Life's Big Questions: College Senior Seminar

Rabbi Leah Cohen

Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements

for the Doctor of Ministry degree

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Graduate Studies Program, New York, NY

March 2015

Advisors: Rabbi Richard F. Address, D.Min

and Paula Kaplan-Reiss, Ph.D.

Chapter I- Statement of the problem addressed by my project

A. The background of my project

Life is full of transitions, some sudden and tragic, others well planned and positively anticipated. Regardless of the nature of the transition, there are inherent challenges associated with any type of change and graduating from college is no exception. In *Passing Through Transitions*, Naomi Golan (1981) notes that transitions, "involve a process of change, a shift from one life structure to another, terminating the existing one and creating the possibility for a new one" (p. 12). Though undergraduate students at Yale University are blessed with a wealth of opportunities while they are on campus, they often express a sense of anxiety and uncertainty as they shift from the structure of being college students to the possibility of being young adults in the working world after graduation.

Graduating seniors have a compelling need to sort through the myriad of issues, decisions and feelings they are facing at this stage; it can be overwhelming at times. There are a variety of resources available to help them in this process on campus. For example, there is the Yale Office of Career Strategy, which maintains an extensive data bank of job opportunities, alumni connections, career advisers and a calendar of on campus interviews. However, the focus of this office is job placement.

There is also Yale's Mental Health & Counseling Department, staffed by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and clinical social workers, which is also set up as a resource to help students. However, not every senior feels the need to seek this level of mental health care services as part of their graduation process. In addition, there are masters and deans assigned to each of the twelve residential colleges on

campus. The students view their residential colleges as micro communities at Yale. These are the places in which they normally, sleep, eat, socialize and live. But scheduled time with masters and deans is usually private and is often initiated as an intervention when things are not going well. Appointments with these resourceful people are not usually held in a group setting nor do they tend to be a series of on going sessions arranged for fixed times.

Another place where college students at Yale can seek support is through the University Chaplain's office. For some students, this kind of guidance is very helpful, especially if they have formed a strong relationship with one of the chaplains in the University Chaplain's Office who focuses on a particular faith such as the Hindu or Muslim chaplain. There are members of the chaplain's staff who serve in a non-denominational capacity too. This is a good option for students who enjoy pursuing a spiritual approach to examining their lives that is not grounded in one particular religion.

Nonetheless, in spite of these and other options, there is a particular subset of students whose needs are different in subtle, but important ways. The resources described above do not fully meet their needs as they prepare to graduate. In some cases, these seniors will use the campus services described above and still seek additional guidance beyond these available resources.

Who are these special students? They are the students I work with most closely and they are affectionately known as "Slifka Regulars." How did they come to be a special sub-set within the graduating class? The relationship began very early in their college lives. When students are admitted to Yale University they are given

the option as incoming freshmen to fill out an information card from the Chaplain's Office that identifies their religious preference. The Chaplain's Office forwards the information of those who identify as Jewish to the Hillel Center (called Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale.) Thus, even before these students arrive on campus, they are sent information about Jewish life on campus and are targeted as part of a distinct cohort amongst all incoming freshmen.

On the day they move in, members of the Hillel board come to their rooms bringing them "Jewish Yale Bling" such as snacks, cups, t-shirts and other paraphernalia with Yale and Hillel logos and Hebrew writing. They are welcomed on campus with these treats, greeted warmly by Jewish upper classmen and invited to attend their first Shabbat service and dinner after move in. For some students, this initial effort results in an immediate sense of belonging to a unique group – the Jews at Yale.

In addition, throughout the students' typical four year experience, Jewish students can become part of the community at Slifka Center by participating in a variety of activities such as Shabbat worship and dinner, learning groups, speaker events, alternative spring breaks, social events, Birthright trips, pastoral counseling sessions, holiday celebrations, Israel engagement and social action projects. Slifka Center also includes a kosher kitchen and dining hall which is part of the university dining plan, a staff of rabbis, programming and operations personnel as well as a four story building with various lounges, libraries and open spaces for students to gather informally.

As a result of all these opportunities for connection, for some Jewish students by time they are in their senior year, Slifka Center has served literally as their "home away from home" during their college years. Students at Yale have many opportunities for forming these types of "home like" supportive environments most notably in their residential colleges, their cultural houses, secret societies, sports teams and a number of other identity groups. However, for a particular group of Jewish students, Slifka Center, is the locus of their identity at college. This is where they come to eat and study, nap and hang out, participate in programs and hide out from their hectic lives. It is a place where relationships are formed and community built. Students know that seven days a week, from 7:00am till 11:00pm, they will always find a friendly peer here and a Jewish adult who will make time to listen to them.

It is natural then, that as some of the "Slifka regulars" approach their senior year, they wish to talk about what lies ahead in a setting that is familiar to them, with a person they have grown to trust, surrounded by their Jewish peers who are also graduating at this time. Having shared so many experiences together during their time at college, this particular sub group feels very comfortable in this kind of setting especially when, for many of them, there is much discomfort in their lives as they navigate this transition. They are full of anticipation and excitement, but also a fair amount of fear and uncertainty. For the most part, they realize that their lives are about to completely change and many do not feel fully prepared for this inevitable truth.

At times, students would like to have an adult to talk with about their concerns for the future who is not their parent. “Adults carry around in their heads a sense of the normal, expectable life cycle, an anticipation and acceptance of the inevitable sequence of events that will occur in the life course and a recognition that turning points are inescapable”, writes Golan (1981, p. 30). Perhaps it is this simple wisdom acquired through years of living that attracts students to seek out their elders throughout the university environment well beyond the academic requirements of the classroom setting. The culture of Yale supports this value; therefore there are a large variety of opportunities for students, staff and faculty to engage in these kinds of conversations.

In her typology of transition, Golan describes different types of transitions based on various criteria. She notes that some transitions “require exchanging one vital role for another which cannot be carried at the same time” (1981, p 13) and she places the transition from college to the workforce in that category. My project aims to create a structure in a familiar environment surrounded by friendly faces that will hopefully help a select group of seniors more easily make this exchange in roles. In my project, the destabilizing effect of this necessary growth will be placed in the context of a stable setting through the format of regularly scheduled support group sessions of graduating Slifka regulars.

Over the summer, a number of graduating seniors who were active at Slifka Center reached out to ask me if I would run a senior seminar for them this year. The history of this seminar is an interesting one. At various times in the past, the previous senior Jewish chaplain who had served in my position for 32 years, held

such a seminar with his wife. Last year, was a big transition year for him as he went on sabbatical with a planned retirement at the end of this period. Our positions overlapped for the first six months of last year. I did not feel entirely comfortable facilitating a senior group in my first year, given that he had known the seniors for their four years at college and he was still very much present at the center.

When the students contacted me this summer, I agreed that I would hold the senior seminar this year provided there was interest. A few weeks later, some of the students informed me that my predecessor, who still frequents the campus, was also planning on holding a senior seminar for the same purpose. Some students were confused. This rabbi is now on sabbatical, no longer has an office at the center and will be retiring at the end of this academic year. Nonetheless, he was an important figure in Jewish life at Yale for decades, he does maintain a presence on campus and he is in contact with select students. I reached out to him and explained my desire for transparency and interest in not confusing the students or sending them mixed messages. After a phone call and follow up email, he decided that he would still hold his sessions; I could hold mine and let the students choose. So, that is what we did. I will be using the same name that had been used in the past for this seminar, "Life's Big Questions" as it is a well-known nomenclature for this senior experience facilitated at Slifka Center by the senior Jewish chaplain. Although the name is the same, the curriculum, role of the facilitator and the overall format of the group will be developed completely from scratch by me based on the clinical and religious principles described below.

B. The need for my project

My demonstration project will be a weekly session at Slifka Center for eight selected senior students with whom I have established a close enough relationship that it will enable me to facilitate a peer support and discussion group. The focus will be on the most pressing topics on their minds during this time of change. I will prepare several themes for the first few weeks, but I know that I will need to be flexible in case these topics or format do not work. The purpose of the project is to address the seniors' needs to:

1. Reduce their anxiety and fears as they go through this natural transition.
2. Increase their ability to be self-reflective as they navigate from advanced adolescence into young adulthood.
3. Ground this experience in a safe, familiar Jewish environment, which has been a central part of their experience at Yale.
4. Envision and anticipate life after graduation with a mix of self-actualization and realistic expectations.

C. The relevance of my project

This project is relevant for campus ministry anywhere, but in particular for rabbis and Jewish educators who work in Hillel Centers on campuses around the world. Although this model and the underlying assumptions of the need to help young people transition to adulthood are relevant to any religious group, the breadth and depth of Jewish campus life in some Hillel Centers makes this a very natural and applicable project. If a campus does not have an active Hillel with a

strong core group of students, or if there is much apathy or division within the Hillel, this project might not work on that campus. However, most Hillel Centers, even the small ones, do have a core group of students who see these centers as an important part of their identity. Over the course of their time at college, it is here where they come to find their friends and trusted adults. The space feels like a natural place to confront difficult decisions and to process feelings. The following are some essential components of this project that would make it applicable to other similar settings:

1) It is important to have a core group of students who have shared experiences together and who see themselves as an identity group within the larger senior class. They may hold different points of view, but over the course of the last four years, they have come to trust and respect each other and they know how to communicate with one another. Given their busy schedules, especially in their last year, they are the ones who should perceive the need for a support group and they should be the ones making it a priority. This type of group cannot be forced from outside the seniors' sphere.
2) A rabbi, chaplain or other facilitator must be available to ask questions and engage the senior students in topics that matter, even though the students themselves may have a hard time articulating why and how these issues are important. The facilitator should have a good understanding of how to lead peer groups and know how to maintain group behaviors that make for a safe space.

3) The group should have access to meet regularly in a physical space that is conducive to holding a support group in a private and comfortable setting.

Within these parameters, there is the possibility of many variations of how the group could be run, who the group members might be, what the focus and goals of the group should be. One of the key issues that I struggled with when designing this project and which I could imagine other chaplains wrestling with on their own campuses is how explicitly "spiritual" or "religious" to make the group. Some of the factors I considered were: should an opening or closing prayer be part of the structure, should the source of the material used primarily come from religious texts or traditions and should there be an overt moral or spiritual message transmitted during the sessions.

Ultimately, I decided to use a blend of Jewish and non-Jewish texts, to refrain from opening and closing prayers and to reference Jewish values, teachings and traditions only in so far as these examples illustrated a relevant point. My goal was not to "preach" religion or impose a spiritual lens for their concerns. Rather I was open to using the unique blend of religion, spirituality and psychology that is emblematic of the pastoral counseling field and to stay flexible in making adjustments over the course of the sessions.

In *Professional Spiritual and Pastoral Care*, there is a chapter by Rev. Lynne M. Mikulak on the topic of spirituality groups. Although her context is the hospital setting and she underscores certain concerns regarding accrediting bodies, which are not relevant to this setting, her work is insightful to my project in a number of ways. Under the heading of "Topics and Settings of Spirituality Focused Groups" she

includes “educational institutions, empowerment, self-esteem & self-awareness” all of which are important parts of my project (Roberts, 2013, p. 204). Her excellent recommendations regarding the format of the group were helpful too. However, it was her observation that these kinds of groups “provide the possibility of opening group members up to compassion and empathy for each other, which helps diminish individual feelings of isolation and aloneness” (p. 196) that resonated so strongly with me during this project. I hope that the seniors in my group do not feel isolated or unsympathetic to each other in facing the personal decisions they are about to make in spite of the competitiveness and individualism that enabled them to reach this point in their lives.

Chapter II- Principles that guide and inform this project

A. Religious principles

There are a number of religious principles drawn from Judaism that illustrate and inform this project.

Legal Concepts

Jewish law establishes the age of legal majority for males at thirteen years old and females at twelve and a half years old. Although these ages are considered too young by modern standards for a person to have reached a level of maturity to be considered an adult, the concept of legal majority in Judaism creates a watershed mark. Minors are not considered fully responsible for their own relationships, are not obligated to most commandments and are viewed more as parental objects than as fully formed human beings.

In many ways, graduating college for the cohort of students involved with this project is the watershed ritual that delineates their arrival into adulthood. Once out of the college environment, there will no longer be any deans or student service departments to help them negotiate their relationships or responsibilities. They will be held accountable for their actions and will need to make their own decisions. As a life cycle event, college graduation, much more than becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, is the start of their adulthood. The various rituals that mark this passage, such as baccalaureate, commencement and the separate programs by department and residential colleges, help concretize this transition for the graduate sending the clear message that one phase is over and another is about to begin. Family and friends bear witness to this transition, as they do in so many Jewish life cycle events, thereby giving context, meaning and gravitas to what is happening.

