can result in living in the realm of symbols, but with nothing to symbolize.<sup>72</sup>

What changes occur when the adolescent enters the world of work? McCandless, after analyzing a number of case studies, identified the following changes and benefits:

1. Gains in autonomy and assuming responsibility for one's behavior
2. A "weaning" process; increased feelings of independence and real independence
3. Broadened social contacts
4. New social skills; more flexible repertoire of behavior
5. Learned to live with routine and authority, at times requiring the sacrifice of individuality
6. Learned to accept a degree of conformity, an essential ingredient in most long-range vocational plans
7. Obtained relevant training for future careers
8. The self concept was firmed up by having to test oneself against others
9. Saw self as a member of an interlinked society; gained a sense of worth as a contributing member<sup>73</sup>

The logistical difficulties in providing such work experience for millions of young people are obviously complicated. The challenge of a recommendation like this is most formidable and will require imaginative planning and considerable financing if feasible programs are to be developed. For the interested reader, the government-funded Coleman-chaired report alluded to earlier provides a more detailed analysis of both these problems and potential responses.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, it seems to me that much of what we have discussed in this chapter supports a rationale, not only for training, but for education--a broad liberal education. Few workers now and even fewer in the future will spend their lives in one specialized job. Job-changes and the resulting need to "re-tool" oneself will become frequent challenges. Flexible and broadly informed people will be needed. Toward that end, appropriate education will focus not only on understanding the world but also on understanding oneself...and one's place in that world. Put another way, education will need to be integrative and as such can not ignore the processes and dimensions of identity formation.

In the final two chapters, we will look first at this synthesizing concept of identity and secondly offer more specific suggestions of how higher education could better facilitate the dynamics of development we've attempted to better understand.

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## CHAPTER 8

### THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

We are nearing the end of our journey. We have covered much of the territory traversed in the course of human development. We have looked at the late adolescent from many perspectives; we have tried to understand different dimensions of his development.

What remains--for the developing person and for us--is to pull it all together. Human beings, when they are functioning well, are unitary beings. They are integrated wholes, not fragmented parts. The searches for self and others, for meaning and vocation are vital--again, to the adolescent and to our hopes of understanding him--yet we were always describing an incomplete person.

Such reductionism is at times, of course, nearly inevitable and perhaps necessary. We often can best understand the whole by looking at its parts. Yet in studying humans, it is critical to at least keep in mind, if not address, the whole. Too often in psychological studies that has not been done and our understanding is the poorer for it. With humans, the whole is usually more than the sum of the parts.

One of the main goals of this chapter, therefore, is to pull the parts together, to see the constellation, not just the components, of personality organization. Toward that end, no concept will be of more value than the concept of identity.

## THE NATURE OF IDENTITY

Simply stated, identity is the awareness of a coherent sense of self and of one's place in the world. It connects the present with both the past and the future. As stressed periodically in earlier chapters, the process is a psychosocial one. That is, identity is formulated in relation to how one perceives both his own needs and characteristics and the nature and expectations of society. Identity can be interpreted as both the core of personality organization and its boundaries.

### The Importance of Identity

Even before some necessary exposition and qualification, it should be obvious that identity is a concept of considerable importance. The quest for identity is clearly the paramount developmental task of late adolescence. Though each of the four "searches" we have been discussing play a significant role in adolescent, indeed, in human development, each is but a limited facet of that development. Each is but a part of the more pervasive and encompassing quest for identity. Put another way, each requires the unifying and integrating power of identity in order to assume its inherent importance. Mature identity requires growth and awareness in each of the four areas we have discussed; identity eventually requires repudiation and commitment in each dimension. We will look more carefully at that somewhat later.

Only somewhat more tentatively, one might argue that the search for identity is at the heart of the total human experience. Though the period of adolescence plays a critical part in the formation of identity, the search and process is potentially and perhaps ideally life-long.

Though some commitments are expected and necessary by early adulthood, it can be, as we will see later, an unhealthy sign when identity solidifies at an early age. In a healthy model, identity is characterized by both stability and fluidity.

Identity is the cause and result of personality integration. It facilitates a sense of unity and coherence; it makes the parts of our self and our lives fit together meaningfully. Conversely, the lack of identity causes a person to feel fragmented and vulnerable. It makes a person feel adrift without moorings and without meaning. Identity diffusion can be a less intense but more immediate version of the fear of non-existence, a threat particularly intolerable to modern Western man and, according to existential psychologists, the root of most other anxieties. Whether one analyzes the benefits of identity or the consequences of related deficiencies, the concept of identity appears to be one of the most important topics in human psychology.

#### The Indefiniteness of Identity

Unfortunately, the importance of identity is rivaled only by its vagueness. Though recent research which we will later examine has contributed significantly towards establishing an empirical base for our discussion, the haziness of the construct is enough to make the purist wince and others at least uncomfortable. The concept of identity is not clearly delineated.

There are several reasons for that ambiguity. First of all, as we noted in chapter 4, terms such as identity, self, ego, personality and character have often been used inconsistently yet interchangeably. When differentiations have been made, they have often been confusing if

not circular, i.e., one is defined in terms of another.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Erikson himself has been guilty of adding to the confusion. In the course of his writing, he has offered a number of slightly varied and rather imprecise definitions. Apparently, that has been deliberate for in the prologue to Identity: Youth and Crisis, written after years of valuable though vague discussion about "identity," he deliberately refused to sharpen his definition, claiming that a precise meaning of the term would be a denial of the rich and provocative ways in which it had been used.<sup>2</sup>

But equivocality on the part of Erikson is not the only explanation for the vagueness yet surrounding identity. The breadth and complexity of the concept makes it vulnerable to diverse interpretations. Because identity is seen as the result of a long developmental process, the usage and explanation of the concept are affected by the myriad issues relating to child development. Furthermore, because identity, in its broad sense, is the sum of all the parts of the individual, differences concerning the nature and composition of man add to the ambiguity.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond these "honest" differences, it must be admitted that identity has also suffered from popular use, both by the public and by social scientists. Though such wide usage perhaps attests to the concept's value and versatility, Scafer is likely correct in suggesting that identity has become a catch-all label glibly used often to gloss over an inadequate understanding or substantiation of behavioral complexities.<sup>4</sup>

Conger offers still another reason why our understanding falls short of the clarity and completeness we would prefer.

Although this problem (Who am I?) has preoccupied man for many centuries and has been the subject of innumerable poems, novels, and autobiographies, only in recent decades has it become the focus of systematic psychological concern--principally through the writings of Erik Erikson.<sup>5</sup>

Conger goes on to note that it is perhaps not coincidental that Erikson came to psychology with a broad background in art, literature, and education. Such breadth remains, I believe, an asset to anyone attempting to understand the richness of identity and relatedly may suggest that a liberal arts education is most conducive to identity facilitation in the young.

Nevertheless, it is not primarily because of a late start, popularized usage, Erikson's imprecision, or lack of effort or ability on the part of others who have grappled with identity that the vagueness exists. Rather, it reflects the complexity of the topic. Identity, quite simply, is not a simple concept. It attempts to embrace a complicated, somewhat intangible, and sometimes unconscious set of phenomena. Identity rests on the four major topics of the previous chapters yet it includes much more. It assumes its importance in the present yet attempts to unify much of what has gone on before and points towards what is to come.

In sum, the concept of identity appears to hold considerable potential for illuminating human behavior. We are faced with the excitement (as scholars) and frustration (as practitioners) of dealing with an area where there remains much unfinished business. Hopefully, theoretical and empirical efforts, commensurate with the potential of this concept, will in the future be better focused in this area. As Madison asserts, though somewhat extravagantly, "...a satisfactory theory of...identity would advance psychology more than any dozen other

achievements one could name."<sup>6</sup>

As we continue in this chapter to better understand the search for identity, particularly as experienced by college students, we will not be able to totally circumvent the ambiguities and difficulties just discussed. Nonetheless, because identity is in many respects the culmination and unification of the concerns of previous chapters, we will gain a good return on what we have invested. Hopefully, those components will enable us to gain a comparatively sound grip on an admittedly elusive concept.

As we progress in this chapter, we will identify and analyze four major types of identity status. This will provide an opportunity to review some of the best research that has been done on Erikson's impressionistic theories.

We will then seek to expand and clarify the pervading assumption that the previous searches--for self, others, meaning and vocation--do indeed take the individual well down the road to a psychologically sound sense of identity. We will expand our understanding of development in those four areas by going beyond the behaviors described in earlier chapters, aiming particularly at the more advanced and mature expression of those needs. These extensions will provide something of a "mental health" model particularly pertinent to the stage of youth. This model will serve as a reference point to both assess the behavior of college students and to make related recommendations, the focus of the final chapter.

Throughout the chapter, our goal will be to regain the sense of dealing with "whole people." The complexity of human beings and the nature of our analysis required that we make some "academic" and



somewhat artificial separations. Yet people develop and function in a holistic manner. We must return to that sense of proportion. As a first step toward understanding larger patterns of behavior, we will temporarily suspend our discussion of identity and move to a review of student typologies.

#### TYPES OF STUDENTS

It is an obvious truism that no two students are alike. Moreover, they differ from each other in many ways. Some have clear career goals, others are primarily seeking a mate. A few are pursuing knowledge for its own sake, others are interested only in vocational training. Some come from families with a long history of college achievement, others are the first to attend. Roughly 10% of college students suffer from serious emotional problems, the majority experience normal anxiety and insecurity, while a small percentage seem unusually free of such difficulties. Many other contrasts could be made and because of those varied differences, many classification systems have been advanced.

The basic typology, upon which many others have built, was offered by Clark and Trow.<sup>7</sup> Technically a classification of student sub-cultures, it was based on two variables: (1) the degree to which students are involved with ideas, and (2) the extent to which students identify with their college. The 2 by 2 matrix yields four categories.

(1) Academic - These students are highly involved with ideas and highly identified with their college. They are seriously committed to scholarly pursuits and often do more work than is required. Social life and extra-curricular activities are relatively unimportant. Though career preparation is not ignored, it is secondary to an interest in ideas and the

cultivation of the intellect. The "egg-heads" and "curve-breakers" of a past age are the "grinds" of today.

(2) Nonconformist - These students are highly involved with ideas but not highly identified with their college. This type of student emphasizes individualistic interests and styles while rejecting many aspects of organized society and commonly held value systems. Nonconformists view many facets of the college (e.g. athletics, traditions, the administration) with distain and object to the order and discipline of the formal course structure. They want to go their own way.

(3) Collegiate - These students are not highly involved with ideas but do identify with their college. They do not ignore academic considerations but put more emphasis on the extracurricular and social side of college life. Although the indulgence of some in football weekends, parties, and other hedonistic activities approximate the stereotype of the fun-loving college student, others simply believe that involvements in student government and fraternity life, for example, contribute more to "well-rounded" development and preparation for life than does course work. In either case, this group tends to be peer-oriented and status-conscious.

(4) Vocational - These students are neither highly involved with ideas nor highly identified with their college. Usually quite committed to a particular field, they are in college primarily for career-training. Intellectual pursuits and extracurricular activities are relatively unimportant; a diploma is the goal.

Most other typologies, even when different terminology is used, resemble Clark and Trow's. Some make finer distinctions. For example, among the academic group, Pemberton<sup>8</sup> differentiates between the

"academic-theoretical" and "academic-conformity" orientations. The former are genuinely involved with ideas and intellectual growth, the later more grade-conscious "studiers." Among the nonconformists, Newcomb<sup>9</sup> differentiates the "creative individualists" from "the wild ones;" Keniston<sup>10</sup> between the highly committed and involved "political activists" and the critical but withdrawing "culturally alienated."

Stone and Church<sup>11</sup> present a taxonomy with four main types though they suspect that the sensitive adolescent can find himself in all of them. "Conventionalists" are those who don't seriously question adult values and whose main goal in life is to fit in and get along. "Idealists" have a profound dissatisfaction with the state of the world and either work hard to change things or withdraw into their private experience. "Hedonists" revolve their lives around a pursuit of pleasure (e.g. skiing, drugs, sex); "psychopaths" are characterized by exploitive and delinquent behaviors.

Though speaking of younger, pre-college adolescents, Stone and Church remind us that there are some individuals who have no peer-group affiliation.

There are those whose shyness keeps them apart, who feel more comfortable with younger children or adults, and who watch the antics of their contemporaries with a certain amount of envy without knowing how to become part of the herd. There are those youngsters who go through adolescence in a state of bewilderment, who seem to have no idea of who or where they are or of where they are going or why.<sup>12</sup>

Though Clark and Trow's basic classifications have held up well over the changing conditions in our society and on campus, the composition of any student body is always in flux. The veterans who returned to college after World War II were very conscientious and

job-oriented. During the "silent generation" era of the 1950's and early 1960's, the collegiate subculture appeared to dominate though for a time, the post-Sputnik need for scientists and technicians brought a rise in the academic types. During the late 1960's, the Civil Rights Movement, the Viet Nam War, and ecological issues triggered the rise of a much larger and influential nonconformist group. Today, the difficult job market has again made academics (achievers, not intellectuals) and vocationally oriented students come to the fore.

