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**Towards an Understanding of the Alienated Jewish Adolescent**

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## Preface

My interest in youth alienation developed during the summer of 1968. I worked as a Rabbinic - intern with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Chicago. My assignment was to be a liaison between the Jewish youth flooding to Chicago to participate in an anti-war demonstration held concurrently with the Democratic National Convention, and the city's Jewish community.

During the months spent on the streets of the North Side, I became involved with an ecumenical group of divinity students who were reaching out to runaways. These were youths who had left home and who were now living on the streets. I joined this group as a Jewish presence.

I came to know many of these kids and shared their problems. In a few cases, I was able to lead them to aid; in others, I was unsuccessful. This study and the project undertaken in conjunction with it are a result of these experiences. I have read extensively through recent Sociological sources; as well as, representative works dealing with adolescent psychology. I then considered modern conceptualizations of alienation and delinquency. Through doing this, I wanted to learn more about youth alienation in American society, experiment with methods for coping with it, and report these observations to others who may be deeply interested.

Mayer Perelmutter  
March 25, 1971

## Chapter I

### BASIC YOUTH TASKS & PROBLEMS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to consider the dynamics of adolescent alienation in American Society, and to explore methods available to the Rabbi in aiding the youth return to himself. Before I consider these topics I will dwell on basic youth needs in order to provide a firm basis for understanding the reasons behind deviance and alienation. In order to understand what has gone wrong, the basic requirements of maturation will be dealt with.

The maturation process is the delicate link in the chain of the life cycle which if damaged in any way may threaten the continuity of the culture, whether for good or for ill. In every culture, there are invariant life tasks that the carrier of that culture must fulfill in order to successfully mature into adulthood.

I want to examine this link in the chain of the life cycle, and show the basic tasks which are confronting youth, for they have critical transitions to make. Rapid adjustments must be made on the social, psychological, and biological levels. As these adjustments are taking place, youth must confront and adapt to changes that his elders experience, for to them still belongs the authority and control.

Just how adequately these tasks are accomplished determines the future role the individual will play in the society, and the happiness and fulfillment that he will forge for himself and loved ones in the future.

Adolescence is both a time of change and time of adjustment to that change. That it is a time of change has been noted by Kenneth Kenniston who defines adolescence as 'a period of physical change, as well as a time of intellectual and psychological change.'<sup>1</sup> That it is a time of adjustment to change has been defined<sup>2</sup> by Erik Erikson who states 'that adolescence is a psycho-social moratorium'. That is a period of life in which the society gives to the individual a chance to play at adult roles, and to see whether he can cope with them meaningfully before making crucial life choices.

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Great changes occur in adolescence. A youth must begin to reassess himself in relation to the new potential that his body has to offer, to a new relation that moves towards autonomy, requires within his family, and to a social world that is starting to be perceived objectively through his own very critical eyes.

His body is changing. The genital organs have developed, and he can now use them. He must recognize that this change has taken place and learn how to deal with it. He can confront the opposite sex as a full biologically sexual individual. At the same time he realizes that this is not enough, there must be exchanges of feeling and ideas, on a very intimate level. He is at an extreme disadvantage, for he is not conscious that all of this is taking place; he must be made aware.

In addition to the changes happening within his body, he faces the intricate problem of establishing and maintaining peer-group relationships. This involves issues of conformity, group appeal, and the ability to socialize. His age group exerts a very strong influence on the way he behaves. Although he claims to be independent, he finds that he is bound to the expectations and demands of the group. He must dress, act, and think in a certain direction in order to gain acceptance and status. If he is not able to measure up to these standards, he faces rejection. This rejection for lack of conformity can arouse feelings of contempt for those around him, but more serious are feelings of self contempt and lack of self-worth which may stem from this rejection.

The adolescent, also, becomes intensely aware of his new ideas and perceptions. He is especially sensitive to his feelings regarding these new thoughts. He becomes very religious in the sense that he begins to wonder about the universe and the place that he holds within it. The understanding of God and the meaning of life are issues that he wants to probe and examine. These problems hold a fascination, yet the wonder that they arouse is also the source of the isolation and loneliness which comes to the fore, during this time of life. The drama of

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Self discovery can bring intense feelings of loneliness, solitude, and isolation, the youth realizes that he can not remain dependant forever, but must begin to carve out a portion of life for himself.