Parental obligation of teaching

The Talmud, in Kiddushin 29a, enumerates three specific requirements that parents must teach their children: the Torah, how to make a living and how to swim. The role of rabbis and educators in Hillel is in many ways a blended role including teacher, counselor and programmer to Jewish students who frequent their Hillel Center. In Judaism, there is a valuable concept codified during Talmudic times called "A Person Who Raises Another's Child". Through this mechanism, Jewish law and custom recognizes that the myriad of responsibilities that a parent has in raising a child into adulthood might be assumed by others who are willing to take on these tasks without severing the biological parents' obligations. In this way, Slifka Center and the adults who work there become agents of the parent in teaching essential life skills to their young

charges.

In my project, all three parental obligations will be supported through discussion and study. First of all, young adults are often looking for wisdom and guidance, which can be found in Torah, using the word Torah in its broadest sense to include the wealth of knowledge in the Jewish experience. Secondly, how to make a living is a pressing concern for all upon graduation, even for those who are not immediately seeking a job. There is concern amongst graduating seniors about whether there will there be a job for them, should they go to graduate school, should they "sell out", should they take some time to "find themselves before buckling down", etc. Especially for the type of student who comes from the privileged experience of Yale, the need to figure out how to make one's way in the real world can be overwhelming after the sheltered existence of living in an ivory tower.

As for swimming, I think this is the most important of all the parental obligations. In a literal sense, the essential ability of being able to swim can help prevent one from drowning and thus is an important life skill. However, swimming is a metaphor for how we make our way through life. This metaphor applies to many of the topics about which the seniors are concerned. Knowing how to swim, just like knowing how to make it in life, is about refining techniques that minimize resistance and maximize output while appropriately applying effort. It is about learning different strokes and being aware of your environment- knowing who and what else is in the water with you. It is important to know how to find and swim with the current most of the time and to know what to do when you need to swim against it.

The role of the collective in Jewish identity and life

Judaism, as a religion, values and in fact requires, a collective body for its existence. Certain key aspects of the worship service, for example, can only be conducted with a group of ten or more people, traditionally ten men, but women are counted in more liberal streams of Judaism. The vast majority of Jewish prayers are in the first person plural in effect expressing all supplication and praise in the collective voice. This collective ethos, however, extends beyond the formal liturgy into all aspects of Jewish life.

In *Pirkei Avot, the Ethics of Our Fathers*, we learn, "Do not separate yourself from your community." The strength, wisdom and support of the community enable the individual to thrive. Certainly, for students who have spent their college years deeply connected to their Jewish community at Slifka Center, a senior support group composed of peers willing to discuss and give support to one another during this significant life transition feels natural and comfortable. Some aspects of this experience are reminiscent of the Confirmation Class experience where the whole class "graduates" from their religious school. The Confirmation Class experience is very different from the Bar or Bat Mitzvah experience where the focus is on the individual and not the group.

Illustrations from the Torah: stories that demonstrate some of the challenges seniors face at graduation

The Torah contains stories that are useful for illustrating some of the key issues that seniors face at the time of graduation. Below are three examples of biblical passages that inform this project:

Adam and Eve: expulsion from the Garden of Eden

In the story of Adam and Eve, they eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and thus have to be expelled from the idyllic Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:23 states "So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he was taken." Students do acquire knowledge during their years in college and in many ways their lives are a bit like paradise. They do no not have to provide for their own food, clothing or shelter. Their days are occupied in the pursuit of knowledge and pleasure. The harsh reality of earning a living has usually not been experienced yet. It is no wonder that seniors have so many mixed feelings as they approach graduation. It is validating to openly acknowledge that along with the joy, pride and sense of achievement, many students also experience a sense of loss, sadness and fear of the unknown. Similar to Adam and Eve, a higher authority, in this case the university, is telling them that it is time to leave paradise. Although college graduation is not expulsion, its direct, unilateral, irrevocable, non-negotiable message results in a forced departure.

Regarding this story, Jewish commentaries place relatively little emphasis on the "sin" of the couple. Rather, most of the focus is on the inevitable loss of innocence that comes with knowledge and the results that naturally flow from entering this next stage of human development. There is even a sense that God, who is omniscient, knew that they would eat of this forbidden tree as an exercise of their free will. In this interpretation, God deliberately placed this tree in the garden in order that the couple would take the necessary steps to mature. Although the

repercussions for their decision were that they had to leave, the rest of the biblical narrative and human history would never have developed otherwise.

David Birnbaum (1989), in his legendary work, *Good and Evil: A unified Theodicy/Theology/Philosophy*, tries to reconcile this tension by postulating a unified formulation that is illustrative not only of the underlying principles operating in the Garden of Eden story, but also in the necessary "expulsion" of seniors from college. In his outline below one can easily imagine the "gilded cage existence" of Adam and Eve as the life of the college student described in the first column. In the second column, the "life of challenge, freedom, privacy and responsibility" describes humanity since the expulsion as well as life for the young adult after graduation. Leaving college is a necessary, albeit difficult, step that all seniors must take in order to enter the next phase of their lives. Acknowledging and discussing this truth in the group, provides a perspective for students who are struggling with a stage of their lives that often feels uncertain and dramatic.

"Tree of Life/Bliss" (Life at college)	"Tree of Knowledge/Potential" (Life post graduation)
1. A "gilded cage" existence	A life of challenge, freedom privacy and responsibility
2. Intellectual satedness	Pursuit of knowledge
3. Limited growth potential	Infinite growth potential
4. Dependence	Independence
5. Eternal life	Mortality
6. "Leashed" natural evil	"Unleashed" natural evil
7. Bliss	Pain and joy
8. Limited potential for "moral good " or "moral evil"	Higher potential for "moral good" and "moral evil"
9. Lesser dignity	Higher dignity

(chart adapted excerpted from Birnbaum, 1989, pg. 61)

Fear of Failure: Moses and Jonah

One of the biggest concerns that I have gleaned from hours of conversation with seniors is a conscious and unconscious fear of failure. Admission to Yale is the result of natural talent, good fortune and a disciplined drive to succeed. Once at Yale, most students figure out how to be successful in their academic and extra-curricular activities within the parameters of the university system. However, when they prepare to graduate, many realize that the rules are about to be re-written. They understand that although an Ivy League degree is a precious commodity, it is not a guarantee of success. Students, many of whom are not experienced in failure, fear failure. Their identities are so closely tied to being successful that the possibility of not being so feels very threatening. They often do not have long track records of reaching for goals and failing to meet their desires. The experience of falling down and getting up repeatedly is not part of most seniors' repertoire at Yale. Thus fear of failure is also tied to fear of the unknown, even though most have substantial safety nets in terms of parental support, personal connections and their own intelligence.

In the Torah, there are many stories that relate to this kind of fear, but two in particular stand out as illustrative of the graduating seniors' plight. The first comes from the story of Moses and the burning bush when God tells him to free the Israelites from the Pharaoh and lead them out of Egypt. Moses is reluctant to go on this mission and gives various excuses why he is not the right person for this role.

He lacks the confidence that he can do this job. In Genesis 4:1 Moses says, "What if they do not believe me and do not listen to me?"

This is a fear that many graduating seniors have. What if their hard won learning is ignored; what if no one listens to their ideas? Graduating seniors express a range of fears that represent different imagined scenarios of self defined failure. During our group sessions, it was revealed that some fear they might not get a job, while others are afraid that they might end up in a position where they are not valued. Some are concerned about taking a job that goes against their ideals, but which they are considering taking for financial reasons. Others are afraid that they might take a job and not have all the necessary skills or desire to succeed after they are hired. The first job out of college feels like a major decision and seniors are afraid of making the wrong choice at this juncture in their lives.

In the case of Moses, eventually he did take the job as the leader of the Israelites. He received guidance from God and support from his brother Aaron; he made mistakes and became resilient as he confronted various challenges in his role. He learned and grew. The job he started with was not the job he ended with, as is so often the case. His role evolved as he developed more skills and confidence. His failures did not destroy him; they made him a better leader.

Because most seniors are purely focused on making the right decision regarding their first job after graduation, they often do not fully appreciate the nuances of what happens after that decision is made. Helping to place the decisions they are immediately facing into the larger context of their work and their lives will

help reduce the anxiety and hopefully mitigate the fear that is a key part of this process.

The story of Jonah represents another fear of failure paradigm that mirrors some seniors' behavior as graduation approaches. When called by God for a specific purpose, Jonah chose to flee to Tarshish. (Jonah 3:1) The Torah does not say why Jonah chose escape as his course of action, but every year there are some seniors who make the same decision when confronted with the choice of what to do upon graduation. Some apply to graduate school, not out of an interest to further their learning or career choices, but simply because they do not want to confront "the real world" yet. Others decide to take time to travel to exotic locations before they "settle down". Still others, move back to their parents' homes and take menial jobs while they pursue auditions in acting or fantasize about writing but often delay taking concrete steps to actualize these plans.

Jonah's escape proved futile, although it did entail certain moments of drama such as - being thrown overboard, getting swallowed by a whale, having an intense conversation with God inside the whale, being spewed out alive by the whale, and eventually accomplishing the task he was asked to do. Similarly, seniors who choose escape as an option often experience a fair amount of dramatic twists and turns, but eventually they have to address their own need to start an occupation and the potential for failure that entails.

Ironically, it was Jonah's success that was most upsetting to him and which he viewed as a failure. After Jonah spoke to the people of Nineveh and they repented of their evil ways, God decided to spare their punishment. The text continues:

> This displeased Jonah greatly and he was grieved. He prayed to the Lord saying, "O Lord! Isn't this just what I said when I was still in my own country? That is why I fled beforehand to Tarshish. For I know that You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment. (Jonah 4:1-2).

In his rush to escape, Jonah never fully understood God's purpose for him. He was too busy trying to run away to really understand what he was being asked to do. In his urge to flee, he did not allow himself the time to reflect on the larger context of the task. Rather it was his reptilian brain that sent him scurrying off, in a fight or flight mentality when confronted with the threat of a task that he feared he could not accomplish. Had he really understood the task at hand, he would have realized that it was not God's desire that he simply inform the people of Nineveh that they were about to be punished. Rather, God had wanted Jonah to warn them of the possibility of punishment with the ultimate goal that they would change their behavior. Therefore, at the end of the story, from Jonah's perspective his efforts were in vain because God did not punish the people. He failed to see that his real purpose had been achieved, which was to save the people of Nineveh by getting them to repent.

After succeeding at college for four years, students in their senior year must also take the time to fully grasp what their purpose in life is at this new stage. At Yale their purpose had been to do well academically, fill their time with a plethora of extracurricular activities and socialize with their peers. As they approach the prospect of graduation, they must transition to a new purpose- making a livelihood.

Seniors must sit with the anxiety producing question of "how will I start to make a livelihood" and to stay in this uncomfortable position long enough to work out an answer.

In anxious moments, it is tempting to flee, but the price of escape is the failure to engage in the challenging work of discernment. Although Jonah did the task of prophesying, he failed to discern his real purpose and therefore did not realize that he had achieved it. Similarly, senior year feels like a giant rush to most students as papers, interviews, socializing and other demands accelerate. Part of the function of this final project is to ask questions of the seniors and create the time and space for them to discern their answers and to begin the process of focusing on their next purpose.

The story ends with Jonah's immature response to God that he would rather die than see the people of Nineveh forgiven. His lack of humility, patience and compassion, leave him silent and chastised. We never hear of him again. For some students who lack the maturity to tackle the next stage of their development, perhaps an "escape" alternative to starting a livelihood is a viable option. However, conquering their fear of failure will help them accomplish the next step in their identity formation. The Jonah story is a warning to all about the high cost of choosing to flee.

Jacob and Isaac - forming an identity

Erik Erikson (1980) defines identity formation vs. identity diffusion as the key task of the late adolescence into early adulthood transition. As students prepare

to graduate from college it often becomes clear that most are well along the way of coalescing their past experience into a unique identity. However, there are always some students in which this is not the case. In the Torah, the example of two patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, serve as good models of identity formation and identity diffusion. According to the Torah, Isaac had a troubled childhood – raised by a jealous mother, in a competitive sibling rivalry, with a father who was largely absent and who ultimately tried to slaughter him, Isaac never really became his own man. He has a diffused identity. In the Bible, although he is one of the patriarchs, he never accomplishes anything major, never strives to overcome battles or conflicts and never strongly voices his desires. He is passive, letting others choose his wife and acquiescing to her after their marriage. At the end of his life, he is tricked by his son and his wife and is "blind" to the family manipulations occurring right under his nose as he blesses the wrong son, allowing the birthright of the elder son to be stolen by the younger one.

Jacob on the other hand, is an example of one who has developed his own identity as a result of overcoming challenges in his life. The climax of his transformation is his name change in Genesis 32: 25-28 when he becomes Israel, meaning "one who struggled with higher beings and prevailed" after wrestling all night with a divine being. He is cunning and persistent, working seven years first for one wife and then another seven years for the wife he really wanted to marry. After being the trickster from birth, he is tricked by others later in his life. Nonetheless, he perseveres, grows and develops his own identity. He accomplishes much making peace with his brother, facing his fears, fathering twelve sons who

become the twelve tribes of Israel and begetting a daughter as well. The factors that produce a personality more like Jacob, a fully formed identity and what makes one more like an Isaac will be explored further in the next section on clinical principles. Here in the religious section, it is sufficient to identify these examples that illustrate the difference between the two personalities and to note that this necessary individuation is an on-going process and not a black and white decision based on students' first job out of college.