Though these typologies somewhat appease our need for classification and though they offer a sense of wholeness which was missing in much of our earlier discussion, these classifications have definite limits. Primarily based on surface qualities and decisions, they leave unclarified the internal dynamics of personality development. More incisive analyses can be derived from the research on types of identity.

#### TYPES OF IDENTITY

The wide acclaim which Erik Erikson has received, from both behavioral scientists and the public, has been well deserved for his contribution to our understanding of human behavior, particularly that of the young, has been unique and substantial. Nonetheless, Erikson has his critics. Though few deny that he is a perceptive and articulate observer of human behavior, many are uncomfortable with the basically intuitive and impressionistic nature of his work.

For some the issue is not the accuracy of Erikson's insights and theories but only the absence of empirical support for them. Others, however, are skeptical of Erikson's views, regardless of their wide acceptance, and see the absence of corroborative research as support

for their doubts. In either case, there has been a need for sound research which would either support or bring into question Erikson's provocative and persuasive theses.

Though much of that work remains to be done, a substantial body of research, conducted primarily by Marcia and his followers, has developed. Principally, it has sought to clarify and differentiate the forms of identity status, a major concern of Erikson. These studies, using structured interviews and independent raters and based almost exclusively on a college student population, form the foundation for much of this section.<sup>13</sup>

Initially, Marcia attempted only to measure degree of commitment--to a vocational plan and a religious-political ideology. Erikson's concepts of "ego identity" and "identity diffusion" seemed to suggest that major dichotomy. It soon became evident, however, that a second variable--degree of crisis--was also pertinent. Consequently, most of these studies use a 2 (commitment or no commitment) by 2 (crisis or no crisis) paradigm which yields four categories of identity types: achievement, foreclosed, moratorium, and diffused.

Identity achievement students are those who have experienced a crisis but subsequently made a commitment. That is, they have wrestled with vocational and ideological alternatives, gone through periods of confusion and indecision, but then, after an intense search, committed themselves to certain goals and positions.

Foreclosed students have also made commitments but have done so prematurely. Generally obedient and dependent, they avoid the anxiety of a search by conforming to the views of others, most often their parents, and choosing a vocational plan likely to meet with parental



approval.

Moratorium students are aware of their alternatives, open to potentially disturbing insight and feedback, and concerned about the decisions they must make. Still, they have not been able to make definite commitments.

There is some disagreement concerning the fourth category of identity diffusion. Though such students clearly have been unable to establish who they are or what they believe, it is not quite accurate to say that they have experienced no crisis. Nonetheless, they are comparatively unconcerned. This ambiguity in Marcia's system and the hazy distinction between these last two categories will be explored shortly.

In brief then, and recalling Marcia's 2 by 2 grid, there are two types of committed students (achieved and foreclosed) and two uncommitted (moratorium and diffused). Moreover, there are two groups which have experienced an identity crisis (achieved and moratorium) and two which have not (foreclosed and diffused).

We will now explore in greater detail these four categories of identity status looking in particular for connections with the developmental antecedents described in chapters 2 and 3 and with the searches of our previous four chapters. Certain contrasts can best be made and certain ambiguities best tackled by using a slightly modified order of coverage.

### Foreclosed Identities

The foreclosed student is characterized by an identity which is prematurely crystallized. In part to avoid the anxiety of the

adolescent search (crisis), at an early time and in a rigid way, he closes himself to awareness and change which would be threatening. More dependent on his parents than other students<sup>14</sup> and rather uncritical of authority in general, he looks to others to decide what he should be and do. Distrustful of an internal locus of evaluation and direction<sup>15</sup> and with a strong need for the approval of others, particularly his parents, he is unable or unwilling to really take control of his life.<sup>16</sup> By opting for what Peter Blos calls an "abbreviated adolescence,"<sup>17</sup> the foreclosed individual curtails the development of personality differentiation and fails to become, in Douvan and Adelson's words, "all he could be."<sup>18</sup>

This student tends to come to college with a predetermined vocational plan. Based on utilitarian or frequently unconscious factors, rather than a conscious self-assessment, he tends not to consider any other paths or examine alternate life styles. Moreover, such students attempt to avoid peers and situations which would confront them with conflicting ideas or evidence and dislike professors who do. Because he copes with the academic demands in a highly formalistic rather than assimilative manner, he tends to be impervious to most of the potentially liberating benefits of college education.<sup>19</sup>

It is difficult not to be critical of this type of personality style for it seems constricted, defensive, and immature. One's reaction to their passive acceptance of society's values, docility towards others, or rigid adherence to traditional sex roles is, of course, a value judgment. But the research indicates that such responses appear to be a part of a larger maladaptive syndrome. Under even slight stress, for



example, the foreclosed student tends to be cognitively constricted and to perform poorly.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps those with foreclosed identities are themselves the worst victims. Given our complex and pluralistic culture, the mental, emotional and behavioral characteristics associated with a foreclosed identity tend not to be associated with a rich, fulfilling involvement with life.

Two important qualifications should be made. First, Henry and Renaud make a distinction between "psychically foreclosed," whom we have been discussing, and the "situationally foreclosed."<sup>21</sup> The latter simply come to college from a very limited background. Though they appear foreclosed, it is primarily the result of restricted experience and limited exposure to alternate modes of thinking and behavior. When such students become aware of a greater range of options and opportunities, dramatic growth often takes place, though there may be a rather precarious transition which requires outside support and assistance.

Secondly, and this matter has implications for much of our discussion, much of the theory and research concerning identity formation appears to fit far better the male experience than the female's. When female subjects are used, the results are frequently and significantly different. For example, though female foreclosures are also characterized by shallowness and lack of individuation, they do not appear to have the rigidity, field dependence, or propensity to conform which characterize the males. More importantly, the foreclosed style appears to be far more functional for females than males. Females also tend towards higher self esteem and lower anxiety<sup>22</sup> and function flexibly even under stress. Josselson speculates that traditional sex roles

allow the female to be more comfortable with this identity status and less defensive or rigid than males about their lack of much autonomy or individuation.<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to speculate whether current modifications in sex roles will modify the results of such research.

#### Moratorium Status

The word "moratorium" is used somewhat equivocally in discussions of identity. Originally and still most generally, it refers to a transitional time when society sees the developing individual as neither a child nor an adult and allows the adolescent time to experiment and explore, to find his place in society. Relatively free of enduring commitments, the adolescent has freedom within reason, to experiment with different roles and behaviors as he moves towards identity integration.<sup>24</sup>

As such, the moratorium status is a psychosocial opportunity open to nearly all adolescents and particularly college students. Even the foreclosed student, though he seeks to avoid the intended purpose of this moratorium, nonetheless moves through a period of relative disengagement.

However, in the research on identity classifications, the moratorium status refers only to one of the four types--the person who is intensely involved in the exploration of alternatives but hasn't yet made commitments. For such, moratorium does not mean a suspension of activity but a delay in decision-making. He is, nonetheless, concerned about eventual commitments.

Marcia and his associates see this type in a basically healthy way. Introspective and autonomous, possessing higher self esteem and

an internal locus of evaluation, he openly pursues a diversity of experience and interpersonal involvement. Indeed, in Donovan's study, the moratorium subjects "appeared irrepressible in their urge to explore the world and to know others intensely. Above all, it seemed that it was an understanding of self that they sought."<sup>25</sup>

The research further suggests that the moratorium subjects are introspective, sensitive, and trustful of their inner world. Perhaps because they trust themselves,<sup>26</sup> they are often resistant to and critical of authority.<sup>27</sup> Such students do report higher levels of anxiety<sup>28</sup> though that may only reflect their greater sensitivity and openness, or greater honesty in reporting anxiety.<sup>29</sup> Because of the high goals which female moratoriums have, they also experience more guilt--guilt for not attaining the ideals of their fathers or the expectations of their mothers.<sup>30</sup>

The relatively positive explanation of the moratorium's anxiety and guilt seems consistent with the generally healthy patterns of their behavior. Though moratoriums engage in an expansive and exploratory life style, often to the dismay and concern of parents, they do seek an eventual resolution to their identity crisis.<sup>31</sup> Unlike some of the young who become fixated in a perpetual adolescent posture of non-committal, there is evidence that moratoriums successfully attain identity achievement. In one four-year longitudinal study, over 75% of the freshmen moratoriums became identity achievers by their senior year.<sup>32</sup>

### Identity Achievers

Identity achievers are those students who were judged to have experienced an intense and sustained decision-making process which

eventually led to ideological and vocational commitments. Since this category, by commonly held values, approximates a developmental ideal, much of what is generally written about identity is semi-descriptive of this group. Moreover, this group comes closest to approximating commonly cited models of mental health.

As you will recall, many of the moratorium students are in process of becoming identity achievers. Since this latter group is generally only a more advanced outcome of the previously described process, the two groups show many similar characteristics.

Like the moratoriums, though in contrast to the foreclosed, the achievers have attained appropriate independence from their parents. They tend to be autonomous,<sup>33</sup> high in ego strength,<sup>34</sup> with a sense of internal control over their lives. Other studies report that students in this category tend to get the highest grades,<sup>35</sup> to work well under stress and to be most realistic in goal setting.<sup>36</sup> Achievers were judged to have developed the highest quality of interpersonal involvements<sup>37</sup> and to be most aware of and open to broad cultural affairs.<sup>38</sup>

As previously mentioned, many of the research results synthesize best for a male population. Studies involving female identity achievers yield ambiguous results concerning self-perceptions and self-esteem.<sup>39, 40</sup> Part of the difficulty, of course, is a result of changing sex roles and a current collision of value systems. Traditional criteria emphasize marriage-related roles and commitments while not being supportive of more autonomous and achievement-oriented women. The confused research findings in part reflect the conflicting set of identifications, value systems, and choices which the contemporary woman confronts.

### Identity Diffusions

There is also equivocality in how this fourth label, identity diffusion, is used. In the general literature (versus identity status research by the likes of Marcia), it is a broad rubric used to cover almost all individuals who have not firmed up a clear sense of identity. It is often used in connection, if not interchangeably, with the moratorium stage to discuss the person who, for various reasons, can not integrate the various roles he plays.

In this generally used sense, nearly all adolescents experience a period of identity diffusion. It is not easy to pull the past, present and future together in a personally unifying way; considerable role experimentation often continues well into college years. Considering the complexity of modern society and the number of options available to many youth, role confusion for even some years is perhaps necessary and healthy. As noted earlier in discussing the foreclosures, it takes a relatively secure person to hold off on such decisions while they explore both themselves and the society within which they live. It is only when the person gives evidence of being locked into this state that diffusion assumes pathological overtones. Biff, from Arthur Miller's powerful Death of a Salesman, is often cited as an example of identity diffusion when he laments, "I just can't take hold, Mom, I just can't take hold of some kind of life."

It is more in that restricted sense that "identity diffusion" is used as a category in the identity status research we have been reviewing. They are the students who are clearly uncommitted to either an ideology or vocational plan. It is not perfectly accurate to say that these students have not experienced any identity-related crisis

(They are forced into that cell of the 2 by 2 matrix.) though they do not seem to be particularly concerned about their lack of commitment.<sup>41</sup> Although aware of the many alternatives of identity formation, they seem to float among the possibilities. At least in contrast to the moratoriums and identity achievers, the diffused have not engaged in an intense struggle. Compared to the achievers and foreclosures, they demonstrate little commitment--indeed, give little evidence of moving toward any.

Before looking more incisively at this group, it might be wise to clarify a possible confusion of terms. Because for many people, particularly since the Viet Nam War, "moratorium" means a suspension of activity, that label can easily become linked with these "identity diffused" students. And since the moratoriums exhibit and are more aware of identity confusion, sometimes the "diffused" descriptor seems a better fit for them. It seems advisable, however, to remain consistent with the manner that Marcia and others have used the appellations.

The research does not paint a very flattering picture of identity diffused students. Like the foreclosures, this group shows minimal autonomy and an external locus of control.<sup>42</sup> That is, they do not feel as if they have an active role in their own destiny. Relatedly, they are susceptible to the manipulation of others, though here more to peers in contrast to the foreclosures deference to authority figures.<sup>43</sup> Diffused students do not conform to authority as much as passively resist it.<sup>44</sup>

Part of that pattern shows up in college course work. Diffused students miss class more than other students and are less involved when there, particularly in terms of interaction.<sup>45</sup> If rigidity

characterizes the foreclosed, withdrawal is the dominant style of the diffused. They seem to pull back into a world of their own, an inner world more characterized by fantasy and aimlessness than by honest, probing introspection.<sup>46</sup>

Although these qualities are hardly laudatory, it should be noted that there is often a more cavalier than disturbed tone to these behaviors. The subjects of these studies were, it must be remembered, capable of at least coping with the college environment. It is likely that the more seriously diffused individual, such as those described by Erikson,<sup>47</sup> does not appear in these studies because he did not come or could not persevere in college.