Whether it be peer group relations, discovery of ideas, revelation of new feeling in relation to the self or others, new adaptation to the family or awareness of a blossoming biological self, the underlying task at hand for the adolescent is to emerge from this age with a sense of identity.

If youth achieves a successful identity then he knows who he is, takes pride in what he does, and naturally relates to others who mean a great deal to him. Erik Erickson whose work with youth draws very heavily on the importance of achieving this sense of identity provides the following explanation of the concept which adds clarity. He says 'that the term identity implies mutual relation. It connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself, and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others.'<sup>3</sup> The important point is that the youth who seeks a successful identity must maintain himself as a coherent personality in his own activity, as well as his activities for others.

Self-knowledge, self-understanding, and self-acceptance that he is a valuable and creative personality are essential elements for a successful identity. The 'self' must be confirmed and accepted. It is the task of youth to search out, explore, and test his 'self' in order to be able to say, 'I have found my natural place in the scheme of life, and take great pride in the fact that I am what I am'

The maintenance of faith in the inner self is of the utmost importance to a youth striving to accomplish the identity task. Erickson describes this faith to the innerself within his concept of fidelity. He incitefully states, that 'fidelity is the strength of disciplined devotion which has been gained through



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through the involvement of the youth in such experiences as reveal the essence of the era about to be joined.<sup>4</sup> Fidelity is a sense of credibility, that what is happening to the youth is believable and real. It is essential if the youth is to gain any type of adaptation or identity. Having fidelity to the self is the youth's path to identity.

The identity task is complex. In order to complete it, youth must cope with not only his innerself but also with his society. As Erickson says, 'there is both a socio and a psyche side to the task of the process of identity formation and ultimate maturation'.<sup>5</sup>

The societal milieu a youth experiences is very important. The nature of his search for identity depends on the historical period in which he lives. To be more specific, if the events that happen in this era are threatening then the inner disturbances which they arouse may hamper a successful maturation process.

Forms of historical apprehension that youth trying to perform the task of identity may meet are fear, anxiety, and dread. These three apprehensions can weigh heavily on a youth whose social situation is unstable. For example, fear which inhibits a freely flowing course of action can be aroused by society that is perpetually hanging in the balance. A society whose weaponry is capable of exercising massive destruction upon a populace. If searching for identity in this type of society, a youth must rid himself of the dread and anxiety that the possibility of mass and sudden destruction can present to him.

On the other hand, in a society not threatened directly by some potential mass destruction, youth may be free of that underlying fear of ultimate devastation. His identity search may run more smoothly because the future of the society is visibly stable and secure. Long range goals and purposes can be firmly apprehended by him..

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In addition to this social (societal) aspect which is crucial in the dynamic of achieving identity, the youth must also deal with process of going on within the inner self. There is a psyche (psychological) side to the task of identity formation.

Viewed from the psychological angle, a youth going through the maturation process is experiencing changes and undergoing relationships that work on his psyche in both a conscious and subconscious level. Knowledge of what is happening on the sub-conscious level could radically change his course of action and relationship.

The effect of unconscious or sub-conscious process on identity formation in youth is very intriguing, and deserves some mention, for it is a beautiful idea. There are certain lessons a person learns from earliest childhood which if successfully handled give him greater strength in coping with the identity task.

I would like once again to draw on the work of Erickson which illustrates this point very clearly. He conceives of the human life cycle in terms of eight crisis periods that must be successfully handled. <sup>6</sup> Four stages precede adolescence and are very crucial to youth mastering the identity task.

In the first stage 'trust vs mistrust', it is hoped that the child will develop a successful sense of trust in the encounter with mother. On the basis of 'trust' perceived in the first stage, the youth seeks men and ideas in which to have faith. At the same time, he fears a foolish all too trusting commitment and will. In the second life cycle crisis, autonomy vs self doubt, the child plays out the first emancipation from the mother through the development of an intense animality. Going back to this second crisis, the youth, through self choice, seeks to be shameless in the eyes of elders, rather than being forced into acts shameful to the self and to the peer group.