B. Clinical principles

In establishing this project it was helpful to begin by reviewing the university setting from a clinical perspective. In this regards, I found Sharon Parks piece "Pastoral Counseling and the University" in the *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling Volume 1,* (1993) particularly relevant. She writes about the university as an environment steeped in the power to transform, yet fraught with inherent tensions that can undermine the individual's very sense of being:

> The self in the context of the university, therefore, experiences a great irony. One comes to a university in some sense to distinguish oneself (from family, within a profession, within a culture); and yet one needs so much to belong, to fit, to feel connected with this new environment –this world-which is powerful precisely in its capacity to confer both distinction and belonging. These dynamics of distinction and belonging are closely related in the university to issues of competence and failure (p. 391).

Seniors approach graduation and envision the tasks of young adulthood from this unique perspective of perpetually being on trial and the need to constantly

prove their merit. According to Parks, the university experience may "enhance one's sense of power and competence to act, but it may also facilitate a recognition of the complexity and power of destructive dynamics and eventuate in a sense of powerlessness, cynicism and even despair" (pg. 391). My project is informed by the reality of these dynamics and by the belief that a measure of clarity, confidence and compassion can be gained by those seniors who participate in the group. The emotional and spiritual strength gained through their participation will hopefully help them progress with greater ease through the final year of their undergraduate experience and beyond.

In choosing to be part of this project, students identify themselves as a select group of seniors whose goal is to explore "Life's Big Questions" in a format that is reminiscent of a seminar style college class. Thus, in the familiar Slifka Center, in a well-known, academic format, surrounded by an intimate peer circle, my hope is that they will feel safe to engage with one another on a seemingly intellectual basis. However James E. Dittes (1999), would suggest that the "presenting problem"- the need to discuss Life's Big Questions, is a "cover story" set in the "benign context" of the support group. In his book, *Pastoral Counseling: The Basics*, Dittes (1999) describes the inner turmoil that counselees experience when they come. I would suggest this unrest is even more exaggerated in this case as most Yale students excel in understanding themselves intellectually and are less adept in understanding themselves emotionally. Dittes explains how the "presenting problem" functions from the counselee's perspective:

> This "presenting problem" is usually an incomplete and a disguised explanation. It has to be. A big part of the distress that occasions the counseling is the confusion and perplexity. Distress seems to be coming from nowhere or from everywhere. If the counselee had the insight and the courage to know accurately and fully what the full problem was, he or she would not likely be looking for counseling. It is the goal of counseling, not a prerequisite for counseling, to move from a partial and discrepant self-understanding to a more whole and honest self-understanding. Tersely put, it is the goal of counseling to discover the problem and not necessarily to move on to the "solution" (pg. 137).

Against this clinical perspective of how the students function within the university as well as within a support group, I will draw upon two main bodies of research as the bedrock of the clinical principles of this project. The first source is from Erik Erikson's (1980) work in defining key tasks that individuals face at various stages of their identity formation, with a specific emphasis on the last stage of childhood and the first stage of adulthood. Under this section I will also apply the work of some other researchers who have expanded upon Erickson's initial research by creating their own theories of adult developmental stages.

The second set of clinical principles I will apply to this project comes from object relations theory. Blos (1979) asserts that late adolescence into young adulthood represents a process of "second individuation". During this period, just as they did when they were toddlers, seniors are involved with two processes-letting go of the old and seeking out the new. Seniors must release their

attachments to the concrete as well as the abstract elements of their old identities including their college friends, their student identities, the campus environment with its convenient source of food, shelter and social life, along with the familiar, clear-cut expectations and activities of being a student. Each graduating senior must then find new substitutes in the next stage of post college life that will gratify their many drive derivatives for self-fulfillment, relationships, intimacy, security and the most basic physical and emotional needs. Other elements of object relations theory, such as a "holding environment", the "true self and false self" and the "good enough" mother will be applied to the project and discussed in greater detail below.

Clinical principles from stages of identity development theory

In late adolescence and young adulthood, which coincides with the age of most college students, the individual is faced with the task that Erikson (1980) defines as "identity versus identity diffusion". In healthy human development, this stage is characterized by the consolidation of elements of an individual's identity that have preceded this time in their lives. From infancy, through early childhood into the school years, the individual acquires elements of an identity. According to Erickson (1980), the integration of these elements is critical for a healthy ego. He states, "Ego identity, then develops out of a gradual integration of all identifications, but here, if anywhere, the whole has a different quality than the sum of the parts" (p. 95).

I would suggest that a critical milestone in this identity formation for an individual comes at the time of graduation from college. A young person's identity is not simply the compilation of all their school classes since the beginning of college,

or even before, nor is it the summation of all their college experiences, relationships and accomplishments. Rather, each young adult at this stage, must assemble these elements or the lack there of, into a coherent whole that makes sense to them.

Identity formation is a difficult enough task, but it is made more challenging by the fact that Yale sends the message to its students from the time they enter campus to the time they graduate that they are the world's future leaders. This can be a heavy and disorienting message for a young ego in the midst of its own identity formation. In college, the emerging adult is given the opportunity to reject and accept, experiment and invent various elements that will eventually consolidate into their adult identity. This is an on-going process over the course of this stage of development with many opportunities to practice integration. My project offers one more setting for tackling this task with peers and an adult facilitator in a Jewish context.

Erickson (1980) describes what happens when this task is not successfully accomplished with the phrase "identity diffusion." I have witnessed identity diffusion amongst some of last year's graduating seniors. On campus, they may have been seen as bright, maybe even campus leaders, but somehow during their senior year the pieces failed to coalesce into a coherent whole. They left without a job or a plan on how to find one or they turned down the offers made to them. They made no serious commitments to a relationship and have no direction of what to do next. They move back into their parent's home or an apartment that their parents support. They spend their time thinking about applying to graduate school, auditioning for theatre roles, or working at Starbucks as barristas. Even from this

privileged Ivy League environment, there are some students who cannot put all the pieces together in order to navigate the next developmental stage. Ultimately, it is impossible to move from one stage to the next without mastering the necessary tasks of the previous stage.

When identify diffusion takes place there is a failure to integrate all the elements into a cohesive total identity which results in a sense of identity confusion. A person in late adolescence not only faces external challenges, but also faces biological ones. As described by Erickson (1980) this transition takes place "at a time of life when the body changes its proportions radically, when genital maturity floods body and imagination with all manner of drives, when intimacy with the other sex approaches and is, on occasion forced on the youngster and when life lies before one with a variety of conflicting possibilities and choices" (p. 98).

The danger of identity diffusion is that it results in behavior that is best understood as a defense against a sense of identity confusion. Students who are preparing to graduate and whose identities have not yet sufficiently coalesced may feel insecure about their competency and knowledge to handle this new stage of life and respond with defensive behavior such as denial, humor or escape. Seniors in this situation often feel that they do not fit in and cannot find their place, but they may not be able to fully articulate why that may be the case.

When identity formation fails to happen at this critical stage, the result is that college graduation marks a passage into a world that the senior is not prepared to meet. Age appropriate rituals and practices such as finding a job, becoming financially independent, setting up one's own residence, finding a life mate and

creating one's own community become meaningless and unmanageable to the individual. In some cases, even gender identity is still being worked out in the senior year and may not be fully formed upon graduation with the result that some students graduate not sure if they are attracted to men, women or both. Based on Daniel Levinson's (1976) study of developmental stages, Golan (1981) writes:

> A transitional phrase comes to an end, not when the particular marker event occurs or when a developmental sequence is completed, but when the tasks of questioning and exploring choices have lost their urgency and the person makes his crucial commitments and is ready to start building, living with and enhancing a new life structure (p. 39).

Another kind of identity diffusion that I have observed is illustrated by the recent graduate who is still trying to manage the Hillel student board a year or more after graduation through emails and visits. He or she does not feel completely connected to post-college reality and has not dealt successfully with the process of letting go of the old and taking hold of the new. They are in denial about their meddlesome ways and are not self aware enough to address their underlying issues when directly confronted. Sometimes recent graduates will come back to Slifka Center for certain holidays because going home feels silly at their age, but they have not connected to a new community yet either. In these cases, although the external act of graduation has been accomplished, campus life still holds a sense of urgency and commitment that is still compelling and is more attractive than any post graduation option they may have created.

Based on Erickson's work in human development, other clinicians have taken

further steps in identifying and classifying the tasks required of this transitional stage. For example, Robert Havinghurst (1953) specifies a series of developmental tasks that an individual between the ages of 18-35 must master in order to mature successfully including: select a mate, learn to live with a marriage partner, start a family, rear children, manage a home, get started in an occupation, take on civic responsibility and find a congenial social group. (Golan, 1981, p. 27). Bernice Neugarten (1964) states that for youth the ego's major task is confrontation with society, the sorting out of values and the finding of a "fit" between the self and society. She notes that in young adulthood, the ego's central issues relate to intimacy, parenting and the work world. (Golan, 1981, pg. 29-30).

In language that uses Freudian concepts, Peter Blos (1979), who spent his career focused on adolescence, presents four developmental tasks, which the adolescent must complete before moving into young adulthood:

1) recapitulation of the individuation process for the second time
2) development of ego continuity through formation of a personal view of one's past, present and future
3) mastery of residual trauma from childhood
4) the formation of sexual identity as the base for the future establishment of stable, adult, human relations. (pg. 406-419)

Riley and Waring (1976) describe this transition from a sociological perspective. They suggest that in this stage, two conditions are required to ensure a smooth transition: a) the new role must be highly valued by both the individual and society and b) adequate social support must be provided as

instrumental means and emotional support. (Golan, 1981, p. 32). During the course of the project, these developmental perspectives will be explored to help the participants gain a better understanding of self. Ironically, on this campus, there is great emphasis placed on learning the external factors of how to achieve the next step after graduation, for example-networking, internships, interviewing workshops, but there is relatively little emphasis placed on helping students become more knowledgeable about their own interior landscapes. Hopefully, my project will address this situation, at least for its small number of participants.

Clinical principles from object relations theory

The discussions during the sessions will provide a holding environment, a term that Winicott used to describe a component of mothering in which the infant matures in a healthy fashion not only because of the physical holding of the mother, but more broadly because of the creation of a total environment which is experienced as supportive. "For the individual, this environment promotes the development of an 'inside' that is an inter psychic reality and an 'outside' that indicates a boundary between the self and the non-self" (Palombo, Bendicsen & Koch, 2010, p.151).

The term "holding environment" can also be used to describe a supportive environment that a pastoral counselor creates for the benefit of her clients in which the clients feel nurtured and cared for, resulting in a sense of trust and safety. My project is a holding environment for seniors to work on the tasks of separating from the known entity of being college students, of integrating their various experiences

and envisioning their futures. One might even think of this project as a holding environment within the larger holding environment of the university, as both function in ways to support students through their maturation processes.

Inside the holding environment, there are several dynamics taking place that can also be described using clinical language from object relations theory. For example, in the early infantile stage, parents are idealized. As the child matures, there is a necessary loss of the idealization of parents. Similarly, the senior too must de-idealize their college ties in order to move on. The nickname "Mother Yale" is particularly relevant in this case. With its wonderful resources and elaborate system to meet students' needs, it would be very tempting to never leave. This is not only true for undergraduates, but for anyone who over the course of their lifetime has had to separate from the womb-like setting of a university, especially one as enriching as Yale. Graduate students whose research is completed, staff who have reached retirement age and professors who are becoming emeritus often struggle as much or more than undergraduates to let go of the many ego gratifying aspects of belonging to Yale.

Relinquishing the idealization of "Mother Yale" is a task that is never fully completed and may help explain the extraordinarily high giving levels of its alumnae and the university's brand mystique. Nonetheless, there is a certain amount of de-idealization required, if not of Yale itself, then certainly of the reality of being a Yale student, in order for seniors to begin to anticipate the potential for ego gratifying activities once they graduate college.

This tension is further exacerbated for a core group of students who are

active at Slifka Center. As they approach graduation, they often wistfully express the sentiment that once they leave, they know they will never find a Jewish community that is as pluralistic, inclusive and full of life and learning as they have here. This may be a healthy example of beginning to let go and it may also be true.

This project will also make use of such concepts as the true self and false self. In our conversations, students will have the opportunity to reflect on the benefits and limitations of the exterior image they project. Although this image has helped them function in school, my aspiration is that as they transition to adulthood, they will begin to gain a better understanding of their true selves. Connecting to their true selves will help them make the important decisions that lie ahead from a place of self awareness, honesty and integrity.

This true self will hopefully find expression in the holding environment if I am successful in creating the sense of security that is required. It is from this place of self understanding that I believe seniors are best prepared to negotiate their next stage, even while it is the false self that may be most visible during the transitional processes of interviews, relocation, starting new jobs, finding new friends and communities. My hope is that as a result of participating in this project, seniors will feel supported to explore and develop their own concept of self, separate from, yet connected to, the outside world.