These four types of identity are those commonly used in identity-status research. However, Erikson and others mention one other type which merits our brief attention.

### Negative Identities

Early in his writing, Erikson recognized the need to account for what he first called "role fixation" but later labeled "negative identity." These are cases where the young person chooses to become, often quite deliberately, a person most at odds with the values of society or the expectations of his parents. How can we account for the minister's son who becomes the town hellion or the offspring of achievement-oriented parents who becomes a nomadic hippie?

Particularly now that peers, the mass media, and other forces rival the influence of parents in a way not true in previous generations, many hypotheses are tenable. In some cases, the negative identity is an attempt to ward off a prescribed identity which seems incompatible with

the young person's view of himself or one in which he had little part in defining. Sometimes it appears to be a means of punishing the parents. Particularly when parents put more emphasis on what he should not become, they invite such a reaction. If he must be "somebody," he may choose to be a "nobody."

Sometimes a negative identity is more the result of fear or feelings of inadequacy than of anger. Because the struggle to become what one "should be" can seem long and difficult, there is relief in dropping all aspirations. It can be better to not have tried at all than to have tried and failed. Or--better to be on the end of a continuum than anonymously mediocre.

In other cases, a young person appears to get trapped in early behaviors, e.g., the need to prove their independence and their disdain for traditionally approved roles. Then, partially in reaction to the expectations of others or perhaps just to save face, the person validates this identity by continuing to act accordingly. In recent years, Rosenthal and others have made disturbingly clear the nature of self-fulfilling prophecies, particularly of the negative sort.<sup>48</sup>

Lower class individuals may confront evidence that they can not be what they wish to be, then give up, and settle for a negative role. Subsequent behaviors, e.g., those which lead to involvement with the courts, may have long-lasting and constricting ramifications. It must be remembered that not all youth enjoy the long moratorium and opportunity to experiment with many possible identities which characterize the middle class college student many of us know best.



Finally, a negative identity can be a way out of anxiety-producing identity diffusion. It can be a relief to have any identity. As Erikson points out, "Many a late adolescent, if faced with continuing diffusion, would rather be nobody or somebody bad, or indeed, dead--and this totally and by free choice--than be not-quite-somebody."<sup>49</sup>

Such acts not only gain a relief from diffusion but also offer a sense of autonomy and self-assertion, albeit in an often self-defeating manner. In an extended case study of a college student who has a further predilection to cut herself off from the very people whose support she desperately needs, Madison illustrates the self-defeating nature of a negative identity.<sup>50</sup>

So much of our discussion to this point has had a rather grim tone. The outcomes of the identity process were frequently seen as counter-productive and even when not, the process seems painful and unsettling. Can't the search for identity ever be easy yet healthy?

#### IDENTITY CRISIS: NORMATIVE AND NECESSARY?

One criticism which could be aimed toward the identity-status research is that it shares a characteristic of much of the literature on identity--a crisis bias. Identity achievers are praised for honestly experiencing the emotional turmoil of the identity search; foreclosures seem to be described with veiled contempt because they avoid the crisis. Given the choice between foreclosures, who have commitment without crisis, and moratoriums, characterized by crisis without commitment, many of the authors seem to prefer the latter.

This belief that there must be an intense period of identity confusion characterized by emotional turmoil and upheaval is widely held

by the public and by professionals. Historically prominent theorists on adolescence like Hall,<sup>51</sup> Anna Freud,<sup>52</sup> and Sullivan<sup>53</sup> have emphasized that rapid personal changes cause unpredictable thoughts and inconsistent behaviors. These in turn trigger intense anxieties which lead to exaggerated defenses. Modern analysts of the adolescent experience and the identity process continue to emphasize a crisis and turmoil explanation.<sup>54, 55</sup>

The extension of this view holds not only that such turmoil and difficulty is normal but that its absence is ominous if not pathological.<sup>56</sup> According to this view, without conflict there can be no self-definition and without self-definition, adult life takes on a bland, one-dimensional existence.<sup>57</sup> According to Anna Freud, adolescents who do not display some upset are victims of excessive defenses against their own normal drives and need assistance in removing such obstacles to normal maturation.<sup>58</sup>

Curiously, this "storm and stress" position remains very durable despite strong evidence against it. Already by the late 1950's, a review of the research questioned the accuracy of such views.<sup>59</sup> Subsequently, Offer's extensive study appeared to demonstrate that teenagers can become decent and interesting people without undergoing severe emotional turmoil.<sup>60</sup> Somewhat in reverse, those who have worked with disturbed adolescents contradict the idea that such upheaval is beneficial or that such problems are easily or typically outgrown.<sup>61</sup>

The problem seems to result from psychology's continued tendency to base a disproportionate amount of theory and research on a clinical population. Even much of the literature on college students is based on the 10% or so of students who utilize counseling or psychiatric

facilities. When more "normal" samples are used, quite different conclusions often result. Freedman began his study of college students with the classic "identity crisis" orientation. Yet by the end of his study, he came to question not only the incidence of such turmoil but even whether the concept of identity deserves such a central place.<sup>62</sup>

A certain degree of conflict during adolescence appears to be necessary and almost inevitable. Some experimentation (e.g. with various life styles), confusion (e.g. value differences among people), and indecision (e.g. vocational direction) are probably necessary if a firm sense of identity is to develop. But if some conflict may be inevitable, emotional turmoil need not be.

How easily the developing person can achieve a clear sense of identity depends on many factors. It reflects the many skills and attitudes he has developed during previous years and the cultural opportunities available to him. The process is certainly shaped by the kind of relationships he has and has had with his parents.<sup>63, 64</sup>

Gallatin offers this overview:

If a youngster's childhood has been relatively benign and he can look forward to a reasonably stimulating and rewarding adulthood, then he may be able to carry out the assorted tasks of adolescence without undue pain and suffering. On the other hand, if the foundation the teenager is trying to build upon is a shaky one, if the experiences of childhood have made it difficult for him to resolve earlier nuclear crises successfully, and if adulthood holds little promise of compensation or redress, then his adolescent years may indeed prove turbulent.<sup>65</sup>

Gallatin's perspective gains support from evidence connected to a statistical definition of normality. Offer found an absence of intense emotional turmoil to be the norm in his study.<sup>66</sup> Based on their massive study of 10,000 high school graduates, Trent and Medsker

report that identity formation is hardly apparent among youth who go directly from high school into jobs and marriage.<sup>67</sup> Freedman, in his study of college women, found that "only a minority appeared to be experiencing upheaval of an intensity sufficient to justify traditional views of adolescent turmoil."<sup>68</sup> Even Matteson, more an exponent of the crisis theories, concedes that a majority of the young achieve identity "smoothly." Moreover, he interprets surveys of college students<sup>69</sup> as evidence that the majority of college students do not see college primarily as an identity-search process but simply as a practical way to gain skills and credentials. However, by identifying many of the above as foreclosures, Matteson hardly endorses these realities. He sees the consequence as being a relatively undifferentiated personality with unresolved dependency and an unquestioned acceptance of conventional attitudes and values.<sup>70</sup>

It is reasonable to question what effect these issues have on the status and reliability of Erikson, whose views have influenced so much of our discussion. That is not easy to assess because Erikson has not always written consistently on the "storm and stress" issue; he is cited by exponents of both sides.

Gallatin, who made an analysis of the storm and stress issue one of the major themes of her book, argues that Erikson is not guilty of promoting that myth.<sup>71</sup> Along with Offer,<sup>72</sup> who also vigorously asserts that intense turmoil is neither normative or necessary, they believe that Erikson is frequently misinterpreted on the turmoil issue.

Erikson has, unfortunately, invited such misinterpretation. Although he claims there are potentially positive or negative outcomes

for each of his eight psychosocial crises, and a whole continuum of possible responses inbetween, he has a propensity to draw his samples from the negative extreme. Erikson himself seems to have become aware of that lopsidedness for when one compares his early<sup>73</sup> and late<sup>74</sup> treatments of identity, a trend toward healthier examples and emphases is evident. Somewhat vaguely, he nonetheless maintains that the potential for "normative crises" or even considerable turmoil yet remains.

To some extent, whether disrupted thinking and behavior is a normative adolescent upheaval or a disturbed state remains an unanswered and somewhat semantical issue. Yet, it has serious ramifications and practical dangers. As Weiner states in his evaluation of Eriksonian theory, "...yet he maintains that such phenomena, although indicative of major psychopathology when they occur in adults, are normative and healthy in adolescents."<sup>75</sup> Severe mood swings, feelings of inadequacy, fluidity of personality, heightened self-consciousness and identity confusion are among the difficult to interpret behaviors.

Such behaviors present at least two dangers. One is that parents and professionals will over-react to "normal" adolescent upheavals, that inappropriate treatment will be initiated, and that a stigmatizing and sometimes debilitating psychopathological label will become attached. Conversely, non-normative, non-temporary symptoms of serious disturbance may be dismissed as "a stage he's going through" or something "he'll outgrow." As a result, there is a failure to detect the incipient syndrome of serious disturbance. Unfortunately, adolescents are not strangers to schizophrenia, character disorders, and other serious disorders. While the number of

hospitalized mental patients is declining, the number of adolescent in-patients and out-patients appears to be increasing. In part, such statistics may reflect better screening in the schools and the greater availability of treatment facilities but it is not unlikely that the actual incidence of serious disturbances is increasing among modern youth.

Though the intricacies of the diagnostic problems are complex, there is consensus on a central principle.<sup>76, 77, 78</sup> If, in reviewing the developmental history, adjustment has seemed adequate, the adolescent symptoms of disturbance are probably transient. If, however, there have been pervasive emotional problems during the earlier years, the probability is increased that an adolescent's difficulties are more serious. Unfortunately, these are difficult judgments to make and there is evidence that the assessment made is frequently in error.<sup>79, 80</sup>

#### CONCEPTS OF MENTAL HEALTH

There is often for an author, and perhaps the reader, too, a frustrating incompleteness about many sections of a book. Human beings, despite their complexity, are incredibly unified; each dimension of personality influences every other. To enhance the clarity of explanation and because of human limits, smaller and artificially disjointed segments must be analyzed. The challenge, however, is to not lose sight of the whole.

The goal of the remainder of this chapter continues to be the promotion of that sense of unification. By using large rubrics, we will attempt to see the relatedness of many of the previous segments

and sections. In previous chapters, for example, we traced the development of a certain aspect of man's search for identity from the early years of childhood. Though our coverage in each case extended into the college years, it had to stop short of describing the most mature and complex extensions of that search because of needed understandings of other inter-related dimensions of personality development. Somewhat analogously, the typical college student falls short of exhibiting the more mature and complex behaviors of a certain search because of incomplete development in other areas.

Looking from the other direction, if we are to make meaningful recommendations concerning how higher education can better promote student development, as we will attempt in the following chapter, or more importantly, if we hope to facilitate such growth ourselves, we must have a model of maturity in mind. Hence, our larger perspective on various concepts of mental health.

Delineating a workable standard is more difficult than one might initially suspect. For sure, there is no trouble in listing a set of features; many such systems have been offered and it is not difficult to generate one's own version. But most of such systems have serious deficits.

One common shortcoming is that many such lists are a series of idealized prescriptions which seem to ignore the universal fallibilities and imperfections of man. Nor is it just a matter of human limitations. Certain qualities come close to being mutually exclusive. As White observes, alluding to virtues and strengths derived from different studies, "Having the power to keep one's head on a space flight may not

be congruent with sensitive creative imagination or with spontaneous warmth toward other people."<sup>81</sup>

A second problem is that such models almost inevitably rest on the value judgments of the author. Psychologists, for example, tend to "value verbal skills, social skills, social consciousness, intellectual attainments, and scientific and artistic creativity...(more than) ...the mechanic's craftsmanship, the clerk's conscientious thoroughness, the businessman's acumen, the athlete's strength and agility."<sup>82</sup> But how fairly or unequivocally can one assert that certain patterns of personality and behavior are "good" or more desirable than others? Does not much depend on the kind of life one leads and the values of each individual?

Relatedly, some concepts of mental health appear to force everyone into a single mold, doing violence to the diversity of human beings. No one pattern of traits seems ideal or equally healthy for all individuals in every situation.

Even the concept of "mental health" is increasingly called into question. Initiated primarily by psychiatrists and patterned after more familiar ideas of physical health and illness, it is inextricably connected to a medical model increasingly recognized as inadequate. More practically, it was hard to specify positive content for a concept that could best be described by the absence of disease symptoms.

For some years, writers in this area spoke primarily of "adjustment." However it too lacked specificity and definitively positive content and seemed to carry the added weakness of promoting conformity. As popularly understood, adjustment appears to endorse



the "marketing personality" of Fromm and the "organization man" of Whyte. "Adjustment assumes the psychological worth of the sociocultural milieu to which the individual adjusts and ignores the legitimate internal demands and structure of the person himself."<sup>83</sup> Or as White observes, "If conformity were the highest goal of development, we would expect superior people to be very much alike."<sup>84</sup> In actuality, when Maslow studied self-actualized people, he found them strikingly different and individualized.<sup>85</sup>

Nor did concepts of "normality" help much. The word was used either to describe statistically typical behavior or to mask the biased prescriptions discussed earlier.