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In the next crisis, 'initiative vs guilt', or the phallic stage, the child begins to reach out ambitiously and purposefully into the world. Successful completion of this stage frees up initiative in the youth and a sense of purpose for adult tasks which promise a fulfillment of one's range of capacities.

Finally in the stage before adolescence, the child learns how to work without sacrificing creativity or imagination. During the initiative vs guilt crisis, the wider society becomes significant to the child by admitting him to roles preparatory to the actuality of economy and technology. If supported by an understanding mentor, he finds assurance and confidence that he can perform skills which the society acknowledges. If he does not have one, the feeling can be aroused that he will never be any good. Successful completion of this fourth stage implies that a guarantee of occupational choice which transcends status and remuneration.

The lessons learned from earliest childhood underlie the youths maturation process. He is not working in a vacuum. He draws upon victories previously won, and is hampered by past defeats. He may not be conscious of these forces, yet they are operating within the psyche, either driving him on to complete the identity task, or blocking him up, consequently preventing it's accomplishment.

In performing this identity task, youth experiences conflict. He may experience conflict within the 'self', the society, or the family. He must resolve this conflict in order to avoid being in a state of aggravated vulnerability which can impose itself upon a sense of grand individual promise. It makes him sensitive and mercurial. His needs may vary from extreme elation to deep depression within very short time lapses.

The conflict experienced by youth in performing the maturation process has, as I have noted, subconscious origins. A youth unable to trust another person may have gained this mistrust during the breast feeding stage of his life.

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On the other hand, there is a conscious level upon which youth conflict can be examined.

A youth is not only a developing 'self unit'; he is also part of another entity, that of the family. Conflict can be caused by relationships with members of the family group.

In order to understand youth's task, a recent approach<sup>7</sup> has been to consider the individual in intimate contact with the family environment. Youth is so much a part of this broader unit that his life is crucially determined by it. It holds that 'self change' can best be achieved through environmental change. Maturation involves not only the development of that entity termed the 'self', but it also involves the relation of that self to other selves.

I have looked at the youth task from an individual perspective, I would now like to expand taking this idea of 'systems' which holds that the individual must be seen in terms of other elements than himself and these very crucially influence his behavior.

Given this new orientation, I can say that maturing youth has a problem in relation to his parent. Maturation involves not only a youths attempt to engage in successful completion of an identity task, but also coping with an adolescent parent system which is transacting and interacting. Taking this perspective, the way individuals significantly affect each other can be better understood because change on the part of one person can beneficially or harmfully affect the behavior and the feelings of the other.

Youth has a problem in relation to parent, perhaps it is father. He is experiencing an identity crisis on a different level than father. Youth is discovering the self and is experimenting with utilizing great reservoirs of energy; father has already discovered the self, and in retrospect is trying to figure out whether it was worth it. He is more contemplative, having

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already fulfilled his identity task.

Although father has achieved his position in life, he feels pressured by younger men whose training is more relevant in coping with the modern job problems. He may not be economically threatened, but his role significance is endangered in terms of his policy and decision making power. After a tense day spent confronting these fears, he is off to the gym for some physical exercise, but again his endurance and strength are not what they used to be. In addition, dread of declining sexual proficiency may be affecting him.

At the same time, youth is at the height of sexual potency, maximum sexual potential having been reached by the late teens. He is active, athletic, and strong, in fact he is probably capable of defeating father in physical combat. Youth in finding his place senses that he must take something away from those already in control. He is very bright and articulate having many friends and acquaintances.

He by no means is lacking problems. I have already touched upon many of them. He is trying to find a place within his family and society while at the same time remaining true to himself, maintaining a sense of fidelity and integrity.

There is conflict within this household. There is a tension that the son experiences in relation to father which sometimes erupts into explosive anger. Hostility reaches such a peak that son may stalk out of the house; and father, after a violent outburst, retreating into anger and gloom.

Youth now confronts father's fear of inner inadequacy and decline which have been aroused by youth's possession of these very same diminished powers. he may have brought this on himself by an unwitting hostile remark or a contemptuous glance.