In a practical sense, I plan on using specific clinical pastoral techniques to create this holding environment including: quiet listening, neutrality, non gratification of drive aims and offering textual interpretations for their consideration that might help students further their own adult identity formation. In

our discussion group, my goal is that students will feel supported to try on different ideas that they bring to the group, borrow from each other or even learn from me.

My role will be to provide a mirror like function of reflecting their experiences and emotions in a way that will help them see and understand themselves better as they strive for self-integration. I will need to be non-judgmental, empathetic, understanding, patient and be a good listener. There will invariably be group dynamics to address as well. Some students may be more open to sharing while others are more guarded. The students' relationships outside of the group will also have an impact on the dynamics of the group. A key variable for the group's success will be the amount of trust that is present. The capacity to trust may dependent on the immediate setting. But for some people, early experiences with the primary attachment to their mothers may have influenced their ability to trust in any setting.

Certain features of the sessions will help create an atmosphere that allows for both a sense of containment and a sense of freedom. For example, I will provide refreshments and use my office, which is furnished with comfortable living room furniture, a fireplace and bookcase lined walls, colorful artwork in warm tones and soft lights to create a warm and encircled feeling. But I will also need to start and stop the sessions on time to ensure that this is not just a social hour or time to hang out. I will be leading the group, but with texts for interpretation and open-ended questions on a theme or issue which will allow for a balance of group interaction, individual sharing and facilitator directedness.

During this project, it is quite possible that I will play the role of the "good enough" mother for some students in providing this kind of environment. By offering a nurturing setting as a means of severing ties, I am conscious that there may be times when I struggle with my own boundaries and feelings. As students go through the process of de-idealizing their parents and any other parent substitutes such as the university itself, Slifka Center or even me, there may be times when they say or do inappropriate things, test boundaries, become defensive or project their own anxiety and fears onto me. As they work through their own identity formation, they will hopefully come to a place of acceptance of all that is not perfect in themselves, their school, their Hillel and adults in their lives. In general, the culture at Yale is one of civility and guardedness. Seniors typically distance themselves from leadership roles in extra-curricular activities, leaving these positions to juniors. By their senior year, most students are completely absorbed in the job search process and in beginning to sever their ties. My awareness of the potential to be cast in the role of the "good enough mother" and dealing with my own counter-transferences will be part of the fluid process of this group.

Over the course of this project, one chapter of these students' lives will most likely come to an end. But the next one will only fully begin once they have left campus. Quoted below, Tyson's (1990) words resonate strongly with me as I recognize the potential for this group experience and its inherent limitations given the scope of the project:

> Although other factors play a part, the ending of adolescence depends to a significant degree on the extent to which the individual's object relations

conflicts, incompatibilities, and attachments can be reconciled and integrated with the demands of reality in what Blos terms 'adolescent closure' (p. 116).

Chapter III. Method of carrying out my project

A. Project Execution

The method that I used to select the group consists of several steps. First, I accessed the records of all the students who were in the Yale Hillel data bank with anticipated graduating dates for this year. Then, I selected from these names, 20 students with whom I felt I had personally formed a close enough relationship in the last 15 months that I was comfortable inviting them to this kind of intimate group. Next, I composed an email to these students and entered all their names in the bcc line. This way, I could preserve the anonymity of who was being invited to the group and the invitees would only be able to respond to me. I sent a copy of this letter to my predecessor so he could clearly understand what my plan was. The invitation was simply to gauge interest. I received some students who said they were not interested, some who were very interested and a few who did not respond. I then created an electronic poll so those who were interested could choose from a few available time slots that I offered. Next, a time and date were firmed up based on the majority's opinion and the start date was set. In the end, 8 students committed to the group and this is the perfect size for this experience.

The format of the group is that we will meet once a week for an hour and a half on Monday evenings. The schedule will run for the whole academic year, however, the piece of the project I will report on will only be for the first half of the year and there will be a mid-year evaluation. The first few minutes of gathering will

be an opportunity for people to take some refreshments, chat with one another and find their seats. Then the flow of the group will be: first, we will go around the room inviting each participant to check in by sharing what is going on in their lives at the moment. Then there will be a specific piece of text that will address a critical issue that students will need to grapple with in their lives as they transition to the outside world after graduation. Then there will be a short wrap up piece that closes the session.

Some of the themes and questions we will explore include:

- What does honesty mean?
- Where is home?
- What are you willing to sacrifice?
- What does winning mean to you?
- How do you recharge?
- When do you take a stand?
- What do you need to learn?
- When are you satisfied?
- How has your relations changed with your parents?
- What makes you happy?

I will be drawing from a variety of sources including the new Hillel program called "Ask Big Questions." This is a format for group interaction that encourages conversations that create community and are based on personal knowledge not expertise in a specific area. The conversations center around big questions that matter and are accessible to all. In this format, there is time for reading, reflecting,

and sharing. It is a process in which the participants learn more about each other and about themselves. For the seniors, this type of peer engagement will be very helpful in consolidating their own post college identities. (See Appendix A for a sample of material I will use for a session on self-honesty.)

B. Project Assessment

Each student will fill out a questionnaire before the sessions start (see Appendix B) in order to help measure a starting point before the project begins. During the course of the sessions I will ask for feedback at the end of each session. In addition, I will ask the participants to write a short essay at the end to describe what, if anything, they got from this experience. I will also be able to observe how they are acting over the course of their senior year in terms of making a smooth transition with post graduation plans. For example what kind of decisions did they make regarding: jobs, graduate school, travel, relationships and parental connections/separation. Because of my relationship with these students, I will mostly likely hear how they are progressing in their transition through direct conversations over the course of the year, observations of their interactions on campus and in some cases I may even hear from them after graduation.

An important, but easy to overlook measure of success for the group will be attendance and participation. Because I intentionally kept the group small, it will be important for members to show up. Without a critical mass, I do not think the group will fully benefit from the process of a support group. Also, although I suspect that participants will be vocal to varying degrees, over the course of the sessions, if I see

certain people dominating the group or remaining silent, I would consider that imbalance of participation to be a negative result. My goal is to have balanced participation because the interactive process of the support group is itself a positive outcome. Observing students who are quiet opening up and those who are more talkative restraining themselves would be signs that their confidence and self-awareness were increasing. When needed, I will be facilitating this process by asking follow up questions to a student who shares only briefly or addressing students who are not sharing at all about their opinions on a subject. I can also help draw people in by my body language. For example, if someone is talking too much, I can slightly turn away and face a quieter student, change my eye contact or subtly focus more attention to quieter students.

Chapter IV- Results of the Project

A. Description of outcomes assessed

Assessing the outcome of this project has proven to be difficult for several reasons. First, because of the small number of participants, there were no statistically meaningful ways to measure results from a quantitative perspective. Secondly, because the group wants to continue until the end of the school year, assessing the results in December does not give a full picture of the impact of the group. And finally, because the effects of the group are not easy to reduce to simple statements and the students themselves are "works in progress," it was challenging for me to draw out which outcomes were relevant for determining the success of the project.

Nonetheless, the qualitative measures of this project showed that this was a very meaningful experience for the participants at this critical point in their lives. I also found the project to be an opportunity of real growth and insight for me personally as I work on my own clinical pastoral skills and role in my new position. Using the methods I outlined in Chapter III, I offer the following analysis.

Group experience as compared to the pre-participation survey input

At the beginning of this project, I asked the participants what they hoped to get out of this experience. I used a simple four-question survey that is attached as Appendix B. One way of assessing this project is to determine if the needs of the students as expressed in this questionnaire were the actual topics covered in the group discussions. In this regard, I would say that the project was successful. For example, the first question on the survey was, "What topics are most relevant for you right now?" The answers ranged from: work-life balance, handling anxiety/stress, how to maintain friendships after college, dealing with the transition from one stage of life into another, building communities outside of ones that are ready made, and bringing a love of learning outside into the professional world.

As a result of this input, I included in this project topics that I thought would address their immediate issues. We had six weekly sessions during the fall semester starting after the High Holy days, skipping school breaks and finishing just before final exams. Each group meeting lasted an hour and 30 minutes. Although initially I planned on making the session only one hour, I found that it was necessary to add this additional time for the students to arrive, get settled and have some refreshments. The feeling of the group was that we were not rushed for time,

neither did the sessions feel like they dragged on too long. An hour and a half time period was just right.

Each of the six sessions covered by this paper had a specific focus. The following section briefly describes the focus of each session and some illustrative verbatim from that session. In addition, there are snippets of verbatim from all the sessions used throughout the report to illustrate particular points.

The six sessions included: an **introductory** session in which the participants were able to share their personal narratives and begin to articulate their fears, anxieties and hopes as they started their senior year.

After the students introduced themselves, I said: "How has this year been different, so far?"

One student replied: "It just seems like time is different."

Me: "How so?"

Student: "At times, it seems to go really fast, then it drags, then all sudden, things are due!"

Me: "It sounds like the rhythm of the year feels different to you."

Student: "Yeah, and it makes me feel, I don't know…. strange. different. Like I have one foot here on campus and one foot already out the door."

Through introductory conversations like these, we began to explore what it means to be starting one's senior college year and entering this period of transition. This introductory session not only established the focus for the project, but also set a tone where doubt was tolerated and well prepared answers were not required.

The **second** session was on self-honesty and an examination of the true and false self through the lens of a quote from Emerson, some follow up questions and a teaching from Maimonides (see Appendix A.) This session included conversation on parental and family relations, what does winning mean to you and what are you willing to sacrifice.

In this session, I asked the question, "What does the expression 'last honesty and truth' mean to you?" in reference to the quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves, but deal in our privacy with the last honesty and truth." (see Appendix A) One student started off by giving a literary critique of Emerson's statement, but ended by saying, "I don't know, this line just feels very heavy to me." When I asked her what she meant by heavy, it was an opportunity for her to talk about a sense of dread around the idea of her decisions at this transition in life being final. "What if I don't know what is honest for me, even in my private thoughts." This poignant response was an opportunity for the group to discuss the topic of self-knowledge. This scenario played out repeatedly as participants would initially reply from the head. But, as time went on, they became increasingly vulnerable to exploring these topics on an emotional and spiritual level.

A particularly fascinating session was the **third** one in which I used the material described in Chapter II, under the section on religious principles, regarding the transition of leaving Yale through the paradigm of Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden. During this session, a debate broke out between several of the students around the topic of whether or not Yale could be considered "a gilded cage

existence". As they critiqued the merits of the analogy, they were able to approach the somewhat intimidating topic of leaving through the safety of analyzing the chart. From time to time I would interject with a devil's advocate type question such as, "Would you really say that Yale provides limited growth potential while post graduation offers infinite growth potential?" As they sought to persuade others of their points of view, they began to find the language to articulate some of their anxiety around dependence and independence issues.

The **fourth** session was on satisfaction and how to measure one's own success in the "real" vs. "academic" world. In this session, a student who had prepared very hard for the LSAT shared a story of how all his hard work did not pay off. In the middle of taking the test, he felt overwhelmed and got up and left. He paused before he started to tell this story, but said, "Ok, yeah, I trust you guys enough to tell you what happened." He described not only his deep emotional pain around that experience, but also what a turning point it was in his life. His body language and facial expression showed how he was weighing his decision to trust the group enough to be vulnerable and to express his pain honestly. He did retake the exam, and although he scored extremely well, he now knows that he cannot get into Yale Law School. He has had to adjust his expectations. He is finding acceptance in a new plan of action and starting to consider what this means for his identity. His experience was a role model for other students to share how their definition of a successful future changed over the course of this year.

The **fifth** session focused on concerns about finding and building community and how to address the need for social connection outside of the structure of college

life. This led to an interesting discussion around the subject of social class, which is an important part of the Yale mystique. Some students were concerned about losing their class once they graduated from this school. What was particularly fascinating to me was how students understood class. It was not simply a matter of income. It was larger than that and was neatly summarized by one student as follows:

> I don't think I will be getting a big job right out of school. I'm interested in politics and I know that I'll be starting at the bottom of the totem pole making very little money. But I still want to live in DC where a lot of my friends will be. How will it look when they all want to go out, and I have to tell them I can't join them because I'm on a budget?

When I followed up on her concern, she felt that if she could not go to the same restaurants and clubs as her friends, they would stop inviting her and she would lose access to her social and professional network, to arts and cultural events and to the kind of intellectual discourse these students enjoy so much. She felt that in that process she would lose her class.

The **final** session for this project and for this semester was an exploration of personal purpose using Marge Piercy's poem, "To Be of Use" as a starting point. (see Appendix C). This discussion led to an exploration on the inherent purposefulness of some organizations versus others. The concept of working for a non-profit organization was brought up. One student remarked:

> I hate when people brag about taking a job or internship at a non-profit as if that makes them somehow better. These places still pay salaries and some of them quite high. They just sound so self –righteous when they say it and it

makes me feel bad about thinking of working for a bank. But there's definitely certain companies I wouldn't work for."