In our efforts to establish an evaluative and guiding model, we will opt for a concept of maturity. Although that concept has advantages over those just described, we will not easily solve or even avoid all the difficulties previously mentioned. "Maturity" is also used in many ways and varied contexts and consequently is vulnerable to many of the problems we have reviewed. The influence of value judgments, for example, can hardly be avoided.

The strength of a concept of maturity, for our purposes at least, is its developmental emphasis. It is predicated on much of what we have discussed and consequently will allow us to specify directions of change, obstacles encountered, and conditions under which development takes place. We can also give maturity greater content of its own than, for example, the concept of mental health allows.

Maturity is open-ended; it must be defined in a cumulative and never-ending manner. We never bring our potentialities to full

development. Nor should maturity imply an absence of conflict. As Erikson so well shows, there is a crisis at each stage of development. Even adulthood involves a continuing adjustment to constantly changing circumstances and personal characteristics. Maturity implies a certain quality of response to those challenges.

College age youth represent a stage of development. Nevertheless, the dynamics and response-options of that stage are affected by the responses made at previous stages. If energy and concentration is usurped by the need to refight battles of childhood, nurse old hurts, or desperately meet unmet needs, he is less likely to appropriately handle or perhaps even recognize current challenges. Maturity requires a sound foundation. If the child has established basic trust, he can gain autonomy. With autonomy, he can emancipate himself from dependence on his parents and eventually his peers. With emancipation, he is free to build healthy relationships with other people, to commit himself to a value system, and to find direction for his life.

Maturity, then, is a developmental concept which forces one to consider developmental tasks. That emphasis has been our focus in past chapters and will be the basis for our model of maturity. As Katz points out:

By the time a student reaches college, he is usually chronologically and physiologically an adult. It is primarily in his psychological and social growth that he is considered an adolescent or in transition to adulthood.... (There are) numerous tasks that college students must master if they are to be considered successful in their maturation; for example, achieving independence, dealing with authority, handling ambiguity, developing with regard to sexual matters, attaining prestige, and developing value systems.<sup>86</sup>

## A MODEL OF MATURITY

From infancy on, the individual confronts developmental challenges and the tasks of life. These tasks evolve and change through childhood and adolescence. In modified form, the challenges of adjustment extend on into adulthood pervading the vicissitudes of life until the point of death. Indeed, we must also come to terms with the reality of death.

Though the challenges of maturity are life-long, there is something central and critical about the period of adolescence--and for those who go on to college, the period of late adolescence or youth. For better or for worse, and because of the cultural factors discussed earlier, such young people experience a transition between childhood and adulthood of a length heretofore unknown. The extent to which that lengthy period is used as a prolonged quest for identity leading to more differentiated personalities is not yet clear. Some evidence we have reviewed indicates that many of the young, in order to ward off the anxiety and alienation of such a moratorium, prematurely foreclose the search for identity.

The search for identity involves a series of searches. As Erikson says, "...to develop a sense of identity...he must make a series of ever-narrowing selections of personal, occupational, sexual and ideological commitments."<sup>87</sup> We turn now for a second look at those searches--to briefly review what was covered, to describe more advanced and complex behavioral extensions, and to formulate a model of maturity. Since few if any students get high marks on all aspects of this model and at best can only approximate psychological ideals,

this model is not intended as a paragon of human virtue. Yet, continual and disconcerting qualifications would be necessary to totally avoid any hint of idealism.

#### Toward a Mature Self

One of our first items of business in chapter 4 was to deal with the equivocality surrounding the terms "self" and "identity." We will not duplicate that discussion here except to recall that each has been used in a wide variety of ways. In these varied uses, the concepts over-lap and each is often used to circularly define the other.

Somewhat arbitrarily, though with a declared rationale, we chose to use "self" in the more restricted sense, "identity" as the more global concept. As long as we were concerned with but one dimension of development, and an incomplete version at that, the distinction was not hard to uphold. But now as we seek to look at the whole of human development and a mature model of it, the ambiguity returns to haunt us for a sharper sense of self is the core of a mature sense of identity. Or, to use what became the key concept of chapter 4, autonomy is the foundation of identity and maturity.<sup>88</sup>

Identity has its roots in the child's first awareness of "me," of "I-am-ness."<sup>89</sup> Earlier we spent time on that self-awareness and attempted to trace the course of increased self-definition and a heightened sense of individuality. In particular, we focused on the development of autonomy and the conditions which promoted either dependence or independence.

But independence, or even autonomy--a more mature form of self-regulation--is not enough. It is not just a matter of being a

"self" but also of deciding who that self is one senses himself to be. Or more--who do I want that self to become? Identity reflects not only past experiences but also future aspirations. According to White, the college student seeks "stabilization of his identity."<sup>90</sup>

Autonomy must lead to continued self-definition and self-differentiation. One must first see himself as a separate and unique person but then also as one related to other persons. One must attain some independence but then be prepared to enter into interdependent relationships. Most significantly, at least for identity formation, one must attain the autonomy necessary to move away from a self defined primarily by others, particularly one's parents.

Maturity requires, at least by my judgment, an internal locus of control.<sup>91</sup> "Internals" act on the belief that one has the power to appreciably direct one's affairs and to act on one's environment. Although we are in part the product of accumulated experience, the healthy person nonetheless accepts responsibility for his own life. Unfortunately, a great deal of college student behavior, as well as adult behavior, is an attempt to avoid that responsibility. We do not help another to grow when we reinforce or are manipulated by that evasion.

The importance of this sense of self-determination and personal responsibility can hardly be over-emphasized. In particular, it is what contemporary girls and women will need if they are to break out of the sex roles bred into them from birth. Without denying the oppressive realities in our society, this sense of inner control is what the minority person so greatly needs. In actuality, of course,

none of us is totally free of the determining power of external forces and part of maturity is learning to accept and cope with that. Still, more often than commonly accepted, we can consciously discriminate between the forces and pressures we will accept and those we will resist. We can usually choose when it is appropriate to conform and when it is not. It is for reasons such as this that an internal locus of evaluation and control is the hallmark of Rogers' "fully functioning person," a widely published model of maturity.<sup>92</sup>

Part of the ability to direct one's affairs, at least as experienced by the college student, is the challenge to manage one's emotions. Contrary to what is commonly meant by that, I do not mean simply the suppression of supposedly dangerous emotions. If anything, the challenge is to learn appropriate expression. Considerable research on college students indicates that at least underclassmen tend to be emotionally rigid, authoritarian, and repressive.<sup>93</sup> For such a person, his main challenge is to become aware of his feelings, to trust and experience them, and to gain confidence that he can express those emotions appropriately.<sup>94</sup>

The failure to achieve such management of emotions imprisons the person in a straight-jacket of rigidity and repression. Moreover, the person who must constantly be on guard against expression or even awareness precludes the spontaneity, flexibility and even the empathy so vital in a rich involvement with life. Ironically, his defenses are somewhat in vain for such emotions usually are released in other less regulated and more counter-productive ways. Such a person loses on both counts.

Much of what we have said to this point about a mature self, including openness to one's emotions, implies self-acceptance. The healthy person is comfortable with himself. Though aware of his weaknesses, foibles and limitations--and likely desirous of changing what can be changed for self-acceptance is not complacency--he nonetheless can accept himself. That is why the behaviors discussed in chapter 4, while critically foundational, are not enough. The mature person must have not only a sense of being but also a sense of well-being.

Self esteem and a stable self concept generally exist in a reciprocal relationship. Together they offer the mature person a powerful and stabilizing frame of reference with which to respond to the vicissitudes of life and to assimilate the resulting feedback. Convinced of his own worth, the person is relatively free of pressing needs for reassurance, affection or approval. Moreover, he dares to reach out in life for he will not be unduly disturbed by failure, the discovery of his own limits and faults, or the criticism or even rejection of others. A mature self-judgment is based on years of accumulated experience; hence, it is quite stable. As a result, "the single incident progressively loses its power to send self esteem into the sky or into the depths."<sup>95</sup>

Such consistency and relative freedom from transient influence comes with autonomy but it is not solely the result of internal factors. With time, social roles also become better defined. When friendships are made, values chosen, or certain goals set--that is, when the other searches also approximate maturity--ego identity is further stabilized. Though such stabilization can have that growth-producing effect, there

is also the danger of growth-constriction. Roles can be imprisoning though they need not be if they are chosen wisely or, more importantly, are lived out in response and with integrity to one's self definition. It is important to remember, for example, that one's occupation need not definitely shape personality structure or style of life, though college students appear to believe that it does.<sup>96</sup> There is more room in occupational and other roles for self expression than is commonly recognized or utilized.

If cultural circumstances and social roles promote autonomy and identity stabilization, we must also live with the converse. That is, a future shock rate of change makes role acquisition more difficult and continuity less likely. The quest for self is not difficult in a primitive culture for it is primarily a matter of socialization to existing roles. There is little exploration or development of self involved.

In Erikson's words, then, the challenge is this:

The young person, in order to experience wholeness, must feel a progressive continuity between that which he has come to be during the long years of childhood and that which he promises to become in the anticipated future; between that which he conceives himself to be and that which he perceives others to see in him and to expect of him....<sup>97</sup> The key problem of identity, then, is...the capacity of the ego to sustain sameness and continuity in the face of changing conditions.<sup>98</sup>

Finally, it must be stressed that a mature sense of self is not rugged individualism or self-sufficiency. Only the person who has moved from emotional dependence to independence can grasp the healthy and fulfilling nature of interdependence. In fact, "recognition and acceptance of interdependence is the capstone of autonomy."<sup>99</sup> The healthy self seeks relationships with others.



### Toward Mature Relationships

Man is a social being. Except in unusual circumstances, he lives life within the matrix of interpersonal relationships. Hence, the capacity to establish and maintain meaningful and fulfilling relations with others is a crucial aspect of maturity. Indeed, it is difficult to think of identity or intimacy apart from the other. In Erikson's words:

What I have in mind is...a kind of fusion with the essence of other people. The...(person)...who is not sure of his identity shies away from interpersonal intimacy; but the surer he becomes of himself, the more he seeks it in the forms of friendship, combat, leadership, love and inspiration.<sup>100</sup>

Interpersonal styles, mature and otherwise, are also the product of previous experiences. In chapter 5, we attempted to trace that history and better understand those antecedents. Of the many influential factors, none is more basic than the development of trust. If a person experiences the need-fulfilling potential of interpersonal relations, he learns to desire and seek them. But if his early life deprives him of close attachments, protective detachment or isolation, rather than close relations, are the likely result. From birth, through childhood and adolescence and then into marriage, the presence or absence of trust--a confidence in another's ability and willingness to satisfy our needs--appreciably shapes relationships.

Because of the child's egocentrism intimacy, empathy, and other qualities of mature relations are not likely to be found in relations of childhood--or even adolescence, despite the expansion of cognitive powers. Relationships in adolescence tend to be guarded, conforming, and rather self-serving. Although dependency on peers gives valuable



support to the young person moving away from dependency on parents, there is the danger that a person will hang on to it long after the support is needed, thereby retarding interpersonal development.

White's idea of the "freeing of relationships"<sup>101</sup> well describes the trend towards mature relations. Although the college student must also free his relations from peer dependency, White has something more complex in mind. To understand it, we need to look briefly again at childhood experiences.

The child's earliest relationships are with people, primarily the mother, on whom he is very dependent. Interpersonal patterns are first shaped by such interactions. Gradually his interpersonal life expands but basic skills are first established in the small family circle.

When the child first moves out into the world, he tends to respond to other adults as he would to his parents and to treat peers in ways he learned with brothers and sisters. He does not respond to them "in their own right."

The critical process, according to White, is the movement away from responding primarily to one's own needs and in habitual and likely inappropriate ways towards responding more to the real nature of the situation and the other person. This is not easily learned. Human interactions are incredibly complex and social behaviors are learned in peculiar and often unconscious ways. "Responding to people in their own right as new individuals is not easy even for the most socially seasoned adult."<sup>102</sup>

Put another way, the challenge is to somewhat overcome the influence of our basic security needs. For example, often a person is so worried about the impression he is making that he can hardly concentrate on his own behavior, much less on the other person. The challenge is to overcome the constricting and distorting effects of anxiety and defense; more chronologically, to move beyond the egocentrism of childhood and through the narcissism of adolescence.

With the freeing of personal relationships comes a greater range and flexibility of behavior. Less burdened by inappropriate reactions to past relations, one is free to notice more in the person with whom one is interacting and capable, if one chooses, of modifying one's behavior accordingly. There is less need to dominate, coerce, or manipulate; there is more warmth, respect and tolerance of diversity.

Related to the freeing of personal relations but important in its own right as a component of interpersonal maturity is the development of empathy. As a person becomes free to assimilate a wide range of experiences, he also develops a rich store of empathetic potential. Few responses facilitate interpersonal relations as much as the experience of another sensitively understanding the meaning and emotional quality of our experience. Such mutuality, in turn, leads to intimacy.