A vicious circle can be constructed out of this situation. Youth can respond in anger because he mis-interpretes the outburst of the father as a

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lack of understanding and refusal to consider seriously feelings and point of views; whereas in reality, this anger lies within father's deep inner self-fears and frustrations being released by son's aggressive action.

Youth in doing this is in danger of saying to father, 'you are no longer important or powerful, I am going to take your place in the scheme of things.'. This constitutes outright rejection of father. Youth also faces a problem in relation to father when he implies that he will only acknowledge and accept father when he can get something from him.

From this example, it can be readily acknowledged that father either refuses or is unable to communicate his fear of decline adequately to his son. Similarly, the youth is unable to communicate to father that he is in crisis which is being provoked by sudden spurts of physical, intellectual, and emotional strength. The breakdown in direct, forthright, and honest communication lies at the cause of the tension and the rage that is gnawing away at both of them.

What this amounts to is that youth, during the process of maturation must learn how to communicate. He must gain skill in receiving and transmitting accurate messages.

The Akedah legend provides an insight into the problem of communication. The Hebrew word 'hineni' appears three times in the text. Abraham first utters it in response to God's call; and then when Isaac calls out; and finally Abraham responds, 'here am I', when the angel commands him not to sacrifice his son.

The strength that Abraham brought to these situations was his ability and willingness to open himself up to communication whether with God or with his son. Abraham was ever ready to say, 'hineni', yes, I will communicate, perhaps this is why he never sacrificed his son upon the altar. Isaac had a great advantage in that he had in Abraham a model upon which to learn the necessary skill of meaningful communication.

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Conclusion: In every culture, there are basic tasks a youth must cope with in his maturation process. I have examined a few of the more crucial challenges, laying particular stress on identity formation and the process of the sub-conscious.

I have attempted to understand youth in not only his self isolation, but also in relation to the larger family unit. When considered in this light, his basic problem becomes learning to communicate inner conflict, and being able to perceive clear understanding of those close to him.

Given these basic needs and problems, I will next examine our own youth. I will explore in what ways American society meets these needs, and in what ways it does not meet them.

Footnotes: Chapter One

- (1.) Kenneth Kenniston, Young Radicals, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1968, p 77.
- (2.) Erik H. Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, W.R. Norton & Co., New York, 1968 p. 242
- (3.) Erik H. Erikson, "The Problems of Ego Identity" Steine & Alad Identity and Anxiety, Free Press, New York 1967, p.45
- (4.) For more detailed discussion of fidelity especially as manifest in literary figures see: Erik H. Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis, New York, 1968, p 236-240
- (5.) Erik H. Erikson, Autobiographic Notes on the Identity Crisis, Doedalus, FALL, 1970 p. 731
- (6.) For detailed discussion of the eight life cycle stages of: Erik H. Erikson, Identity Youth & Crisis, p 91-141.
- (7.) For a good introductions to systems and the fault pioneering work in treating the family as a functioning unit of the following articles by Jay Noley in the Journal Family Process: "Research on Family Patterns: An Instrumental Measurement" Vol3, No. 1, March 1964 p 41 ff; "Speech Sequences of Normal and Abnormal Families with Two Children Present" Vol.6 #1 March 1967 p 81; "An Editors farewell" Vol. 8 #2 Sept. 1969, p 1149, also in some issue of Ross V. Bpeet & Uri Rueeni, "Network Therapy - A developing concept -p 182



## Chapter II

### PROBLEMS OF YOUTH IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

#### Introduction

#### *Youth Alienation:*

Youth living in America are losing their natural environment; they live in an automatized and mechanized maze. They experience reapid in a complex society. Looking at these youth, I see individuals searching to find values and meaning for their lives within this complexity, trying to discover real relationship not only with each other, but within themselves.

To do this, they face obstacles rather than avenues of free access, obstacles which have been erected by that very society in which they are attempting to grow and flourish. A selfish and restrictive society that is unhealthy for a person to freely develop in, rather than healthy society that is willing to experiment, tolerate, and break into a dance that celebrates the joys of life and the hope offered by the future.

America's youth have stopped dancing, instead they sit alone. In their loneliness, they silently listen and try to understand it all. Often they come together, their loneliness pours out in the form of dissatisfaction that thunders in the roar of dissent, or it can be suppressed in a drug induced trance.