Helping students evaluate their own traits and begin to envision how they might align these with an employer was an important step of envisioning what their future might be like. It was challenging at times to help them distinguish the meaning of the word "purpose" applied to an individual as opposed to an organization. The identification of a personal purpose is a lifelong pursuit, I believe, and these young adults are just getting started in this process.

This group is planning on starting again in late January after winter break and their new spring semester classes are finalized. They hope to continue until graduation in May. I was satisfied that the topics did meet their needs, but I was conscious of other topics we did not cover this semester.

One area that stood out for me as absent from their immediate concerns, but which I think will play a big role in their lives after graduation is the finding of a life partner. Various psychologists, such as Erickson (1980), Golan (1981), Levinson (1976) and Blos (1979) who examine the tasks necessary to move into young adulthood identify this as a critical one.

A second question the students were asked on the beginning survey was, "What are you hoping to get out of this experience?" This aspirational question will be best measured at the very end of the year, however, their responses were telling. Some wrote, "I hope to get some good thought-provoking conversation and advice for post college life. " I would like to reflect on my experiences here at Yale and how I can apply them to my life after Yale." "I would also like a chance to learn about

what other people are thinking about in this moment of transition." These students seemed to seek guidance not only from an older adult, but also from each other. The project did provide for both kinds of conversations.

It is also true that in general, Yalies appreciate the ability to intellectualize their experiences through conversation. In this project, a space was made for that kind of expression. However, I would often follow up by probing deeper to help the students connect to their emotions as well as to their intellects. I consider this a positive outcome of the group. As the group became more trusting of one another and of me they were able to set down their defenses, and examine their interior lives with more openness and honesty. This skill of self-reflection will be applicable to other aspects of their lives and at other stages of transition.

When asked on the survey, "What would make this experience a waste of your time?" their answers where less uniform. One student wrote, "Not too much text study, perhaps just a few lines to help lead the conversation." While another one wrote, "The experience would be a waste if we had no anchoring text or theme with which we can use to think and if instead everyone just talked about how they were feeling." By in large, I think that the students did not consider this experience a waste of their time because they kept coming back and because they wanted to extend the group until the end of the year. Their body language, facial expressions and verbal responses when I checked in with them after each session indicated that they were getting something out of the experience if only the simple chance to process what was happening at this time in their lives and to feel validated by each

other and myself. In spite of the scary nature of change, they were going to be alright.

At the end of the project, I asked students to respond to the simple prompt, "Based on your experience in the group so far, what have you learned about yourself as you go through this transition?" Although the length, style and content of their responses varied, the five themes I gleaned were:

- The students' sense of self-awareness and self-confidence is increasing in spite of some persistent anxiety and concerns.
- They are feeling optimistic, sometimes cautiously so, about their futures and starting to understand that there is more to consider than just their jobs.
- They appreciate this opportunity to talk and process in this kind of setting.
- They are interested to be learning about what their peers are doing and how they are coping.
- They want to continue the group until graduation.

Their responses made me feel that this project was a worthwhile effort for them and for me.

Group attendance and participation

Another feature of assessing results was to look at attendance and participation. In this regard, I was slightly disappointed with the attendance outcome, but pleased with the participation of those who came. In my opening chapters, I described the challenges I faced in establishing the group, but I felt confident to proceed because I had confirmed eight students who wanted to participate. in the group. However, once the sessions got under way, one dropped

because of a busy schedule and in any given session there were on average five or six students, even though I had stressed the critical nature of attendance at the outset. On the other hand, I am glad these seniors came at all given how many other demands they were juggling. I am satisfied with how the project went and I believe that the quality of the interactions was good even if I would have wanted to have a greater quantity of students involved.

As for the participation of the students who came, I noticed that on average the group was split, with 2-3 being more talkative and eager to voice their opinions on all topics. Another 2-3 needed to be drawn in more or else the more talkative ones would dominate the group. One of the less talkative members was very self-reflective and often shared from a deeply personal place. Another, more reserved student tended to be sardonic with her comments. She often came across with an edge to her remarks and at times, an ironic sense of humor. Two of the most regular attendees were actually a couple and I was concerned that their relationship would dominate the group or intimidate others to speak up. Although this dynamic did pop up occasionally, I was able to draw in the other members and the two students who make up the couple are different enough from each other and self aware enough that it was not a major problem.

B. Description of unanticipated developments

Perhaps my biggest surprise of this project was something that on the surface may not appear to be significant. However, it was important to me and it is something that I cannot fully explain. Like college campuses all over the country, Yale has faced its share of incidents around alcohol consumption. The main themes

around college alcohol consumption tend to be illegal underage drinking, non-consensual sexual activities, excessive drinking which interferes with the students' ability to perform academically and the potential for a drinking addiction or some other type of mental disease such as depression. Few students at this campus struggle with the ability to manage their classes and their drinking and the issue of underage drinking is not a major issue, though the subject of non-consensual sex is a growing concern.

At Yale however, there is another aspect of campus drinking which I had not fully appreciated until I arrived here. There is a myth that is cultivated here which defines what it means to be a gentleman. Now that women have been admitted to Yale since 1969, one might expand this image to mean what it means to be classy or from the upper crust. This myth includes a sense of entitlement, a high regard for intellectualism and a social refinement including the ability to drink well. Drinking well, I have come to understand involves a certain worldliness around wines, a non-preference for beer drinking unless it is a foreign or little known domestic brand and above all, being able to drink hard liquor, preferably neat. This is not frat house drinking or the keggers of a bygone era. Rather, this experience comes as an invitation from a professor to continue the conversation over drinks with a select group after a particular speaker or class. It may be an invitation to a dinner or gathering in a private home, but it usually takes place in the many semi-private lounges and studies on campus or at favorite watering holes around town.

In the past, this senior seminar, was known as an opportunity to practice this essential life skill. In fact, it was an issue for me. I generally do not feel comfortable

drinking socially with students, even if they are of legal age and I do not serve liquor in my office. Given the age of these students and the precedent, I decided that I would be comfortable serving wine, in reasonable quantities, at the seminar but nothing stronger. I was not sure if I should order wine from the kitchen in our facility or bring my own.

For the first session, I brought a bottle of red and a bottle of white from my home and set them up with the other refreshments. I left a corkscrew on the table, but did not drink myself. At that first session, one of the male students opened the wine and two drank, one commented that she was taking antibiotics and could not drink and the others simply helped themselves to the non-alcoholic beverages I had also set up.

The next week, I decided not to put out two bottles and not to bring them from home, but to get one bottle from the dining hall. This time the bottle remained unopened. The following week, I wondered if the dining hall wine was not as good as the wine from home so I put out a bottle from home and the unopened bottle from the kitchen. Neither bottle was touched and no one said anything. Hence forth, I put out the symbolic red and white bottle, but they mostly remained unopened and have become almost a kind of table decoration.

What happened? Why weren't they drinking, especially since in the past, this was part of the ritual of this senior seminar as a rite of passage? As this chapter does not deal with explaining any of the results, only describing them, I will wait until the final chapter to share my interpretations and to connect them to the larger project.

Another unexpected result relates to my lack of clarity regarding how I thought communication would flow within the group setting. At the beginning of the project, I thought that the students would go around the room and check in with what their week had been like, then I would give them a short text with some questions, then we would read the text together and I would ask them to respond to the questions. I thought about the possibility of having students respond to each others' remarks and I also considered the possibility of no-cross talk, with each student simply reacting to the text, but not to each other. I thought that there were pros and cons to either format. In the end, there were no definitive rules, just common manners- no interrupting, no distractions, and practicing generous listening.

I was also unclear in my own mind what exactly my role as a facilitator would be in terms of how I spoke during the group. I did not want to be too directed nor dominate the group. On the other hand, I knew that they wanted some sense of guidance and would consider it a waste of their time if they did not receive information that they valued. Over the course of the project I did find the right blend. It did not work out well to simply ask people to respond to pre-written questions. This was too structured and it had the opposite effect of getting people to open up. One student shared after an early session with pre-written questions that it felt like I had a predetermined outcome I was looking for by using those questions. I explained that I did not have that as a goal, but I could certainly understand why it might feel that way and it would be easy to get away from using questions. So for future sessions, I had questions in my mind in case the conversation got stuck, but

mostly I proposed a theme based on their interests, presented a short text or quote and opened with a question or invitation to reflect on the theme or text. We would go around the room, and I would mirror students' responses or ask follow up questions to elicit deeper conversation.

Rarely, however, would students challenge each other. They would give their own impressions, which could be different from one another, but they did not try to persuade or correct each other. Sometimes they would give examples from their own situations that validated another student's experience, which created a nice sense of camaraderie and validation. At times the flow of communication took the form of educating me, as the only non-Yalie, in the room about certain customs and expectations that the students felt were unique or special to Yale. In these cases, I was the opposite of too dominant.

In these situations, I practiced a kind of intentional retraction of self in order to make room for the creative expansion of other. In Hebrew, the term is *tzim tzum* and is first used to describe how God created the world ex nihilo. This mystical interpretation of the creation story suggests that if there was nothing before God then God was everything and everywhere. If so, how could God create the world, there would be no place to create into? Therefore, God's first act of creation was to contract enough so there would be space for new creation.

Practicing *tzim tzum* was an important part, but not the only way that I made space for the group to form. At times I spoke directly, at times I told stories from my own life of what this transition was like for me, at times I used language that was more spiritual at other times I spoke more like a guidance counselor. As I became

more comfortable, I became more flexible and listened carefully to see what the appropriate response from me might be.

The final area of unexpected outcomes was my own strong counter-transferences that I became aware of through out the length of the project. I feel very close and supportive of these students. I also admire their intelligence and their real love of learning. However, there were times when I felt frustrated, insecure, envious or sad. Their experience of college, the opportunities that they are given and the support of their families boggle my mind. My own experience during college and especially during this transition from the end of adolescence to young adulthood was in many ways the extreme opposite of theirs.

When I talked to these students I could not help but reflect on what my life was like at their age. This comparison often made me feel sorry for myself or envious and I had to grieve the adolescent and young adult I had been and let go of any resentments of these students' lives. However, as time went on and I learned more about their struggles, both from our sessions as well as from such books as *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* (2014) by William Deresiewicz, *The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace: A Brilliant Young Man Who Left Newark for the Ivy League* (2014) by Jeff Hobes and an older book by Calvin Trillin called *Remembering Denny* (2005) I developed a sense of great compassion for their experiences. I also came to a place of greater acceptance and gratitude for the gifts that my life has given me including resilience, self-confidence and authenticity.

Chapter V- Understanding of this particular ministry based on this project

A. The implications of results both anticipated and not anticipated

Congruence between earlier clinical pastoral expectations and actual outcomes

I had hoped that this project would provide a valuable service to a particular set of seniors who had close ties to Slifka Center as they transitioned to the world they would encounter after graduation. I think that the outcomes to date are very encouraging, but the real results of this project need another six months to a year to fully measure, once these seniors have all graduated and are directly confronting their new environments. Nonetheless, the project did address the two primary steps of this transition process through discussion of topics related to: first letting go of old behaviors and beliefs that were appropriate to the college environment and secondly acquiring new ones that will help them succeed in the rest of their adult lives. The project was designed to be a holding environment where these students could integrate their experiences to date into an identity that would be serviceable to them in the future and to give them a safe environment to discuss the many nuances surrounding this two-step process.

One outcome that was congruent with my early expectations was that I could actually create a holding environment for my clients. Even though I hoped this could happen, I was not completely confident that it necessarily would happen. I have identified three key psychodynamics that were a part of making this holding environment successful:

Restraint of self-gratification

In its original meaning as Winicott defines the term, the mother creates the holding environment for her child by being both intentionally present and yet not

overly intrusive at the same time. She encircles a place, preventing the introduction of impingements into this space thereby creating an inner and outer world (Palombo, Bendicsen & Koch, 2010, p. 152). Then she empties her own ego needs from the center of that inner space so her child can use that area to grow in a safe and protected way. Mothers whose emotional needs are so great, such as in the case of a depressed or addictive personality disorder, or whose requirements for attention are so overwhelming such as in the case of a narcissistic or borderline personality disorder, cannot provide this space. Creating this environment is a selfless act that the mother does for the benefit of her child.

Similarly, I as the facilitator had to create a safe space in which I was present, but did not fill the center of that space with my own needs, transferences, judgments and words. Gentle probing, mirroring the students responses, sharing minimally, but intentionally for the benefit of others and listening deeply is how I was able to hold this space. There were times during the sessions when I had to restrain my own impulses to insert myself into the conversation, advance my own agenda or gratify my own need for affirmation. I was best able to do so when I framed these sessions as focusing on listening to the students' concerns and encouraging them to talk through their concerns as opposed to me trying to supply an answer or fix a problem. When I limited myself in this way, the sessions not only benefitted the students, but these sessions also became wonderful learning opportunities for me. I felt honored to be allowed into this very vulnerable space.