Intimacy suggests the kind of "relationship in which people know one another, support one another, share their lives and identify their interests with one another."<sup>103</sup> Intimacy involves a deep caring so that the needs of another person become as important as one's own. It is a profound psychological meeting of persons where there is a losing but also finding of oneself in relationship to another. As

Erikson explains the paradox, "Intimacy is really the ability to fuse your identity with somebody else's without fearing that you're going to lose something yourself."<sup>104</sup>

Intimacy, then, requires self-definition and self-affirmation. Until a person knows himself, it is too threatening to really know or be known by another. Even intermediate steps, e.g., empathy, can be blocked for it is only when a person knows who he is that he can dare to see others as they are and only when he accepts and trusts his own feelings that he can empathize with another. In larger terms, this is another way in which the stabilization of identity influences interpersonal maturity, or more broadly yet, how all components of identity reciprocally interact with each other.

Humans of all ages but particularly the young frequently seek to use sexual contact as a shortcut to intimacy. Though heterosexual experiences can help develop the capacity for true and mutual intimacy, more often, sexual intimacy is the culmination or capstone of the search for relatedness. As promiscuous people generally discover, sexual union is meaningless apart from psychological union.

Besides promiscuity, the failure to achieve intimacy can also result in loneliness, withdrawal, symbiotic dependence, or defensive aloofness. Every interaction, of course, need not nor can be an intimate one. Indeed, a healthy kind of detachment and aloneness characterized Maslow's self actualized individuals. The problem is when no relationship in a person's life approximates the qualities we have described.

Unfortunately, loneliness and detachment are not rarities in our society. Sociological factors are somewhat responsible. As Toffler

observed in discussing the "temporariness" of future-shock society, "Just as things and places flow through our lives at a faster clip, so, too, do people."<sup>105</sup>

Psychological factors, many of which we have discussed, are likely more responsible for interpersonal immaturities. Socialization patterns in our culture are particularly influential. During childhood, boys are taught to deny their dependency needs and to inhibit emotionality. Later they are encouraged to be competitive and self-reliant. Even the potential of dating relationships is often undermined by proving behaviors. All of this deleteriously affects the male's eventual ability to establish intimate interdependent relationships, though as the Newmans perceptively note, a man may come to cherish his family life as the one safe and supportive environment where he can express feelings.<sup>106</sup>

Concerning the preparation for intimacy, the socialization patterns of our culture greatly favor the female for they reward her for the expressive and nurturant behaviors conducive to intimate relations. If the female encounters difficulty with intimate relations, it is likely not with tenderness or emotionality but with sexuality. In over-simplified terms, the male needs to integrate sex with love, the female love with sex. Or in Reiss' terms, cultural stereotypes and socialization processes emphasize "body-centered" sexuality for the male and "person-centered" sexuality for the female.<sup>107</sup>

Several years ago, some observers believed there was evidence that young people, in contrast to previous generations, were better able to achieve self definition and to establish and maintain intimate

relationships.<sup>108</sup> Today, as we reviewed in chapter 5, the evidence seems more equivocal. If there is reason for hope, it likely rests on the trend toward more androgynous sex roles,<sup>109</sup> a concept we will return to after a consideration of mature value systems.

#### Toward a Mature Guidance System

Man has a central and uniquely human need for meaning. To ward off the ultimate fear of nonbeing and nothingness, he needs a comprehensive belief and value system to guide him. With it, life assumes direction and integration; without it, life becomes close to unlivable. The basic question of what human existence is all about is most poignantly faced in the form of, "Who am I?" and "What does my life mean?" The acquisition of an ideology greatly enhances the formation of an identity.

The developmental processes surrounding moral reasoning, value acquisition, and the search for meaning were reviewed in chapter 6. The cognitive-developmental theories of Piaget and Kohlberg were found to be particularly helpful. Modeling influences, particularly of parents and peers, are also a key part of how these guidance systems develop in children and adolescents.

There comes a time in healthy development, however, when these second-hand systems, inculcated by or borrowed from others, are not sufficient. Though each of us borrows much from history and from others in building a philosophy of life, ultimately it must rest on personal choice and commitment.

The acquisition and development of a mature guidance system is a formidable challenge, especially in modern society. Most people

throughout much of history have taken culturally defined patterns and meanings of life for granted.<sup>110</sup> Today, however, we are far more aware of the diverse answers different people have worked out to the problems of existence and far more critical and aware of the shortcomings of our cultural response.

The same cognitive abilities which later serve the young person so well in his development of a mature guidance system are also responsible for his prior crisis. The adolescent's new capacity for abstract thought enables him to see flaws in his parent's system. He discovers that others have quite different views of what is right and wrong, good or bad. He comes to see the relativity of people's responses to these basic questions. As one college student put it, "They can't all be right. So maybe no one is right. It feels like there's just nothing you can count on anymore."<sup>111</sup>

These perceptions and reactions, which some adults never move beyond or even achieve, are very characteristic of the college student. They are part of an appropriate stage in healthy development but also a stage with serious dangers. One is that the person will deviate into a nihilistic belief that there is no objective foundation for moral principles.

A more common maladaptive response, characteristic of many young people but also numerous adults, is what Erikson calls "totalism," the organization of one's self with rigid, absolute and arbitrary boundaries. Unwilling or unable to tolerate the anxiety inherent in the quest for meaning, millions immerse themselves in synthetic, ready-made ideologies. Though totalitarian and extremist movements are particularly adept at attracting the "true believer," totalism



can assume more socially constructive forms. Psychologically, however, totalism and dogmaticism tend to be growth-constricting and identity-foreclosing. Again, that type of intense immersion and group identity can, as a temporary stage, meet important needs and facilitate growth. The danger is that of a more permanent and defensive fixation.

It is difficult to assess the nature of religious commitments. At their best, they are the culmination of an honest and personalized search and lead to integration and direction. Yet in many cases, religious beliefs and activities are habitual and hypocritical. Until recently, young people exhibited a decreasing interest in organized religion, seeing it as too doctrinaire and irrelevant to the issues and questions which troubled them most. In recent years, however, that trend has been conspicuously reversed, e.g. the "Jesus Movement." Though more time is needed before the true nature of these commitments can be assessed, the ideological potential of religion is clear. As Allport wrote:

That which is ever not quite fulfilled is best able to hold the attention, guide effort, and maintain unity. It is for this reason that religion qualifies par excellence. Precisely because religious accomplishment is always incomplete, its cementing character in personal life is therefore all the greater.<sup>112</sup>

We can identify several features which ordinarily characterize the movement towards a maturing guidance system. One is what White calls the "humanizing of values,"<sup>113</sup> the shift from a literal belief in the absoluteness of rules towards greater insight into the spirit and purpose of the guidelines. Particularly in a complex and ever-changing society where no situation is ever identical to a previous one, an awareness of the human meaning of values and moral principles

is critical.

But an individual can not stop with simply that awareness; values must become more stable and beliefs less tenuously held. Increasingly, one's own experience must be brought to bear in affirming a credo which will guide one's life. Even if the content of that system does not change during college or differ from what one was taught, the bases on which it rests must change. It must become more personalized.

Personalizing of values leads to a congruence between values and behavior. The search must go beyond an intellectual exercise and even beyond mere choice to a commitment to live one's life in accord with those decisions. For Rogers, congruence is the "matching of experience, awareness and communication" and represents the peak of personhood.<sup>114</sup>

Behaviorally, what are the evidences of a mature guidance system? One indicator is a sense of unity and integration. Though the humanizing of values does not necessarily produce a unified philosophy of life--indeed, the "morality regressions" which we discussed earlier<sup>115</sup> suggest that a person may for a time become less unified--the trend is clearly in that direction. With such personal unification comes increased strength, resistance to stress, and purpose.

A sense of purpose and progression is both a reflection of an integrated value system and a unifying force in its own right. At least in the eyes of humanistic thinkers, man has a basic need to expand and actualize his capacities. Ostensibly, there is not always forward movement; many theories stress the ebb and flow nature of human growth.<sup>116</sup> Nor is the progression necessarily highly planned or structured. Rogers strongly believes in trusting the flow of

experience.<sup>117</sup> Still, as evidence of increased maturity, seniors usually score higher than freshmen on such dimensions as goal directedness, full involvement, a venturing openness to new experience, personal integration, and humanization of conscience.<sup>118</sup>

A final quality of a mature guidance system which also evidences itself behaviorally is generally called flexibility. Flexibility suggests openness, the ability to respond to differentiating cues, and psychological freedom to choose from a range of alternatives. It is the ability to tolerate, in a respectful not tongue-biting manner, diversity among people and situations. It is a quality frequently associated with creativity.<sup>119</sup>

Although rigidity is generally seen as the undesirable opposite of flexibility, and is associated with the counter-productive opposites of the above characteristics, the issue is not quite so simple. Though Chickering saw, in reviewing a number of studies on change in college students, a shift from automatic application of uncompromising beliefs toward more comprehensive and flexibly applied systems, the goal of healthy development is a rather delicate balance.<sup>120</sup> A guidance system must be open to change yet solidly based. The person must be able to live with ambiguity yet be decisive enough to make and live by commitments. He must recognize the lack of closure yet move beyond a life of suspended judgment. In terms of impulse expression, maturity requires a balance of spontaneity and control.

Our final dimension of maturity, moving towards vocational direction, will allow us to further our understanding of this balance.



### Toward Mature Vocational Direction

In some sense, vocational matters seem the most mundane aspect of our discussion. Whereas feelings about self, interpersonal relations, and values seem like more profound matters which continually and pervasively shape our lives, vocation seems more tangible and limited.

Though little will be served by arguing which of our topics is most important, I submit that the matter of vocation is more important than it may appear. Even in the narrowest work-a-day sense, we saw that one's work significantly shapes self image, how one spends much of his time, and standard of living, among other things. If one thinks of vocation in its deeper meaning, as "a calling," it becomes still more important. More broadly, vocation can represent the major thrust or goal-directedness of one's life. For some women, for example, the primary purpose of their life revolves around the roles of wife and mother. That, in the main, is what they want their life to count for.

In any case, vocation both influences and is influenced by the other dimensions of identity. It is the expression of an emerging identity and the cause of greater identity stabilization. As an extension of one's goals and purposes, vocational choice is an inherent part of the value-system we've just discussed. Or at least it should be. When it is, work--not just paid employment but "any activity that produces something of value for others"<sup>121</sup>--becomes a well-integrated part of personal identity, not a detached activity. Under such conditions, one does not work in order to "live" during non-working hours. Rather, "work" and "living" become nearly one and the same.

The reciprocal interaction between identity and work, evident in vocational choice as we previously saw, continues during later

years. We are generally aware of how vocational roles shape identity but we frequently overlook the room there is for individuality within vocational roles. Some research indicates not only how widely held and rigidly defined occupational stereotypes are but also their unfortunate self-fulfilling effect.<sup>122</sup>

Vocational maturity is not easily attained and often when it is, it seems more fortuitous than deliberate. Under optimal conditions, there is a "deepening of interests."<sup>123</sup> As abilities and values are clarified, there is a progressive matching of personal attributes with vocational possibilities. Options are narrowed because the person can recognize and accept the difficult truth that affirmation also means renunciation, that every choice to do one thing is a choice not to do others.<sup>124</sup>

Numerous factors can interfere with this process. Self understanding can be minimal or distorted. There can be ignorance about vocational realities or highly fantasized perceptions. If the "good life" can only be imagined in expansive breadth, as adolescents are wont to do, choices will be avoided because they appear constricting. On the job, unrealistic expectations can undermine satisfaction and productivity.

The mature person recognizes the inevitability of compromises and adjustments in all of life, vocation not excepted. Many people desire a job that challenges their abilities and gives them a sense of accomplishment; a job which has status and is personally fulfilling. But not everyone can have such a vocation and perhaps no job can continually meet that criterion. A particularly harsh collision is presently occurring between an increasing number of college graduates and

the occupational realities of a recessional economy.

Though an individual can do much to modify his job in order to meet certain needs and though mid-life career switches are increasingly popular (and will become more necessary), we should not gloss over the truth that many features of the world of work run counter to an ideal model of mental health and identity. Herzburg's important writing on the meaning of work and worker satisfaction indicate that such "anti-health" features are more an inherent part of modern society than just the result of recent events.<sup>125</sup> It was not without reason that the Special Task Force on Work in America recommended extensive reforms if the apparently growing alienation and dissatisfaction of workers at all occupational levels are to be reduced.<sup>126</sup>

Major change with significant identity-related ramifications is already occurring among half the population--women. Much of what we have said about the nature of career development and the relationship between vocation and identity applies, at least traditionally, almost exclusively to males. From early on, boys are taught to be autonomous, achievement-oriented, and vocationally directed. Female sex roles have been oriented around domestic and interpersonal roles; careers are seen as only a way-station on the road to marriage and motherhood. Female identity has been based primarily on family, home, and the husband's occupation.