They face the perils of accelerated technology, a world that has the power to self destruct but which doesn't seriously attempt to limit the instruments that can bring this devastation about. They live in an age in which there might not be a future.

Great demands are made upon them to grow up optimistically and with a sense of meaningfulness, yet how is this possible when the strong family system is beginning to deteriorate, and moral values shifting at such a rapid rate with very few solid and meaningful substitutes. Youth are expected to

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cherish values that even their elders for all practical purposes have rejected.

Given this situation, I want to examine a situation which is symptomatic of the problems facing youth in American Society, showing both some typical youth reactions to this problem. After examining this incident, I will attempt to observe and explain the reasons why it has come about.

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Woodward High School rests on the borders of a middle class Jewish suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio. It is a school in flux, with an ever shifting racial population created by changing neighborhoods. Disorder struck there one clear Fall afternoon. The turbulent demonstration was due to a condition that has been creating alienation and apathy within American Society. It was not only a student protest against a seven year war waged in South East Asia, but was in sympathy with a nationwide moratorium, mourning once again the murders of four Kent State University students killed in the midst of previous anti-war rally.

It was a situation reflecting the crisis of our times. Working with the JFS as director of Youth Drop in Center, I observed a range of youth reactions, through conversation and dialogue. There were the youth who agreed with societal values taking no part in the dissent, he was in the minority. The majority of the students participated. Within this majority, I noticed three responses. There were the ambivalent, those who seemed to just be there not knowing why. There were the activists, and lastly the disengaged, the abstracted.

The four responses were logical, and had a universal quality to them. They reminded me of the four types of sons that we read about in the Passover Haggadah: these were the wicked, the wise, the simple, and the son who could not ask.

The son who doesn't know how to ask is the prototype of youth content to settle for the status quo. He accepts the society as it stands; change for him is hardly necessary. He believes that deviation from the expectations of authority

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are wrong, and that the authority is entitled to use what ever measures at it's disposal to bring the deviators back into line. He remained in the classroom refusing to investigate the gut situation. His acceptance of authority led him to a position of condemning the demonstrators. His demeanor was hostile, contemptuous, and condescending. To him, the action of dissent was destructive and disrespectful; authority should be heeded and not resisted. Looking out over the crowd of youths, he says , "If I ever catch one of those mother-fuckers alone, I'll bust his ass."

In the student population of Woodward, this 'son' was decisively out numbered by the youths who lent their full measure of participation. The ambivalent youth whose prototype can be found in the model of the tam, the simple son. His reason for leaving the classroom and joining the demonstration was not very involved. He saw that all of his friends were doing it, and not wanting to be excluded, he joined in, asking only, 'what is this?'. He was frivolous, but underneath this frivolity lay great anxiety. In our conversation, he said that he 'had a lot of fun' during the incident and that he would do it again if the opportunity ever arouse. He indicated that he was fearful that his actions had been noticed by the authorities; he feared reprisals. Although the actions of the 'tam' were precipitous and unreasoned, there was something within him that elicited a supporting reaction to a demonstration that was critical of his society.

Vastly opposite was the reasoned participation of the activist, who is symbolized by the 'hacham', the wise son. This youth was very confident, expressed himself well, and took pride in the ideas that he was able to articulate. He took the demonstration very seriously. He had not arrived at his position precipitously, but had thought it out very carefully. In so doing, he questioned all other alternative positions. He was intensely, alive, aware, and committed. He wanted change and saw radical politics as the way to effectuate it. The most direct way of changing things was the application of the politics of confronta-

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tion. This strategy he felt would not only make the issues crystal clear, but would also make people more intensely aware of the sorry state of affairs, bringing commitment to rectify them.

The activist believes that he knows exactly what he is doing. He recognizes that his action is subject to sever reprimand, culminating, perhaps, in court prosecution. He accepts either expulsion or arrest as part of the political process. If inflicted, he claims that he could eventually turn these penalties to his advantage.

Finally, the prototype of the 'rashah' the wicked son, wicked not in the sense of being evil, but some form of group exclusion. This is the response of the disengaged. Although he is present, his presence and participation are not total. The 'disengaged' is the youth who has drifted into drug use. This youth had been using marijuana for over a year, and during the past months had been experimenting with LSD and methedrine.