Boundaries

Establishing boundaries created this holding environment. We met at a specific time and place, behind closed doors, with the same people and a pre-planned topic. There was a reality inside the group and another outside the group; the group became a container of sorts for their collective anxiety, hope, fear, mourning and anticipation. The normal topics and types of conversations that took place outside of the group were not part of the dynamic inside the sessions. There was an absence of conversations focused on gossiping about one another, discussing class work, debating political or philosophical points and engaging in intellectual showmanship. Outside of our sessions, students did not reference what happened or what was discussed inside the sessions. It did not appear that the members of the group became closer because of their shared experience outside of our group, but inside the group I observed a greater openness and fluidity over time. By containing this fairly vulnerable experience, it did not threaten to take over any other part of their lives, thus it was tolerable for the students to emotionally expose themselves and grow through that process. This experience of creating and respecting boundaries not only provided the necessary space to do the kind of work we did, boundary setting is also a helpful life skill to learn at this stage of their development which can be applied in other arenas.

Trust

Perhaps my biggest concern, given how competitive and guarded students can be here, was whether or not they would actually trust each other enough to open up. I was pleasantly surprised to see that they were able to do so. I observed

in their sharing during the group how they were able to peel back layers over time. I was worried after the first session when the student's introductory narratives were well rehearsed and their willingness to show the depth of their concerns was present, but expressed more in a collective sense, rather than a personal one. Over the length of the project, they became more vulnerable by sharing their personal concerns.

Nurturing

There is a great irony to being a student at Yale and the environment that I have observed here. On the one hand, this school has the most incredible resources, which it generously lavishes upon its students, especially the undergraduates. The residential college system with the masters and deans creates micro communities with parent-like figures to help guide the students through their four years of college. In addition, there are elaborate and interlinking student services which focus on helping students. Fraternities and sororities, various clubs for ethnic groups, interest affiliations, nationalities, LGBT and many religious organizations play this role as well. The opportunity to feel connected and enriched is great, but somehow in the midst of this lavish environment, there is often a scarcity of real care and nurturing.

I am still learning why this is so after only a year and a half on campus. I am gathering information and trying to put the pieces together. Somehow it does relate to the students' busy workload and demands of their extracurricular activities. It also relates to the kind of students who come here who have been so driven for so long that self-care is challenging. Equally challenging for many, is how to be a

friend. The students who make it to Yale do not necessarily have high emotional intelligence even though their IQs and academic performance are very impressive. As one of the members in the group remarked, "You have to remember, we were all the nerds in high school. Even the hot sorority girls and those running student government were really nerds and we all know that. We're the ones who would always prefer reading a book, alone by ourselves somewhere than being with other kids our age."

This project gave these students an opportunity to be nurtured and to focus on feelings. At times, they would come a bit early before the group got started just to relax in the comfort of this enclave they had created. One student told me after a session in which she shared in a particularly vulnerable way, "I just feel so good after I leave here. I don't really know why." When students said things like that it made me feel both good and sad at the same time. Reflecting back on my own college experience, I did have a few adults I could turn to, but for the most part, it was my friends and roommates who I could count on to listen and support me. This was a reciprocal relationship in which one time I might be the one in need of help and the next time I would be the one offering it in an unstructured, informal way. I wonder if because these students are so handled by adults starting from a young age with coaches, tutors, advisors, therapists and counselors that they are only comfortable with a nurturing relationship that is one directional, modeled on an adult helping a child. Peer to peer, mutual nurturing is a skill they will need for their future as they assume the role of being an adult in society. I hope this group setting

will encourage them to find support, nurturing and care with their peers once they graduate.

Incongruence between earlier clinical pastoral expectations and actual outcomes

There were three areas of incongruence between my expectations and the actual outcomes of this project from a clinical pastoral perspective. Two are related to the students and one to my own experience. These three areas are: 1) the overall perception of limited opportunities after graduation, 2) students' lack of vision around the next critical life task for young adults: Intimacy vs. Self Absorption and 3) my own learning about how student lives actually function at Yale and a deepening sense of awareness of my role and impact.

Perception of limitations

I was truly surprised at the perception of limited options that most of the students had at this stage of their lives. The general consensus is that the only "real" job choices were to go into consulting or investment banking or to go to medical or law school, with perhaps some leeway for business school. Few companies that actually manufacture industrial, pharmaceutical or consumer goods recruit at this campus. Even companies in service industries such as communications or transportation rarely look to this campus for their entry-level managers. There might be a few graduates who are exceptionally good artists or others who pursue an altruistic path such as becoming a teacher. But I learned from the students that that there is tremendous pressure not to "waste your Yale degree." The pressure to continue achieving at ever higher levels after graduating from this college places

tremendous expectations on students. Even though most realize that their first job out will not be at the highest level, there is the expectation that they will be positioned to reach the top echelons and therefore must start in the right place.

Some of the students shared with me that Yale graduates' reputation of being interested in serving humankind, in a sort of "noblesse oblige" mentality still exists to some extent, but is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. With the exception of a few do-gooders and those who have political aspirations, most students aim to be financially successful and take jobs that will help them reach that goal as soon as possible.

But in truth, of those in my project who did have a strong idea of what they were doing after graduation, three of the six members who attended the group regularly were in fact going into jobs that were not in one of the perceived narrow options. One has aspirations to become a rabbi and is applying to seminary; one is planning on working in politics to help the common good, and another is planning on working at a government agency responsible for consumer protection in the financial sector. The others are still applying and researching their options.

A closer look at the facts provided by the Office of Career Strategy at Yale, shows a slightly broader range of options than most students perceive is available. Reporting in the *Yale Daily News*, Foggatt notes that in 2014, financial services was the most popular industry for Yale graduates to choose comprising 16.6% of the class with Goldman Sachs being the most popular employer in this category. Education was second with 12.1% and Yale was the largest employer in this category, followed by consulting at 11.5% with companies such as McKinsey &

Company, Bain & Company, and Boston Consulting Group leading this category, then research at 8.6% and computer science at 7.2%. Another 17% took jobs-either full time or part time in more than 20 other career categories. In addition, roughly 14% of last year's graduating class went immediately to law, medical, business or graduate school. The reality of career choices for graduating seniors and the perception of those options is close, but the reality is a bit broader than the perception.

An article by Ezra Klein (2012), in *The Washington Post* echoes the sentiment I heard during our sessions as to why so by many students choose to go into finance or consulting. It is not necessarily a love of finance, nor the high starting salaries or even the metropolitan locations since Teach for America also draws large numbers of graduates from Yale and other Ivy League schools with low salaries and remote locations. Rather, for many students, getting into a good college is seen as an endpoint in itself. As graduation approaches, many students realize that they do not have any real marketable skills. Klein argues:

> What Wall Street figured out is that colleges are producing a large number of very smart, completely confused graduates. Kids who have ample mental horsepower, an incredible work ethic and no idea what to do next. So the finance industry takes advantage of that confusion, attracting students who never intended to work in finance but don't have any better ideas about where to go. (Klein, 2012.)

Starting with a familiar application process, these finance firms have figured out how to lure in cohorts of students and give them basic financial training over a

two year period. Some stay, many leave to find more meaningful work. The students are well aware that this is going on, but those who got into places like Yale and Harvard, are very comfortable and excel at the formal application process as the article describes :

> There are a handful of firms you really care about; they all have formal application processes that they walk you through; there's a season when it all happens; all of them come to you and interview you where you live, etc. Harvard (and Yale) students are really good at formal processes like that, and they're less good at going on Monster or Craigslist and sorting through thousands of job listings from thousand of companies whose reputations they don't know. Wall Street and consulting (and Teach for America) turn applying to jobs into applying to college, more or less. (Klein, 2012.)

The notion of taking a job in finance in this manner has its pros and cons. It does give students marketable skills and real life work experience but it also takes away some of the important self learning that is part of choosing a job as an expression of one's larger aspirations. The Wall Street process, with its creation of a temporary, preparatory stage extends the late adolescent developmental stage and perpetuates a kind of suspended state of dependence on an all encompassing, almost parent like institution rather than encouraging genuine identity formation and individuation. The concern with this process is that it favors the entrenchment of the fear driven false self over the emergence of the vulnerable, yet ultimately more authentic, true self.

Intimacy vs. self-absorption

Erickson (1980) and the psychologists who came later who focused on stages of development in adulthood defined the end of adolescence as a time to consolidate one's identity and strike out on one's own. Following this task, the first task of young adulthood then is described as " establishing a true and mutual psychological intimacy with another person." (p. 101). For the members of this project, I thought they would be more involved with or interested in the first adult task of intimacy than their conversations would suggest. It never came up on the introductory survey as a concern and in the course of the sessions it never came up as a natural part of the conversation. Given their ages and the transition they were all facing, I thought it would have been right at the top of their list of concerns.

I can imagine three reasons why this unexpected result might have occurred. 1) Perhaps they were thinking about it, but felt uncomfortable discussing such matters with me as an older person or in mixed company. 2) Perhaps with the heavy focus on education and career, these students are not oriented to think about the importance of intimacy, especially while they are in college. I know for example, that with a slightly older group of young adults with whom I have frequent contact, this is a topic that receives much more attention. But undergraduates rarely seem to take dating seriously, nor are there very many committed couples. 3) Another possible reason this topic might not have come up is that within the group there is a couple in a committed relationship for the last year. They are making plans to be together past their graduation date and perhaps the incongruity of this couple as

compared to the rest of the group may be awkward for the other students who are not in relationships.

My concern with the lack of discussion around intimacy is that according to Erickson (1980) a youth who is not sure of his own identity avoids interpersonal intimacy. Erickson spoke not only of romantic intimacy but referred to all kinds of human intimacy. The danger of not mastering intimacy at this stage is that one can fall prey to self-absorption and an unhealthy "love and work" balance. (p. 102). I hope to gently address this topic during the second semester. I would not force anything, but with an appropriate opening, the students might be very relieved to have this conversation.

My own growth and learning

Over the course of the project I believe that I went through my own transformation of understanding what impact I expected to have on the students and where I ended up. In my earlier vision, when I was designing this project, I had hoped to be a coach, counselor, maybe even role model for the students. Somewhere along the line, this changed. It could have been as a result of working through my own counter transferences. It might have been as an outcome of hearing more of what the expectations of their lives from their families and school were like. Maybe it was because as my time on this campus has increased I have experienced some truly brilliant students that have created a halo effect of deeper respect and admiration for all the students, even those who are not brilliant, but are just excellent achievers.

Nonetheless, at a certain point, I realized that I could not intentionally impact or shape their lives, their choices, or their futures. There came a time during this project when I realized how very different the times are now. Anything I experienced more than three decades ago as a college student is beyond irrelevant to these young people. I realized that I do not have a clue what it must feel like to carry the burden and the privilege of an Ivy League education. I find myself sufficiently challenged just trying to maneuver my way around campus and live into my own peripheral role here. I came to understand that the unique gift I could offer was what Dittes (1999) calls being a witness to another's life. In regard to this kind of pastoral counseling he writes:

> If you are the counselor, you experience your own kind of moratorium, even a transcendence, from involvement and mutuality. You are not looking for ways to bond, to play a role in this other person's life, or to fit the other into your life. Despite the intensity of the encounter, pastoral counseling is the opposite of an intimate mutuality. You do not care whether you like or are liked by the counselee. You do not need to carve out of this other's life a niche for yourself. You do not need to be manager, coach, healer, therapist, friend, or even pastor. You are immune from the need to make visible impact. Such conventional and habitual concerns are rendered irrelevant. You are called out of being a player in the other's life into becoming witness to it. (p. 13).

This transformation has been very insightful for viewing not only my project, but also my role altogether on this campus. Though I often want to "fix things" there

is also a skill in bearing witness that comes with a gracious detachment that can be very helpful. I might even be more effective as a leader in assuming this posture and ultimately more effective in implementing any type of improvements.

B. Outcomes of the project in relationship to the needs and aims of the project

I believe that the needs and aims of the project were met, but only at an introductory level. I am glad that the group will continue meeting next semester. The range of subjects that are part of this transition process as well as the time needed for the group to develop sufficient trust and connectivity were factors in gauging the outcomes to the needs that this project sought to address.

The first aim of the project was to reduce the students anxiety and fears as they are going through the transition of graduating from college and entering the work world. The project was successful in this regard in as much as a safe holding environment was created in which they could discuss their concerns. None of the students presented with a pathological level of fear or anxiety. Rather, given the stage of life they were in, the group was able to meet their needs to discuss a normal range of concerns. Of course, even after the project, they do continue to have concerns regarding this transition. I believe this is normal. They will know this feeling again since all of life is a series of transitions. But they now have a solid experience of what can help them and hopefully more insight into how they are making decisions and processing their environments and choices.