Presently, college women are more aware of the limited and limiting roles they traditionally have been offered. They are seeking other sources of identity and self-fulfillment. Not surprisingly, they are turning to work as the key involvement that will lead to equality with men and a more differentiated identity.





This is not the place to review the obstacles which impede that course of action. There are numerous institutional practices and cultural mores which oppose these changes. As Bird summarizes it, "Whether the measure is money, power, prestige, or achievement, and whatever the field, the proportion of women at the top is remarkably constant and low."<sup>127</sup> More insidiously, there are internal and pervasive effects of the socialization process, not the least being the "fear of success."<sup>128</sup>

These developments relate to our concerns in two major ways. First, many college women are rejecting a traditional and well-defined though frequently unsatisfactory road to identity in favor of one which more resembles the male's quest...but with added difficulties. Secondly and consequently, many of the theories of identity formation and models of mental health, particularly as they address female dynamics and behavior, will need to be applied with caution and eventually modified.

Two other somewhat paradoxical vocational trends are likely to characterize the future. As the psychological significance of work becomes better and more widely understood, or because of the more urgent problems of high absenteeism, low morale, and poor productivity, greater efforts will be made to maximize worker satisfaction and fulfillment. In different ways, work will be seen as more important and meaningful than it customarily has been.

Paradoxically, however, work will in some sense become less important in the life of the individual. As automated and computerized systems become even more sophisticated, perhaps as ecological factors



require a different style of living, and for other reasons, the worker of the future will likely work fewer hours in a week, fewer weeks of the year, and fewer years of his life. Consequently, leisure time, not work time, will take on increasing importance.<sup>129</sup>

### In Conclusion

If there is one psychological theme central to the drama of life it may be "identity." But identity itself is a multi-faceted phenomenon and no one dimension captures its richness and complexity. As a result, it is difficult to predict how the process of identity formation--one builds more than finds his identity--will change in the future. Nor is it yet clear whether the theories and research we have reviewed will continue to apply to identity processes in the coming decade.

One significant trend, already evident and already straining current theories, is towards a decreased dichotomy in cultural sex roles. Though the dehumanizing constriction of the female role has been widely publicized, the male's role has a comparable amputating effect. In simplified terms, women in our culture have had feeling without power, men power without feeling.<sup>130</sup> The socialization of males has emphasized instrumental qualities, the female expressive qualities. The too common result has been men preoccupied with the pursuit of "success" (or embittered by its elusiveness or unattainability)<sup>131</sup> while missing the fulfillment of family life and other intimate relationships. Women, meanwhile, have been confined to largely familial roles while being denied the opportunity to actualize other potentialities.

These sex role transitions, impeded by a long cultural heritage and fraught with difficult and ambiguous issues, will not be easily negotiated. The terrain is largely uncharted and the appropriate destination not at all clear.

At this point however, the prognosis seems favorable. There appears to be an increasing number of androgynous identities being formed, identities which comfortably embrace both masculine and feminine qualities.<sup>132</sup> I consider that a trend to be applauded and promoted. If women continue to move more into the world even while men become more involved in the home and family, it appears that the benefits to all involved will outweigh the possible dangers. We could reasonably expect decreased discontinuities in human development, an enriched personhood for both sexes, an increase in genuine community, and more fully functioning human beings.

Since that goal--maximum human fulfillment and effectiveness--is the ultimate goal of education in our culture, our final concern will be with ways in which higher education can better facilitate that development.

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## PART IV

### EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

## CHAPTER 9

### YOUTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self development.

Alfred North Whitehead  
The Aims of Education

We suffer from a serious lack of a theory of personality factors that relates them to a theory of college behavior, generally, and to the academic learning processes more specifically.

J. A. Fishman  
The American College

As we approach the end of our attempt to better understand the developmental stage of youth, it will be good to regain the more holistic perspective with which we began. We initiated that unification process in the previous chapter by using the concept of identity to encompass the various dimensions of our analysis. We will continue that process in this chapter, not so much by summarization as by expansion and application. Given the existing state of knowledge, what are the implications for higher education? Equally important, what gaps and unanswered questions remain in our understanding of college students? As was perhaps previously and repeatedly clear, there is no shortage of challenges awaiting the theorist or researcher

interested in cultivating this fertile area of education and psychology.

#### YOUTH: UNDER-DEVELOPED PSYCHOLOGICAL TERRITORY

In the earliest pages of this project, I described the emergence of "youth," a new stage of development. Triggered by cultural forces, primarily technological in nature, youth is the result of an elongated adolescence. With entry into the vocational world increasingly delayed and with advanced education increasingly necessary, the process of growing up has been significantly modified. Adulthood is delayed, adolescence extended, and youth the name given to that protracted interim period.

The pervasive assumption in these pages has been that such changes and that period are of considerable importance. That importance is indicated, among other ways, by sheer numbers. Whereas in 1900 there were only slightly more than 200,000 college students, today there are more than 8,000,000. Put another way, in 1900 only 4% of the 18-21 year olds were in college; today 50% of a considerably larger age-group population attends college.<sup>1</sup> Though "youth" is not necessarily equivalent to the college years, many who meet that criteria are numbered among the millions of young people in college experiencing the dynamics and developmental tasks which accompany the elongated moratorium of youth. This stage, previously nearly non-existent, is now heavily populated and societally significant.

Of more importance than mere numbers is the increasing realization that the stage of youth is characterized by important needs, challenging developmental tasks, and far-reaching changes. Though the effects of the early years remain crucial, the dominating nature of that belief

has blinded us to the potential for change and personality development at all subsequent stages of life, particularly adolescence and youth.

During the college years a person generally achieves new understandings and attitudes, new competencies and commitments. Frequently, new self perceptions are derived and life-shaping interpersonal relationships developed. Furthermore, the value systems and vocational involvements which characterize the decades of adulthood are often the product of college experiences. For understanding both individuals and their subsequent influence on society, one might well look to the formative influences of the college years.

Surprisingly, that seems infrequently done. The importance we have ascribed to the college years is not reflected in scholarly work or the popular media. In psychology, a preponderance of theory and research has focused on the early years; we have not yet recovered from a Freudian-induced lopsidedness. Though the period of adolescence has come to receive considerable attention, few people talk or act as if much other than gradual solidification of personality is likely to occur after that.

We began this chapter with a quote claiming that we suffer from a serious lack of theoretical and empirical understanding of college behavior. Fishman made that observation in the early 1960's.<sup>2</sup> Some progress has been made since then if only because the campus turmoil of the late 1960's required attention and response. Unfortunately, much of the resulting research was done on the conspicuous "activist" and "hippie" minorities, yielded conflicting conclusions, and was of questionable generalizable value. As we noted particularly in chapter 5, much that was written during the late 1960's and early 1970's now

seems, in contrast to contemporary college students, quaint and strangely obsolete. Consequently, in a recent book on personality development across the life span, Rappoport still observes:

Since it is a rather sizable and interesting piece of psychological real estate, it is surprising to discover that the adult transition period (ages 18-25 in his system) remains an under-developed area in personality research.<sup>3</sup>

Our previous chapters illuminated some of what we do know about the development and dynamics of college students as well as the gaps and limitations of that knowledge. Later in this chapter, we will attempt to specify some of those challenges, organizing them within the five-dimensional "search" framework we have used. For now, several general needs can be identified.

First, the efforts we have made make clear that we are far from total understanding of how the developmental antecedents of childhood and adolescence influence subsequent years. Secondly, the issue of stability and change is unsettled. To what extent is youth determined by the earlier years? To what degree is there continuity of behavior? To what extent are youth free to change and choose new direction? The same questions, of course, can be asked concerning the relationship of youth to the adult years. Given the normally greater length of adulthood, perhaps the latter relationship is of even greater importance.

A second major conclusion is that college students deserve to be the object of more research. Though they frequently are the subjects of studies, rivaled in popularity only by the white rat, somehow that involvement has not led to appreciably greater understanding of the behavioral dynamics of college students.

Rather amazingly, even colleges and universities have exhibited



a relative indifference to better understanding their basic unit--the student. As one respected committee concluded:

Most American universities devote far more attention to every conceivable research question than they do to trying to understand their own students.... The characteristics of students...are largely ignored in the concentration on more easily describable features of the university.<sup>4</sup>

It seems paradoxical that gaining a better understanding of their students is not higher on the list of priorities of institutions of higher education. Relatedly, it appears to be a disappointing commentary that few such institutions engage in imaginative and incisive institutional research. It appears that many would prefer to live with the illusion that they indeed fulfill the noble goals stated in the college catalog than to courageously face hard evidence of what they actually do accomplish. Both types of research would appear to be critical elements in an effective educational process.

More bewildering is the way in which the basic goal of education--promoting meaningful growth in students--has gotten lost amid a host of lesser goals and related procedures. Because this project is both a response to that serious flaw and intended to be a beginning contribution to corrective actions, that problem merits separate analysis.

#### THE MYOPIA OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Perhaps because schools inevitably fall short of fully achieving all of their stated goals, it is not difficult to criticize education. Such criticism abounds and much fails to acknowledge either the unattainability of some goals or the rather remarkable achievements educators have attained. Before discussing what I believe to be a serious flaw in American higher education--a failure to keep in focus

the growth-needs of students--a sense of proportion will be served by some acknowledgement of higher education's impressive accomplishments.

One such accomplishment is the response American higher education has made to a wide range of goals and expectations imposed upon it. Originally modeled on the German university and geared to providing a classical education, colleges have had to adjust to more technical, vocational, and practical demands. Moreover, as our society became more egalitarian, colleges were called upon to serve not just a small and elitest population but to provide a channel of upward mobility for an ever-increasing number of all Americans. Through it all, American higher education has adroitly blended tradition with innovation, the rich cultural heritage of Western civilization with the unique and more practical matrix of American society.

Though that brief sketch hardly exhausts the expectations we have had for higher education or its other achievements, it does illustrate its considerable accomplishments.

Still, higher education appears vulnerable to the criticism that somehow it has lost sight of the central goal of student development. Though there are honest differences among educational philosophies (amid all the semantical confusion), fundamentally education exists for the growth and benefit of the person. From the Greeks through Dewey and up to the present day, educators have shared the vision that education would promote the growth of the individual, his self realization and maturity.<sup>5</sup> Even a closer reading of classicists like Cardinal Newman<sup>6</sup> and Whitehead ("The valuable intellectual development is self development.")<sup>7</sup> lends support to that view.

The development of students has not always stayed in focus as a central and guiding principle; student needs have often not shaped procedures and goals. As a result, education has not had an optimal effect on student development, often barely affects it, and too frequently impedes it. It is my further contention that even traditional and largely cognitive goals of education are undermined when the affective side of students and education is ignored. Most goals of education are best approximated when they are connected to the central concerns, personality dynamics, and developmental tendencies of the student.

To see this chapter in context, we need to step back and set a sense of proportion. I do agree that intellectual development has been and should remain the major emphasis of education. Our emphasis on personality change and student development is intended as a connective and therefore does not reflect the same proportions which should characterize higher education. I do not intend to exchange one lopsidedness for another, but rather to emphasize what has been ignored.

Yet even the more traditional cognitive-content goals must meet some broader criterion. Rarely could one argue that something possesses value in and of itself without regard to whether it enhances a person's growth and potential. In the final analysis, the value of education must be measured by the effect, direct or indirect, it has on the persons it affects.

American higher education, it seems to me, has had a tendency to confuse processes with purposes. The basic purpose of education is to change people; learning, by very definition, means a change in behavior. In order to accomplish such changes and approximate certain purposes, certain content and procedures were originally chosen. But

now too often, means have become ends. Original goals are forgotten as individuals and institutions become locked into certain procedures. Professors think primarily in terms of covering content, of teaching subjects not students, while students come to seek primarily not growth but grades. In many ways, it seems, we have lowered or maybe lost our original vision of education.

All this would be less disturbing if the results were more encouraging. They are not. Though the research on teaching, learning, and the general impact of college on students is voluminous and not given to simple summary, the essential conclusions are not heartening. Change appears to be minimal, inadvertant, and often transient. In particular, the apparent effects of faculty and the formal curriculum (versus peers and extracurricular impacts) are conspicuously disappointing. College catalogs continue to assert bold and broad goals--claiming to develop not only the mind but the whole physical-emotional-social-spiritual man--but the evidence is not kind to such illusions.<sup>8, 9, 10, 11</sup>

Finally, American higher education can be faulted for its rigidity and resistance to change. Though society has changed dramatically since 1900, the curriculum has not changed appreciably since the turn of the century.<sup>12</sup> Lack of change is not necessarily bad, of course; it depends on previous quality and effectiveness. But to the extent that student needs are inextricably linked to the direction and dynamics of society, the failure of higher education to change with society exists at the expense of student development. The President's Commission on Campus Unrest cited both poor teaching and curriculum irrelevance as causes of unrest and recommended a

renewed commitment to teaching, more curricular options, and generally an education more related to the realities of the contemporary world.<sup>13</sup>

More specifically, colleges have lost sight of the primacy of student development when rules and regulations are set up primarily for staff and faculty convenience. Though certain administrative and course-related procedures are obviously and justifiably needed to insure efficiency and effectiveness, those regulations must be questioned if they impede rather than facilitate student growth.