When I asked him about the situation at Woodward and the nature of his involvement in it, he responded pessimistically that the problem was really too big to handle. It is hopeless to effect, just, meaningful and lasting change. When asked if this also meant with regards to himself, his response was a bit more optimistic, but in line with the 'rashah' attitude. He felt that what could be meaningfully accomplished was to become completely devoted to developing the inner self, to become more aware and attuned to the pristine nature that surrounds him. Although he seemed to take this point very seriously, his attitude was detached, dreamlike, and even a bit extraneous.

Four youth responses in a crisis situation triggered by societal unrest have been observed. What type of society can precipitate a situation in which youth responses range from attempting to overthrow it, to not reacting directly against it but playing with drugs to induce changes of consciousness, to not being capable of doing anything, to simply not caring and just going along with it?

What type of society created conditions such as Kent State and Vietnam which

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have in turn such an unsettling impact upon youth who are engaged in the quest for fulfillment of basic needs, identity and fidelity to self and society? What is the impact that such a society has on it's youth? What are the consequences for youth of it's injustices?

In terms of 'technology', America is probably one of the most advanced societies in the world. Herein lies her basic problem. The 'technology' that has made her great is also severely threatening that greatness; yet it is not so much what her technology is doing to her that is the problem. If that was all there was to it, then she would be able to rectify the problem by either changing to a technology with different priorities and destroy the one now shackling her. The disturbing reality is that the process is self inflicted. Americans are perpetuating the tyranny of their technology. - *and thereby injuring her children.*

In fact one of the main theses of an excellent but highly pessimistic study of American society takes just this line. It is all about what people are doing to each other, not what is being done to them. The study bodes so negatively that it is subtitled with the jeremiad<sup>1</sup> 'American society at the breaking point'.

Is American society at the breaking point? What is happening to her in the face of an expanding technology. The answer is fairly simple. It is mirrored in the eyes of her youth. Americans are constantly turning inwards, avoiding personal contacts and commitments. As Philip Slater more succinctly puts it,<sup>2</sup> 'we are pursuing loneliness'. -

Why have Americans become so alienated? Why is the society so impersonal and cold? Looking to the basis upon which society runs answers to these questions are readily available. The mechanism of American Society depends on the premise that there are not enough goods to go around in order that everyone will have a fair share. Philip Slater refers to this idea as 'the scarcity principle'<sup>3</sup> and believes that it rests at the very core of our culture. Examining the matter in depth proper management of resources would allow all needs to be adequately met.

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In actual fact, the 'principal of scarcity' is a self imposed illusion.

It is an illusion which has led to one of the greatest alienating forces in the human experience. Since the assumption is that there is not enough to go around, the next logical step is that people must compete for these purportedly scarce resources. The pursuit of this mode of life perpetuates loneliness because not only does it draw people apart, but also being constantly engaged in it leaves very little time for satisfaction. Slater underlines this point by saying that 'the loneliness of the competitive life lies in the fact that it's satisfactions<sup>4</sup> are indeed very short lived because each leads only to the need for a new one.'

Since there is this assumed lack of material to go around and that it engenders competition, there are bound to be many injustices. Injustices which are sapping away at America's vigor, and against which her youth are reacting.

They are distressed at a society in which urban ghettos and rural wastelands are permitted to grow and flourish, burgeoning into centers of devastating poverty. They can not understand why this happens in a prosperous and plentiful society. They look with suspicion to a society that has every possible means to eradicate poverty, yet chooses not to do so.

They are confused by plastic values. The media to which they are constantly exposed glorifies cars, cigarettes, and computers. A nationally distributed news magazine advertized one line of computers as if they were human. The ad ran thusly: 'We've really been blessed, with a big (really big) family of big (really big) computers.'

Are computers becoming the model for the new American family?, as the traditional family is being rent assunder by the benefits of technology. Rapid modes of transit have made it easy to leave home, in fact on all sides Americans are encouraged to do so. In addition, new forms of family life are being experimented with: the mass family tribe, the threesome, and even the unmarried marrieds. Although they may be an improvement, these attempts to change the traditional family have not been time tested. In the meantime, there has been a weakening of the

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of the basic family unity, with nothing to fill the vacuum. American youth face this difficult situation, with apprehension.