One student, in discussing this transition, said, "When I think about it, it's sort of like when we all first got here as freshmen. I remember how scared and confused I was then. I think what really helped me then and helps me now, is to

surround myself with people who believe in me." When students can see successful transitions that they have managed in their pasts and apply the same pattern to their present and future they have gained access to a valuable resource in resilience.

The second objective of becoming more self-reflective as they navigate this transition from advanced adolescence into young adulthood was more successful in some students than others. Some students were able to look inward and articulate their feelings over the course of the project, others remained more detached. At times, they tended to intellectualize their experiences or focus on the influence of their parents, the school or other students. Self-reflection was as much a matter of the students' individual maturity and ability to be articulate in the group as it was a function of this project.

The third objective of grounding this experience in an environment that was both familiar and Jewish worked well. Since these students came with a high level of comfort in this environment already, this project was a good fit for them in this setting. I did not make the sessions overtly Jewish, but I did incorporate some Jewish teachings and texts which seemed natural and went well. I hope that when these students reflect back on their Jewish experiences growing up, this senior seminar too will be part of their Jewish memories.

The final objective was the one that I think this project was least able to address, but which I hope will be better met in the second semester as the group continues to deepen its conversations and as the date of graduation draws nearer. The goal of visioning and anticipating life after graduation was hard for this group at this stage. A couple of the students had very clear ideas about what they wanted to

pursue and one had already accepted an offer. The rest were in the process of researching options and applying to jobs or school after graduation. Some were anticipating interviews in the early part of the spring. It was amazing to me how well organized and proactive they were.

It is interesting to note that most of the Ivy League and other elite schools have done a good job at becoming racially diverse, but not as good a job as welcoming students from all levels of economic backgrounds. In fact, youngsters from the lowest socio/economic class might find themselves more supported in reaching the heights of this elite educational opportunity than students from the middle class.

However, more concerning to me was how narrowly the students perceived their options to be upon graduation. I was told that their only real choices were, "consulting, investment banking, medical, law or business school, maybe graduate school if you really liked the subject." It was hard for them to envision other possibilities even as they complained about the narrowness of their choices. They also realized that whatever job they took was simply a way to spend 2-3 years before they went back to get their masters or doctorate degree in order to get "their real job." This period of "fake working" felt frustrating, but necessary as part of how the whole thing is done. Graduation was more of a false start than the launch into their adult lives. Even STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) students felt their choices were limited. One student who is a math and philosophy major told me that he would probably end up working for a particular investment bank because he was "not smart enough to be a real academic in his field." He also

shared that this would probably be a good choice because unlike his peers, who he believes are much smarter than him, he can talk to people. His attitude was one of resignation- let the really smart ones go into academia and research; I'll go talk to the people and make money.

Connecting a unique sense of purpose to their post college jobs and lives was something that the majority of students were struggling to do. My sense is that they had spent most of their lives trying to package themselves in order to attain the next level of achievement, but underneath that false self, they may not really be sure who they really are or what they really care about. This lack of clarity is not uncommon at this age, but I do think that it is made worse by the level of pressure to fit the criteria required to be admitted to an Ivy League school.

C. Outcomes of the project in clarifying and expanding the religious and clinical principles of the project

Religious principles

In Chapter 2, I introduced three religious principles drawn from the Jewish tradition and three stories from the Torah that related to the aspirations for this project. Here I will briefly comment on how applicable these religious concepts were and what I learned through this project about these principles.

Age of majority

In observing the group, I noticed a range of behaviors and assumptions about how each of the students viewed their own level of accountability. Most were clearly ready to take on the responsibilities that come with being an adult. Although they lacked clarity of what it really meant or how exactly they were going to :

manage a home, take on civic responsibility, find a congenial social group, select a mate and get started on an occupation, for the most part, they believed they were ready to try. One of the students however, was still more focused on her family of origin and the role that her parents were playing in her life.

The role of society, especially a religious community, in establishing age appropriate responsibilities and expectations is something that has dwindled in modern times. The insistence on individual autonomy in defining what a person will do and at what age makes it harder for students to move into adulthood with clear, universal expectations.

"Starting college" and "graduating from college" used to be distinct markers in a young persons' life signifying an increase in independence and responsibility. However, technology and parental ability to stay overly connected to their offspring, even after the age of legal majority, or any other arbitrary age marker makes it harder for young people to define and implement what becoming of age means. During the course of this project, we spoke often about what are the actual things an adult does and what are they planning on doing to take on these responsibilities. This is a growth curve that I am confident with time they will all master, but it was interesting to note the variability at this stage within the group.

Parental obligations

Ancient Judaism made it very clear what a parent was obligated to do for their child. Modern times have not offered such a clear-cut list. It has been a real eye opener for me to hear from students in this regard, especially as I am the parent of a college student too. There is a tension between parental obligation and the need for

late adolescents to become self differentiated from their parents. Some of the narratives that the students shared spoke of the "hover parent" syndrome, which describes overly enmeshed parents who are often instrumental in pushing their children to reach this caliber of college. However, their usefulness begins to diminish if they are not able to let go.

In addition, I observed two other phenomena that create unique burdens. One is being a legacy student whose parents or even grandparents were Yale graduates. These students are especially keen to the many traditions and expectations of being from Yale. They must choose to conform to these expectations or rebel against them. In addition, being a legacy can also heighten a sense of self doubt: Could I have gotten in on my own, or is the only reason I'm here because of my lineage? Other students often are aware of whose family members also attended Yale and it weighs into the social mix.

A different type of burden is carried by the student whose parents did not go to an Ivy League school, or maybe not to any college. These students too have tremendous expectations placed on them from parents and family to take advantage of the myriad of opportunities and to not waste any of this precious opportunity that has been graciously bestowed upon them.

Although I do meet with prospective parents and talk with admitted students' parents and even with parents once their children are students here, my focus on improving this dynamic is by empowering the students, not trying to change the parents. Affirming students' choices, listening to them, mirroring their

answers, gently probing how they know what they know or made their decisions is the best way for me to strengthen these budding identities.

Role of the collective

Seniors at Yale face an interesting dynamic as they begin to disconnect from their positions on campus. Typically, seniors do not hold officer positions in the clubs. In fact, some drop the very activities that have defined them over the previous three years to make time for the all important job search and to experience a kind of freedom before they take on the responsibilities of the working world. This shedding of responsibilities, can have an isolating and a destabilizing effect on them exactly at a time when they most need peer support. In a small way, this project became a new identity group for seniors to connect with around similar interests.

I also learned that the secret societies that tap students during their junior year to become active members in their senior year are not bastions of Jewish life. I was surprised to hear that. I know that at one time Yale had a quota system for Jewish students, but I assumed that when the quota system went out the secret societies would be equally integrated. But at least anecdotally that is not the case. These secret societies exert a tremendous influence on campus and beyond. As Dan Oren (2000), author of *Joining the Club: the history of Jews at Yale* succinctly wrote: "Social success at Yale helped to assure one's success in the outside world." (p. 27). Admittance into one of the secret societies is viewed as the apex of success in the social world at Yale.

Ironically, much of what happens within the secret societies is not that different from what was happening in this project, in terms of giving seniors the

opportunity to discuss their personal pasts and their future aspirations. However, the selectivity and secrecy, as well as the intentional cultivation of a collective identity and its lingering impact in the outside world, do greatly distinguish the function of the secret society from this project. Nonetheless, the need to be part of a collective as a place to process transition in the senior year, is something that is true for both.

Of the three Torah stories, I used religious principles from all of them, but only used the actual Adam and Eve text as part of the class material. In that case, we explored the concept of graduation as exile or banishment from the idyllic Yale campus. For most students, this was a rich opportunity to recognize and articulate their feelings of loss. We discussed the way that Yalies stay connected even after they graduate through reunion weekends, local gatherings of Yalies all over the world, the alumni magazine, and the alumnae organization which works very hard to maintain close ties for development purposes.

Over the course of that session, I tried to reframe the conversation to one of acceptance and anticipation of creating new homes, new friends and new "paradises." Envisioning these new possibilities is somewhat hard for this group. They are most articulate when they can describe the new picture with a heavy dose of Yale still as a reference point. This is especially true when it comes to where Yalies tend to live after graduation. According to the statistics for the class of 2014 roughly three-fourths of the class of 2014 now lives in New York, Connecticut, California, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. (Foggatt, 2014). This heavy concentration of alumni in specific cities creates a ready pool of people with

which to socialize and network. This is a comforting thought for most of the seniors in my project.

The paradigm of Moses and Jonah as two kinds of fear of failure models did not exactly resonate in my group. None of them were afraid of failing once they found the job they wanted. In fact, for these individuals, who are used to being successful, the most common concern regarding first jobs was that they were afraid they would be too bored or underutilized. This concern was based for the most part on previous internship experiences. One student shared, "I know my boss was trying hard, but I was always able to finish the work he assigned me by early morning. I soon realized he had nothing else for me to do all day, so I just read the files and tried to reorganize information in useful ways."

The model of a Jonah who runs away from responsibility was not present in this group. Although, I have spoken to seniors last year who fell into this category, and I can already think of one who fits the bill for this year, the students who took part in this project are eager to find work that engages their immense talents. One of the Yale myths that has proven true for me in the experience of this project is how much these students are hungry for intellectual engagement and how driven they are to be usefully engaged. These impulses are real and do not seem to be driven merely by the desire to pad one's resume. One student remarked with visible delight that upon graduation he is looking forward to being able to read once again at a deeper level now that he does not need to skim large volumes of material and cram for class.

The story of Isaac and Jacob offers a great paradigm for exploring character and identity. We had only begun to discuss character before the semester drew to a

close. I hope to continue this discussion in greater depth next semester. The conversation so far has focused on which jobs, industries or employers are inherently "bad to work for" and which are essentially good. This was one instance where I did speak a bit more than usual. I told them that based on my experience I know that there are Bernie Madoffs in the world but there are also rabbis and priests who commit horrible crimes. I strongly feel that we bring our own moral compass to whatever situation we find ourselves in and we cannot rely on the selection of an employer to define our character. I shared personally about some of the most compassionate and selfless people I found when I worked in a corporate setting and some individuals with opposite types of behavior I have experienced working as a rabbi.

Clinical principles

The clinical principles that I had selected at the start of this project proved to be a helpful lens for me to understand the psychosocial dynamics of the group and also a source of guidance as I considered various topics and questions. I wrote extensively about the holding environment at the beginning of this chapter however four additional clinical principles that were part of this project and are in concert with object relations theory or the developmental task approach of Erickson that I described in Chapter 2 were expressing grief, the process of de-idealization, developing a true vs. false self and the "good enough" mother.

Expression of grief

There is a necessary grieving process of letting go of old behaviors and established relationships that I had underestimated. Perhaps because I did not feel

this way when leaving my college or maybe because I just assumed that seniors would be so overcome with a sense of optimism that it would dampen down any need to grieve, I was surprised at the student's sense of loss.

This grief is mostly repressed since there are not many acceptable outlets for it, but it found honest expression in the words of one student who said, "I just could not bear to go to Bulldog Days last year and see all those incoming freshmen that were going to take our place." Bulldog Days is the name of the three-day program that is held every spring for students who have been admitted to Yale. During this time there are a variety of programs meant to entice those students who have not yet decided whether or not they would like to attend Yale and to welcome those who have made the decision to become part of next fall's incoming freshmen class. The senior who made this remark was sharing a personal sense of loss and a feeling of being easily replaced.

Throughout our conversations, I made space for wistful recollections, expressions of loss and fear of the unknown and validation that these were important years that they will cherish forever. One student expressed his disgust that he felt the college was already trying to capitalize on these feelings of nostalgia and loss even before his class had graduated. He is already receiving solicitations from the college and he has not even started working yet. But for the most part, the dialogue during the project has been a gentle way to start letting go.

The process of de-idealization

When children are young, they typically idealize their parents. But inevitably parents fail them and gradually as a result of this disappointment, children start to

understand that their parents are not perfect and cannot perfectly meet their needs all the time. Part of the individuation process, which is necessary to make the transition from college to the world beyond, repeats this early drama in the life of the young adult (Tyson & Tyson, 1990, p 114). As the time of graduation approaches, the separation is more focused on the idealized campus rather than the perfect parent. There is a necessary critique of college and a narration of its imperfections in order to move beyond this ideal, college setting. However, this critique cannot be forced. Rather, I observed that there was a gradual loosening of the cords over the course of the project. For example, in discussing career options, one senior said, "Everyone tells you to go talk to your professor, so I did. Then I realized, I don't want to be a professor, I have no interest in being an academic, why am I talking to him, what does he know of the real world?"

In the hierarchy of university life, professors hold the highest rung. This seemingly trite comment represents a bold departure in thinking for this student and the other members who were listening. Overall, students were not critical of the education or the classroom experience. In general, they love their learning experience at Yale and are very loyal to the institution as a whole. Rather, in starting to de-idealize their perception of a perfect Yale, they focused on some of Yale's customs and ambiance as this anecdote illustrates. "I remember the first time I walked into the Beinecke Library, I was so blown away," reported a student who then continued to describe the dark wood paneling, the hushed tones and dim lit stacks of books. "But now I don't see it in the same way. I'm over so much of that now." The aura of wealth, privilege and class that is so physically manifest at Yale

are easy targets to assert their individuation against, even while the students are honored to be part of this very exclusive slice of society.