A more serious and peculiar problem is that of putting the curriculum ahead of persons. Curricular content, originally just a vehicle to achieve person-oriented ends, has become an end in itself. Numerous academic decisions are based primarily in allegiance to the arbitrary ways we have categorized academic content in indifference or opposition to the needs of the person involved. Even Archibald MacLeish, a scholar of the classical tradition and hardly a champion of modern educational fads, recently observed, "The university concern with 'man' as such has grown less and less and its concern with what it calls 'subjects' has become greater and greater. The important thing has become the academic offering."<sup>14</sup>

#### A STUDENT DEVELOPMENT VIEW OF EDUCATION

Because a student development bias pervades much of this chapter, that view needs to be made more explicit. On the other hand, since that view was rather clearly implied in the previous criticisms, I will assume that the reader already senses its major themes and that only some additional commentary is needed here.

Perhaps sensing the major themes is as far as we can go at this

point in time. The student development view is not yet a clearly defined and well articulated position. In fact, it is really not one position but a number of partial views and varied emphases which more or less share a common value system. In brief, these views want education to focus on the student and to deliberately respond to developmental tendencies.

Relatedly, student developmentalists want colleges to take seriously the catalog goals. They want education to be more than the acquisition of information and a narrow intellectual competence; they want to aim for the full development of human potential as it will be needed in a complex, democratic society. There is an emphasis on thinking critically about one's values and attitudes, on decision making, and on accepting responsibility for those decisions and one's life.

In terms of our earlier chapters, student developmentalists are concerned about identity formation and the "searches" which influence that. Among other goals, they believe that courses should seek to promote the growth tendencies we previously examined. Can not an introductory philosophy course also help a student shape his philosophy of life? Can not psychology courses, even while they pursue other goals and remain true to the discipline, help a student to grapple with some of his major concerns?

It is unfortunate that the word "relevance" has fallen into disrepute for it is germane to our concerns here as we talk about courses which relate to the needs and interests of students and prepare them for the decisions and problems they will confront. Interestingly, though few people consciously identify with what we've

called a student development approach, most students and faculty agree that education should meet this criterion of relevance.<sup>15</sup>

The eminent philosopher Abraham Kaplan recently spoke to this issue. In writing against the over-specialization and remoteness which characterizes much of philosophy, he said, "The disinterested pursuit of understanding for its own sake is surely the very essence of the philosophical quest...but its expression often reduces philosophy to what is at best a harmless pastime and at worst a trivial mental exercise." Kaplan suggests, as we did earlier, that something is wrong when philosophy courses rarely connect with the student's own developing philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

The late Abraham Maslow, in reviewing the relationship of psychological scholarship to the activities of ordinary men also observed that "much of the substance of teaching and research in psychology, while not untrue, is trivial and of little help to anyone wishing to come to grips with the major problems of the day."<sup>17</sup>

Though relevance suggests the question of whether the material has meaning to the student here and now, it does not necessarily favor current over older material. The current can be of fleeting and incidental importance. On the other hand, nothing can be more relevant than theory and basic principles. Put another way, reading a classic book can be far more relevant than a current best seller.

Though students sometimes mistake immediacy for relevance, in the main they are asking that course content be chosen because of its relation to life, not because of an esoteric relationship to some arbitrary structure of the discipline. Faculty can be threatened by these demands for it is the latter organization which they find

familiar and comfortable. However, when teachers can push themselves through and beyond that anxiety-triggering stage of reorganization so that their course better connects with the central concerns of students, the results are often gratifying. Much of the research on learning suggests that individuals learn best, both in acquisition and retention, and do so more enthusiastically, when the task relates to their desires and interests. If that indeed is the result, then a student-centered course also appears to be in the teacher's best interest.

This view should not be mistaken for an all-out, "do your own thing," the student-right-or-wrong approach. Though every movement has its embarrassing disciples, the student development view does not subscribe to the currently fashionable cult of spontaneity. In the Maccoby model, for example, using Fromm's "productive character" as a guide, a strong emphasis is placed on the development of self discipline.<sup>18</sup>

Still, education can more profitably use the energy of the id, not just the controls of the super ego. Education can be enhanced by following certain youthful inclinations--dealing with the ideal, not just the real; emphasizing cooperation not just competition; and using sensory not just cognitive processes. Education can involve feelings, not just detached intellectualism. Scholarship and learning could be more joyful and even playful than it usually is.

With that backdrop of criticism and perspective, we will conclude by looking briefly again at the various dimensions of the search for identity. Based on previous chapters, we will summarize major points, identify the more important gaps in our understanding, and suggest certain implications and applications for higher education.



### The Growth of Self

It seems rather evident that education which hopes to effect meaningful change must take seriously the development of "self." Even in the comparatively narrow way we have used the term, making it closer to autonomy than identity, it remains a crucial dimension of development. The Trent and Medsker study of 10,000 high school graduates, to which we have referred frequently, identified autonomy as the critical variable in a successful college experience.<sup>19</sup> Jahoda arrived at a similar conclusion in her analysis of concepts of adult mental health.<sup>20</sup>

The challenge for both individuals and institutions is to move beyond glib assent to such principles of mental health. Not infrequently, we are blind to the disparity between our declared and operative values. Whereas we may believe that we value independence, in actuality our policies and procedures may reward dependence and docility. We may resent the challenge of an autonomous thinker or subtly resist growth in another which makes him less dependent on our assistance. Or in another form, we may experience more need gratification from the dependent student who is anxious to win our approval than from the person with a more intrinsic basis of self worth. Even more damaging are ways in which we cause others to feel shame or guilt for emerging and essentially healthy expressions of autonomy.

Other educational implications follow from the student's need to test his developing powers, to expand, and to gain the sense of competence which is so exhilarating to experience and so valuable to possess. Educational institutions are primarily concerned with intellectual competence though as I have argued elsewhere, a sense of

emotional and social competence is not unrelated to major educational goals.

Grading is but one area that merits scrutiny if developing a sense of competence is taken seriously. Although that analysis would not necessarily lead to a competency-based mode of evaluation, the deleterious side-effects of traditional criterion-referenced grading can not be lightly dismissed. Students commonly experience high levels of pressure, anxiety and guilt; failure affects self images, achievement patterns, and other self-perpetuating cycles.<sup>21</sup> Relations with peers take on a competitive nature and those with faculty a judgmental tone. Ironically, grading procedures often undermine rather than facilitate learning, their main purpose, because only memorization, not creative thinking, personal integration, or other higher mental processes, contributes to the final grade. Even more embarrassingly, as Hoyt concluded after a careful evaluation of 46 studies, "Present evidence strongly suggests that college grades bear little or no relationship to any measure of adult accomplishment."<sup>22</sup>

The problem of grading will not be easily solved; it has already resisted varied and intensive onslaughts. Nonetheless, when such a compelling force and dominating concern is in many ways at variance with even conventional goals of education, to say nothing of student development concerns, better ways of synchronizing evaluation procedures with educational objectives must be sought.

The issue of grading is only illustrative of the many possible implications and applications related to the development of self. Better realization of the potential of the freshman year is another, though we will examine it in a different context. In the main, our

concern is not just to develop a sense of self-hood, a process which begins in infancy, but also a sense of self esteem. If autonomy is to be achieved, the person must develop trust not only in others but in himself. As we discussed earlier, he benefits from involvements which cause him to be more familiar and comfortable with his emotions and more confident in his abilities. He must learn to assume responsibility for his behavior and to grow in his belief that he can to a considerable extent direct his destiny. Education which promotes that internal locus of evaluation and control contributes significantly to the growth of self.

#### The Importance of Relationships

Even among those who believe that education should promote the growth of self, there are some who would question what responsibility education has to develop interpersonal competence. That concern has received little attention in conventional educational philosophies and systems.

Nevertheless, if one establishes educational goals primarily on the basis of what contributes most to a full, meaningful, and productive human life, interpersonal relationships rank near the top. Man is a social being and his greatest pain and fulfillment tends to come from relations with others. Consequently, it is neither peculiar or trivial to make interpersonal understandings and competencies an educational goal.

That the growth of self and interpersonal behaviors are related is a point we have emphasized. With insufficient development and definition of self, the person will still relate to others but

these relationships will tend to be guarded, distorted by unmet needs, and undermined by feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. Until a person achieves a certain sense of self or even sense of identity, the giving and receiving involved in a close relationship tends to be too threatening.

With the growth of self, identity, and interpersonal experience, a freeing of relationships tends to occur. According to White, this is primarily a relative release from a preoccupation with self, from distorting needs, and from habituated responses.<sup>23</sup> This frees the person to be more flexible and to respond more relevantly and sensitively to the immediate person and situation. For college students, there is also the need to be freed from conformity to peers and from the enslavement to counterproductive cultural patterns, two matters which lend themselves to even conventional academic analysis.

Though interpersonal relations are important to nearly all humans, regardless of age, they seem particularly important to college-age people. Besides the freeing process described earlier, there is a broader emotional repertoire and new interpersonal potentialities. There is a heightened sense of sexuality and generally a more conscious desire for intimacy.

For many college students, all this is as confusing as it is exciting. Many have difficulty coping with these challenges because the societal context seems as confusing as their internal state. Current changes in sex-roles and in sexual mores are but two of the complicating factors, particularly in heterosexual relations.

It is not clear just how higher education can best respond to these needs. It is clear, however, that these interpersonal

concerns constitute a major struggle if not preoccupation for many college students and appreciably influence their academic performance and personal development. The research we have reviewed is quite clear: peers and noncurricular experiences appear to have far more impact on students than do faculty and the formal curriculum.

Perhaps all this only suggests a more important and central role for student personnel workers.<sup>24</sup> There is an obvious need for more attractive and non-stigmatizing programs geared toward normal developmental needs, not psychological remediation.<sup>25</sup> Yet it seems equally obvious that it is only at great loss that the main stream and thrust of education ignores the powerful influence of peers. Indeed, from early on, education not only fails to utilize the strong force of peer influence but finds itself in opposition to it.<sup>26</sup> As a result, peer pressure militates against conscientious academic work and classroom participation and rewards counter behaviors. Moreover, commonly used grading practices competitively pit students against each other at a time when more cooperative and affiliative involvements, still compatible with the need for evaluation, would be more desired and beneficial.

The challenge, then, is to respond to and when possible utilize the major psychological forces in the college student. If education is concerned about socialization and peers are primary socialization agents, some planned connection seems appropriate. If interpersonal and other social experiences are critical aspects of modern life and personal fulfillment, then the neglect of such understandings and competencies brings into question what education is really all about. If the void left by changed sexual mores and college regulations

causes students to flounder, deleteriously affecting personal growth and academic performance, colleges must consider which structures produce optimal growth. Or relatedly, when there appear to be significant differences between commuting and residential students, as Chickering reports there are,<sup>27</sup> even though both are offered the same classes, the college serious about student development looks for compensatory responses.

All the ramifications and applications for higher education are not clear. Much, however, can already be pursued. The recent movement towards co-educational dorms is but one example of how colleges can respond and of the growth-producing benefits which can result.

### The Quest for Meaning

Once again, if one approaches the matter of educational goals by first thinking about what really matters in life rather than in terms of what education usually deals with, the need and challenge to find meaning and purpose comes to the fore. That is a basic need of man and because it can provide integration and direction to life, it is a critical variable in an individual's behavior and satisfaction.

The quest for meaning is a life-long one though again, the college years appear to be part of a particularly important time. Newly acquired powers for abstract and analytical thought enable the young person to see the inadequacies of the belief systems he has been taught. A second-hand belief and value system won't do; at least a personalized version is necessary.

The college years are an optimal time to work on a mature

guidance system. Psychologically and sociologically, the individual is in a moratorium. Relatively free of enduring commitments and responsibilities, he is free to explore and experiment. Moreover, the college student is in a stimulating environment where he is exposed to alternative views and critical analyses.

But the student generally needs assistance on this quest. The shattering of childish beliefs and new perceptions of flaws and uncertainties can be disillusioning and unsettling. The road from absolutism to relativism is not easily travelled. Furthermore, the myriad options in our culture can be confusing and the void left by diminished consensus bewildering. The temptation to escape into dogmatism, cynicism, nihilism, or apathy is great.

Trends in higher education appear to have made colleges less helpful of this quest than formerly. The population shift from private to publically-supported institutions, certain perhaps misunderstood Supreme Court rulings concerning religion and education, and particularly the growing, perhaps lopsided emphasis on scientific procedures have made it less likely that holistic issues related to meaning and purpose will be addressed.

I do not favor, of course, biased inculcation by either individuals or institutions--something that does not qualify to be called education--but rather consideration and analysis of value-laden issues. For example, students benefit from value clarification, not value imposition. What is needed is greater awareness of the moral and ethical dimensions of educational content. The Nazis represent this century's paramount example of educated people who were morally deformed. Watergate, though not comparably deplorable, nonetheless

also exhibited the ethical illiteracy of otherwise sophisticated men, most of whom, ironically, were graduates of eminent law schools. Recalling our discussion of Kohlberg's stages of moral development and White's "humanization of conscience," (seeing the real purpose and meaning behind moral principles) the "well-educated" Watergate conspirators are not very good advertisements for our educational system.