Youth are also questioning the rat race that the society has imposed, upon them. They wonder at the hypocrisy which hold that people should be made happy in order to work better so they can obtain more goods rather than the premise that people should work in order to obtain goods so that they can be happy.

Again we note the phenomenon of the perpetuation of loneliness. Americans driving themselves farther away from one- another and deeper into isolation. The tragedy is that it is self imposed. Striving to maintain possessions sought out because the spirit of acquisition reigns and the result of this becomes the creation of deep and unbreachable class barriers. In addition, basing happiness on means rather than on ends, making joy and self fulfillment not so much the goal, but state that one must be in to get more things, locks Americans out of the garden of contentment and peace.

What this all comes down to is that America is a society in which property has become one of the most important values. If you adhere rigidly to the idea that there is not enough for all in a society of plenty, then property and material goods can take precedence over human existence. If possessions are scarce relative to people, then they come to have more value than the people whom they are intended to serve. A corollary to this is that in our society it has become permissible to kill someone caught in the act of stealing property, especially if he is a member of a lower class strata or minority group.

If we take this value and add to it the practical ways that it has been applied, for example the devastation America is perpetuating with her war machine in the ever expanding South East Asian War, the massive amounts of money that goes into the military-industrial complex, the huge sums expended for supersonic bombers, missiles, the whole range of nuclear weaponry, we should stand aghast.

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If we added to this equation, America's unwillingness to engage collectively and wholeheartedly in ventures which would stamp out the conditions which make life hazardous, the vast amounts of pollution, the rising rate of the lumpenproletariat from which evolves the danger of crime and political upheaval, and the poverty and starvation that is afflicting many millions of people in so many parts of the world, we can understand the dissatisfaction of our youth.

Philip Slater after examining American injustice and destruction could only say, "Has there ever been a people who have destroyed so many things". In fact he goes so far as accusing the American public of being genocidal, in their passive acquiescence to the fact that civilian populations many thousands of miles away are being decimated by bombs dropped from super-sonic planes which they pay for with their tax dollar. This atrocity shock and disillusion many youths. Their credulity is shaken. The present becomes unacceptable while the future takes on an aspect of vagueness and unreality.

Youth lives in the era of technocracy. They experience it's alienating influence. They discover that society defies efficiency, but de-santifies the worth and value of the individual life. In such a world, there is no control over fate. The future belongs to the powerful governing elite, an elite dedicated to finding efficient and expedient ways of mastering the culture aided by machines and accelerated industrialism.

Another sociologist, Theodore Roszak feels that 'the key problem (of our society) is that we have to deal with is the paternalism of expertise within a socio-economic system which is so organized that it is inextricably beholden to expertise'. He goes on to say of those living in this society: 'like Kafka's K men throughout the developed world become more and more bewildered dependants of inaccessible castles wherein inscrutable technicians conjure with their fate'.

Whether or not individuals in America are really 'dependants of inaccessible



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castles' is open to question. Perhaps what seems so inaccessible and impossible is entirely within their grasp. As Theodore Reich states in the Greening of America, 'the problems that our society faces problems ranging from corruption, to the decline of liberty, to loss of self, can be explained by the fact that the machinery of our society no longer works'.<sup>10</sup> The machinery, (or rather the expertise) that controls our society is concentrated in the large industrial organizations, the non-profit foundations and the educational systems which Reich conglomerates under the title, 'corporate state'. These divisions are related to the whole as<sup>11</sup> in a business corporation, and they are no longer serving the people properly.

↳ Loneliness encouraged by rapid technological growth and the alienation fostered by impersonal elite controls dominate the American scene. The problem of youth is to maintain self-fidelity against pressures to acquire and be molded by these forces.  
like

The conditions that I have attempted to outline are by no means static; for if they were there would be little hope for American Society. There are attempts at change. There are people saying no to the experts, to the loneliness, to the machines, and to the depersonalization. In the vanguard of this movement, there stands America's youth. In spite of this, there is a great dilemma for it is difficult to escape the strong controls exerted by culture.