Not only is the de-idealization of Yale healthy at some level for the transition that occurs at graduation, there is another important effect for the student. "If Yale is not perfect, then maybe", students reason, "I do not have to be perfect either." For so many years, these students have worked to be as close to perfect as possible all the while making their efforts appear effortless. The demanding GPA, test scores and extra-curricular activities required for admission into the Ivy League makes striving for perfection seem like normal behavior. However, as I have explained to the group, once you are out of college, no one is keeping score in that way any more.

I think the possibility of not being perfect is something that students might intellectually understand, but it will probably take awhile to adjust to it. A student shared during one of our sessions that his older friends had described their post Yale experience as akin to suffering from PTSD. For them, it was that dramatic and disorienting. "It takes awhile to adjust to what the rest of the world is thinking about and doing and not everyone is able to make that adjustment," he was told. It was eye opening for me to hear this, but I believe him. The little talked about truth is that there are suicides and mental breakdowns on campus and more afterwards as students driven to "perfection" struggle to make the adjustment to a less than perfect world.

Developing the true vs. false self

The creation of the True Self happens as a result of an infant growing up with a safe holding environment. "When adequate holding takes place through

development, the child acquires an authentic sense of being alive and feeling real to which Winnicot referred as the True Self." (Palombo, Bendicsen & Koch, 2010, p. 152). The main task of the mother in creating this safe space is to reduce or prevent harmful, outside forces from entering this space and causing the child anxiety, which at this point in the child's development is experienced as annihilation. When the mother is not successful in doing this, the child develops an inauthentic and defensive false self, which functions to protect and hide the true self. Anxiety can bring up fears of annihilation at any stage of a persons life that harken back to this very vulnerable period. The more grounded a person is in their authentic self, the stronger they are to resist the frightening effects of anxiety.

Moving from college to the work world and establishing one's credentials all over again in a new job, city or social network, is inherently anxiety producing and the tendency is for people to want to impress others in order to be accepted by them. This transition is a time when the false self often leads. This impulse, although designed to protect the true self from rejection, often backfires over the long term. "Over time, with each 'successful' deception, the person feels more as an imposter and more disconnected from his or her authentic True Self." (Palombo, Bendicsen & Koch, p. 152).

This statement rings true with my experience of students and even some faculty on this campus. There seems to be a real fear that people will find out that they are not as smart as they seem. Students have repeatedly shared with me the feeling that they do not really belong here. They all know people as smart or smarter than they are who did not get into Yale. I wonder if this fear of being

discovered or this sense of not being worthy of being here comes from being so cut off from their true self after years of being successful in deceiving people with their false self. I do not know if there is a way for students to break the ingrained habit of striving for some external definition of success rather than leading with what authentically matters to them. I think it would take extraordinary ego strength to do so. I hope our time together over the course of this project nurtured and strengthened them so they can lead more from their true selves and feel less of a need to live in their false selves.

The true self has a hard time on campus. Not only do students control their own impulses toward authenticity, but other students can sometimes be made uncomfortable by someone who revels too much of their true self. For example, one student shared that, "Sometimes my friends tell me to shut up because I'm embarrassing myself." This student reported that her friends tell her this anytime she acts too enthusiastic or emotionally transparent. A studied aloofness signaling a worldly intellect is the preferred demeanor of the false self as presented on campus with limited opportunities for expressing excitement, awe, or eagerness. In our group sessions I try to encourage the development of their true selves regardless of what the larger campus holds as sacred.

The role of the "good enough" mother

Winnicott refers to the "good enough" mother as one who does not mother perfectly, but who provides the essential functions that give her child the environment and attention to develop in a healthy way. In this project, I came to feel like the "good enough" mother helping the students develop the inner strength

to make a smooth transition. The primary way that I did this was by providing a holding environment.

The issue around drinking that I wrote about in chapter 4, I now understand from this perspective. The reason that I think the students did not drink in my group is because I demonstrated a different possibility of how to be an adult. I have gathered that in the past, drinking was modeled as a way to demonstrate privilege, class and how to be a gentleman and a scholar. Perhaps, it was also a social lubricant that enabled people to speak openly. In addition, there might have been a sense of mutual bonding that drinking together can facilitate. For me, drinking in this setting felt like an unnecessary intrusion into the holding environment. I was glad that participants felt trusting and uninhibited enough without alcohol to be open. Furthermore, I think that as the group facilitator, drinking together during this project for the purpose of mutual bonding is antithetical to the emotional restraint that Dittes (1999) describes as essential for bearing witness to another's' life as a chaplain.

D. The outcomes and aims of the project as a contribution to ministry

One of the groups that I am involved with at Yale is called YRM, which stands for Yale Religious Ministries and is made up of about forty different religious organizations on campus. This group functions under the auspices of the University Chaplain. The Chaplain's office, along with the many campus ministries, works to meet the various pastoral needs of students. The YRM meetings are an opportunity for me to learn how other campus ministries are seeking to address the needs of their specific flocks. I believe this project could be effectively implemented through

other campus ministries for their denominations if their ministry focuses on undergraduate students. Not all campus ministries do. It would be especially helpful if the minister has a close group of students already established. This project or a similar one could also be coordinated through the University Chaplain's office, but I know that they already run many different kinds of groups and this one might be redundant.

Another way that this project could contribute to ministry would be to use it as a prototype for other Hillels or Jewish centers on campus. The Hillel directors meet via email and in person several times a year and we look at what is happening on each others' campuses as a way to learn best practices. I imagine that some Hillel directors might even have a similar seminar already. We might share what topics and what format would be most successful based on the experiences of different campuses.

A final thought I had about how this project might contribute to other ministries is to consider other critical transitions that students face during their college experience. There is not a formal program, for example, to do this kind of ministry for incoming freshmen at Slifka Center although there is a great deal of orientations given at the residential college level. At Slifka Center, there is a lot of peer-to-peer programing to welcome new freshmen and some outreach to their parents, but very little direct pastoral counseling in a group setting. Perhaps this is because they are not really connected to Slifka Center or any other group yet. Nonetheless, there may be possible application of a Slifka cohort by year support

group that could be helpful for some students. I would have to explore the students' needs better to understand if this type of group would be a good idea.

I think the main way that this type of ministry for young adults in transition can be helpful is by bringing faith and hope into the very human process of change. As a rabbi, I am uniquely qualified to do this in ways that a professor, master, dean, or therapist is not able to do. I think this fall semester was unusually turbulent, leading off with the tensions around Operation Protective Edge in Israel, the clashes around Ferguson and a series of other events small and large, local and international that have all led to a higher level of anxiety on campus. It is not enough to be a non-anxious presence. These are times when I feel that we are called to lift up hope and to role model what it means to live a life of optimism even in the face of despair and conflict. Young people transitioning to the world after college need to hear a message that contains purpose, honesty and a way forward. Otherwise, they can become negative and despairing about the future.

C. Implications for future ministry

Based on my experience with this project, I would definitely like to run this kind of senior seminar in the future for other graduating classes. I might change the name of the program and perhaps tweak some of the topics based on the students' feedback. This first year has been challenging because of the dual nature of my job. As the executive director I need to run an organization from the standpoint of managing a large staff, handling budgets, fund raising, overseeing a kosher dining hall and producing a myriad of religious, educational, social and Israel related programming. The stakeholders I am responsible to include not only the students,

but also the board of trustees, parents, donors, campus administration, faculty, Hillel International and the larger New Haven Jewish community.

As I continue to make progress in straightening out some of the past issues, I am able to focus more of my energy on the second piece of my job, which is senior Jewish chaplain at Yale. In this regard, I am making more time for pastoral counseling appointments, leading two support groups this semester and working with other groups on campus to address the spiritual needs of our students. I love this second part of my job and I am looking forward to being able to spend more time in this area. I think I have learned a lot from this project. I will know even more by the end of the year. All that I learn will help me become a better facilitator with the next group of seniors and all other students who I work with as part of my ministry on campus. I am grateful for this project as a platform for more deeply understanding and supporting a specific group of students and as a way for me to learn more about my new environment and myself.

Appendix A

Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves, but deal in our privacy with the last honesty and truth.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

1. What does the phrase “last honesty and truth” mean to you?

2. What is your truth as you consider graduation and what lies beyond?

3. What games are “played with you” at this stage of your life? Who is playing them? How?

4. What do you do to deal honestly with yourself?

5. Maimonides summarizes this concept beautifully in Hilkot Deot 2:6 “It is forbidden to say one thing with your mouth and to have another thing in your heart.” Do you agree?

Appendix B

Survey for Life's Big Questions Senior Seminar

Dear Seniors,

As we begin this journey of exploration I want to be sure that the topics we discuss are interesting to you. The goal is to examine areas that are particularly relevant to this time of your life-namely graduating from college and moving into the world beyond campus. Could you please take a moment to respond to this brief questionnaire and I'll be sure to incorporate your ideas.

Best,
Rabbi Cohen

1. What topics are most relevant for you right now?

2. What are you hoping to get out of this experience?

3. What would make this experience a waste of your time?

4. What are your post-graduation plans (to the extent that you know) or your post graduation aspirations?

Appendix C

To Be of Use
By Marge Piercy

The people I love the best
jump into work headfirst
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who stand in the line and haul in their places,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

Bibliography

Blos, P. (1979). *The adolescent passage*. New York: Int. Univ. Press.

Birnbaum, D. (1989). *Good and evil: a unified theodicy/theology/philosophy*. Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House.

Deresiewicz, W. (2014). *Excellent sheep: the miseducation of the American elite and the way to a meaningful life*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Dittes, J.E. (1999). *Pastoral counseling*. Louisville, London, Leiden: Westminster John Know Press.

Erikson, E. H. (1980). *Identity and the life cycle.* New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company.

Foggatt, T. (2014). 2014 Career paths revealed. *Yale Daily News*.

technology.yaledailynews.com/features/2014-careers/.

Golan, N. (1981). *Passing through transitions: a guide for practitioners*. New York: The Free Press.

Griffith, J. L., Griffith, M. E. (2002). *Encountering the sacred in psychotherapy.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Hall, C. S. (1999). *A primer of Freudian psychology.* New York, NY: Meridian.

Havighurst, R.J. *Human development and education*. London: Longmans, Green.

Hobbs, J. (2014). *The short and tragic life of Robert Peace: a brilliant young man who left Newark for the Ivy League*. New York City, NY: Scribner.

Kaplan, L.G. (1984) *Adolescence*, Chapter 8m New York: Simon & Shuster.

Klein, E. (2012). Wall Street steps in when Ivy League fails. *The Washington Post.* Feb. 16, 2012. *www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/wall-street-steps-in-when-ivy-league-fails/2012/02/16glQAX2welR_print.html.*

Levinson, D.J. (1976). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: A.A. Knopf.

Linzer, N., Schnall, D.J., Chames, J.A. (1998). *A Portrait of the American Jewish Community.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Mahler, M., Pine, F., Bergman, A. (2000). *The psychological birth of the human infant.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

McGoldrick, M., Carter, B., Garcia-Preto, N. (2011). *The expanded family life cycle.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc., publishing as Allyn & Bacon.

Neugarten, B. (1964). *Personality in Middle and Late Life*. New York: Atherton Press.

Oren, D.A. (2000). *Joining the club: a history of Jews and Yale*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Palombo, J., Bendicsen,H.K., Koch, B.J. (2010). *Guide to Psychoanalytic Developmental Theories.* Heidelberg, London, New York: Springer Dordrecht.

Piercy, M. (1982). "To be of use" from *Circles on the water: selected poems of Marge Piercy*. New York, NY : Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Pine, F. (1990). *Drive, ego, object, and self.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Rayner, E. (1971). *Human development: an introduction to the psychodynamics of growth, maturity and ageing.* Great Britain: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Ream, G.L. & Savin-Williams, R.C. (2004). Religion and the educational experiences of Adolescents. In T. Urdean and F. Pajares (Eds.). *General issues in the education of adolescents*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Riley, M. & Waring, J. (1976). Age and aging. In R. Merton and R. Nisbet, (Eds.). *Contemporary Social Problems*, 4th eds. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Roberts, S.B. (2013). *Professional, Spiritual & Pastoral Care: a practical clergy and chaplain's handbook.* Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing.

Schwartz, R.C. (2001). *Internal family systems model.* Oak Park, Ill: Trailheads Publications.

Shaw Austad, C. (2009). *Counseling and psychotherapy today: theory, practice, and research.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Trillin, C. (2005). *Remembering Denny*. Farrar, New York: Straus and Giroux.

Tyson, P. & Tyson, R. L. (1990). *Psychoanalytic theories of development: an integration.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Wicks, R.J., Parsons, R.D., Capps, D. (1993). *Clinical handbook of pastoral counseling: vol.1.* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.