It is not fully clear what specific institutional or professorial efforts would be most beneficial. Perry's study suggests there is much potential in simple exposure to the inevitable differences among peers and professors.<sup>28</sup> Piaget and Kohlberg have begun to help us understand how such exposure to more mature models can be growth-producing. Much work remains to be done, however, before we understand the ebb and flow of this form of growth and what differentiates a constructive from destructive upset of equilibrium. To anticipate a future point, the freshman year appears to constitute a point of unusual readiness that is generally not well exploited.

Other possible efforts can certainly be made. Giving attention during class time to moral implications and value-laden issues is valuable as is the professor's willingness to share how he or she has grappled with such matters. Modeling after an admired person is one way in which all of us have developed. Research on the impact of college further suggests that one-to-one interactions with a faculty member can have even greater influence than the more diffused class experience. In the midst of their exploration and experimentation, many students have a need to test out their ideas and emerging identity against a more mature person. Unfortunately, the reward system which



dominates in higher education discourages professors from engaging in these time-consuming involvements.<sup>29, 30</sup>

Off-campus experiences, either extra-curricular or for credit, can also be valuable. Though we will discuss this more fully under vocational concerns, it can be noted here that such activities help the developing person to shape a realistic ideological perspective rather than an idealized one which later turns into cynicism when confronted by the realities of life.

In brief, colleges have access to a person when he is developing, or solidifying, a guidance system which will likely shape the nature of his adult years. It is a time of great potential--for good or for ill. Instead of making significant steps, the individual may respond to the confusion and anxiety by escaping into rigidity, aimlessness or apathy. This need for purpose and the resulting guidance system is so central to a person's behavior that education which looks beyond courses and credits can not, it seems to me, ignore it. Even if one limits education to primarily the acquisition of information, our concerns here are pertinent for this ideological bent affects the accuracy of perception and the flexibility of intellectual processes.

A mature guidance system must be stable yet not rigid, flexible but not flighty. It shapes both beliefs and behavior, ideally bringing congruence to them. At its best, it brings unity and integration and therefore, as we noted earlier, is correlated to the level of identity achievement. Certainly if we believe, as Margaret Mead argues,<sup>31</sup> that we have entered a prefigurative culture where the young not only are socialized but significantly shape the direction

of society as well, education must take seriously the opportunity to influence the development of a mature guidance system.

### The Need for Vocation

In our earlier discussion, we presented vocational concerns as the most tangible dimension of our concept of identity, as easier to get a grip on than, for example, a value system. Perhaps for that among other reasons, the nature of one's work has an unusually strong influence on both self-image and perception by others. Each feeds on the other so that work itself and the status assigned to it add up to an important component of identity. Vocational choice is both an expression and shaper of identity.

Vocational concerns are also what students are most aware of and what they most readily connect with college. Of all our topics, "vocation" is also what higher education generally accepts most responsibility for though ironically, it may be the aspect of our discussion which the regular college curriculum and program can do least about. Major responsibility for vocational concerns may be primarily the domain of adjunctive services like the counseling center. Unfortunately, their resources and efforts, at least to this point, seem to fall short of the challenge. Vocational theories, tests, and guidance materials appear to be less helpful than originally believed.

The problem is intensified because contemporary young people expect much from their work. They want it to be self-expressing and fulfilling in itself, not just support for the rest of life. Unfortunately, that psychological sensitivity comes at a time when the economy is anemic and, perhaps more permanently than temporarily,

there are not enough challenging jobs for all who seek higher education.

If ready-made solutions can not yet be offered, we can at least clarify the vocationally-related challenges which face higher education. Young people are confused by the numerous vocational options they face--over 47,000 by last count. Additionally, supply and demand variables seem to shift faster than training programs and advising can or will adjust. More generally, young people lack clear and broad insight into themselves and the world of work. Lacking realistic exposure to more than a few jobs, their decisions are often based on unrealistic stereotypes and fantasies, or simply the prestige factor of the occupation.<sup>32</sup>

Many college students experience stress over vocationally-related decisions, e.g. college major. They feel the pressure to choose yet sense the incomplete and unstable basis on which the choice is made. For contemporary college women, these decisions are especially difficult. Conditioned by conventional sex roles, now presented with new opportunities and expectations, yet conflicted by ambivalent needs and messages, the female student in particular needs sensitive and supportive guidance.

It is increasingly agreed, as corroborated by the Carnegie,<sup>33</sup> Coleman,<sup>34</sup> and Joint Commission<sup>35</sup> reports previously discussed, that young people need more actual work experience. Perhaps the emphasis should be on course work which takes the student out of the classroom and library and into the "real world." Perhaps an interim of work between high school and college or the practice of "stopping out" during the college years should be encouraged. Perhaps work-study

programs can be more extensive and meaningful. Major logistical and financial difficulties are associated with each approach and it is too early to say which is the preferred route. What is clear is that greater exposure to the world of work would have definite benefits. It would allow the student to test his abilities and interests and to develop new ones. He would experience the routine and authority of the work world but also some responsibility and autonomy. Ideally, he would also gain a sense of self-worth by doing something important and of value to others.<sup>36</sup>

The need for better advising seems to be a nearly universal problem in higher education.<sup>37</sup> Along with the fringe benefits of the student-faculty interaction discussed earlier, the student needs an opportunity to discuss and check-out his vocational plans. He needs information and feedback.

In the end, effective vocational assistance likely must rest with the counseling center, though they face problems of their own. Theories of vocational choice have not proved to be as helpful as once believed; vocational information seems adequate but ineffectively used; tests probably not as valid as commonly believed.

Vocational choice and development are complex matters. Even when supplementary materials reflect that complexity, there will be a need for sensitive counseling. Numerous personality variables and social realities are behind wise vocational decisions and each decision, in turn, triggers many and far-reaching ramifications. Identity shapes vocational involvement even as that involvement shapes identity.

Vocational concerns are of critical importance, they are related to the college experience, and students are highly motivated to make

efforts and accept assistance. Higher education could ask for no more favorable set of circumstances.

#### HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

We have used the concept of identity as the unifying rubric for personality development in the college student. That evolvment of identity is a life-long quest though the college years are a particularly strategic time. It is a time when the past and the future come together in an especially meaningful way. Between the tension of childhood experiences and adult plans and between personal qualities and social realities, an identity comes into greater focus than ever before.<sup>38</sup>

Higher education has many opportunities to significantly affect that complex and vital process. To recall Marcia's "crisis" and "commitment" model, discussed earlier, the college experience can encourage the young person to face the resulting "identity crisis" and help turn it into a growth-producing, albeit anxiety-arousing struggle. Even through conventional academic content, colleges can illuminate the risks of involvement and the virtue of commitment.

It was repeatedly evident in the previous chapters than much work remains to be done before a comprehensive and specific student development program can be proposed. We need a clearer understanding of the psychological development of college students and a better grasp of educational implications.

The theoretical framework of those efforts will likely be eclectic. Some help has already come from psychoanalytically inclined observers.<sup>39</sup> The usefulness of behavioristic thought was supported by

the many references we have made to principles of learning theory. Furthermore, the concerns of humanistic psychologists and educators are in many ways closest to those of student development proponents and those of students themselves. Unfortunately, much of the humanistic writing appears to peak out at the level of inspiring ideals but unspecific programs.

At this point, there does appear to be one area of particular promise for future theory and research. This area carries no well-defined boundaries or label but includes those who share an "equilibrium upset" theory of human development. According to this view, a person grows from experiencing a sequence of challenges and responses. A state of equilibrium is disrupted by new information and perceptions which, ideally at least, force a person to reconstitute at a higher level of synthesis. There is also the danger that the anxiety of disequilibrium will trigger either rigidity or regression.

Piaget, Kohlberg, and other "cognitive developmental" thinkers form the theoretical core of this view but our interests are advanced by many others who do not fit into that camp yet make important contributions to our understanding of disequilibrium. Dewey's "reconstruction of experience,"<sup>40</sup> Festinger's "cognitive dissonance,"<sup>41</sup> Heider's "balance theory,"<sup>42</sup> and more recently Heath's analysis of growth in college<sup>43</sup> are but a few of the many variations on a belief that development occurs through cycles of challenge and response, differentiation and integration. Since these thinkers cross commonly used theoretical categories and sub-divisions of psychology, they have not often been tied together. There seems to be considerable

promise in so doing. Two impressive and valuable studies have been done which attempt to relate that view of human behavior to personal growth during the college years.<sup>44, 45</sup>

Though it seems the case that no growth can occur without stimulation, it is not clear yet how that provocation can be optimally regulated. There is both constructive and destructive potential in such equilibrium-upset; questions concerning sequence, intensity, and timing remain.

All such answers will not need to be ground out from scratch. Existing research will likely contribute needed pieces to this puzzle. To use an extended example, for it is important in its own right, what we already know about the freshman year of college suggests much about the mis-timing of current procedures.

The freshman year appears to have considerable potential for student change which is generally not well exploited. For whatever their faults, freshmen have many virtues. They generally come to college eager to learn and willing to work. Comparatively, they have an open mind and are willing, though hesitant, to explore and expand. In brief, they are generally enthusiastic and in a high state of readiness.

Frequently those qualities are soon squelched. Because of higher education's preoccupation with rationality and an almost Puritan notion that what the freshman wants and enjoys can not be good for him, he is given a heavy diet of required courses. Moreover, in those courses he usually discovers that what he personally believes or feels doesn't matter much; despite what is said the first day of class, the memorization of facts is generally what counts. Like and

from older students, he learns that it makes sense to treat course-work as a grade-oriented game, not a true learning experience. By the end of the year, little of his initial enthusiasm and intrinsic motivation remains.

Though such a description may border on the cynical, the research is fairly consistent in reporting that the greatest degree of change during college occurs in the first year.<sup>46</sup> This appears to be in spite of, not because of our typical procedures. Put another way, that freshmen do change is evidence of their psychological potency and readiness; that they change very little thereafter reflects the deadening, not enlivening effect colleges typically have.

The first year--indeed, the first semester--is a crucial time. Heath believes it is the most educative point in the college years;<sup>47</sup> Katz, after his intensive study of college students, concluded the same.<sup>48</sup> There seems to be good reason for a college to concentrate much of its best efforts and resources on the freshman year. Instead, it imposes the least concrete courses typically taught by the least experienced faculty in a lecture-dominated style to large masses of passive students. It is hard to imagine an educational experience less congruent with the student's needs, inclinations, motivations, and growth potentials. As a result, the student loses the valuable qualities he brings to college and the college loses its best opportunity to have a meaningful impact.

It is not difficult, of course, to criticize educational practices or to propose alternative approaches which promise, at least on paper, grand benefits. In actuality, conventional higher education has accomplished much, as we noted earlier, and real



obstacles lie in the path of a student development emphasis. Such goals carry the danger of misuse and harmful consequences. Secondly, current methods of training college teachers produce instructors who know much about their content-area but little about the students they teach or the complexities of the educative process.<sup>49, 50</sup> Even if faculty were inclined in the directions we have suggested, the reward system which dominates in higher education discourages if not precludes the kind of involvements and time-expenditures a student development emphasis demands.

Ironically, even if all the institutional and professorial requirements were met, it is still open to question whether students are generally inclined to assume their responsibilities in such a process. Either because they have been conditioned to be passive participants in education or for less exonerating reasons, students often use academic freedom and options only to find the way of least resistance, not the route of optimal personal growth. That students themselves may be the weak link in a student development emphasis is a serious and at least partially valid observation.<sup>51, 52, 53</sup>

Realistically, education can not be all things for all people, professors are not paragons of virtue and skill, and we will never produce maximum growth in all dimensions of student development. Still, it seems reasonable to believe that we need not settle for the almost embarrassingly minimal impact the research reports we currently have. I believe we could make a greater and more meaningful difference in the lives of college students. At least we should try.

Quite likely the major obstacle is what Silberman has called "mindlessness"--that so few of us ever take time to ask why we are

doing what we do, to think seriously about questions of purpose.<sup>54</sup> If we did, it seems quite certain what we would change many of our goals and procedures. In terms of this chapter, I believe that the rationale and principles of a student development emphasis would appear more obvious and more compelling to more people in higher education.

Though intellectual development has been and should remain the primary business of college--I have not proposed that some type of quasi-therapeutic activity replace it--even within a traditional educational framework, intellectual development too often has been reduced to a cognitively narrow and emotionally sterile set of exercises. Content and procedures which were once valuable ways to effect meaningful changes in persons have somehow become ends in themselves, and in so doing have lost much of their original purpose and potential. Though I have favored certain goals, I believe that most and perhaps all goals of education are best approximated when they are connected to the central concerns, personality dynamics, and developmental tendencies of the student.

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