Many of our youth are rejecting the idea of materialism and competition. They are saying that there is enough to go around for everybody. They believe that human aggression is dangerous, that it is not necessary, that there is no reason why there should not be peace, joy, and beauty. This, however, can only happen if people are willing to come together; and this is happening in isolated<sup>12</sup> pockets of our society.

### Conclusion:

Behind the Woodward High School demonstration that we observed, there lies

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the realization of youth that a society preaching peace, but gearing for war, extolling justice, while condoning injustices, saying one thing and doing the other, is not the ideal society in which their basic needs can be met. The pressures and turbulent forces rending family and values apart work against a youth's search for a meaningful occupation and a sense of intimate contact with the people and environment around him.

Footnotes - Chapter II

1. Slater, Philip, The Pursuit of Loneliness
2. *ibid* p 7.
3. *ibid* p 100.
4. *ibid* p
5. The Rabbinic notions of 'li 'hashiv nefesh' or 'pikuach nefesh' could serve us very well in this instance. They hold that human life must be cherished and preserved no matter what the cost may be, even if it be the violation of the most ultimate or sacred religious duty.
6. Slater, Philip, The Pursuit of Loneliness, p 69.
7. *ibid* p 69.
8. Roszak, Theodore, The Making of a Counter Culture, Anchor Books, New York 1969, pl 3.
9. *ibid.* pl 3.
10. Reich, Charles A., 'The Greening of America', The New Yorker, September 26, 1970, p 44
11. *ibid.* p 45 - The United States Government is in actuality only a part of this corporate state, for it provides simply supportive services. It is the corporate state and not the people which determines what shall be produced, consumed, and the methods of allocation. The line that was drawn between public and private domain no longer exists, so that most of the public functions of the government are performed by the private sector of the economy, and most government services are performed for this private sector. This is outright deception for the illusion is created that the government runs things and is responsible that is able to control political and economic trends - and that this government has been duly constituted by the people.
12. The trend towards change has been noted by both Charles Reich and Philip Slater. Slater in The Pursuit of Loneliness is pessimistic (pl18-f) 'people will have to learn to subordinate their contemplative desires to more co-operative ones, to re-conceptualizing a deeper feeling and responsibility for the group, and to create an environment in which people can come together working effectively and creatively, not so much to build and gain for the part, but rather for the whole. Reich, on the other hand, is optimistic. He points to the genesis of a non-violent revolution that will alleviate all of the ills of American society. It is coming in the form of a change of consciousness, and is now very much a part of the present American Scene, of Reich, Greening of America, New Yorker, p 92ff.

## Chapter III

### Introduction

Having considered the forces which generate loneliness and despair in our society, I now turn to the youth who have not been able to adjust to American culture during their maturation. There is a very large drop out rate amongst youth growing up in our society.

I will examine this problem from two perspectives. In the first part of the chapter, I will consider how society brands a youth who has deviated. This involves a discussion of delinquency. I will briefly trace the concept historically, share my observations of how many youth are being dealt by the authority structure, and give a specific example of this dynamic.

After dealing with the response of society against youth who deviate, I will examine instances of youth despairing. A brief discussion will focus on the process of alienation which will hopefully give insight into the discussion of specific instances of alienation that will follow. I shall discuss the drug user, the suicide, and the runaway.

#### Part I - Society Reacting, Delinquency Reconsidered

When a youth fails to reconcile himself to the society in which he lives, the society labels him. The most useful designation so far has been the term, 'juvenile delinquent'. Delinquency has been conceived of in many ways, each of which provides roots for attitudes towards youth who have deviated from the expected norms.

How many times do we hear people use the term 'beast' or 'animal' in referring to youth who have breached the conventional models and mores of society. This tendency to denigrate youthful offenders is found surprisingly enough today in the juvenile court, and with the traditional defenders of the people, the police.

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This idea has its origins in the theory of the Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroses, whose concept based on ideas of Social Darwinism<sup>1</sup> centered around the notion that the delinquent had congenital and hereditarily evil propensities, and that nothing could be done to change this fact.<sup>2</sup> His idea was picked up by early American criminologists and people entrusted with the destinies of juvenile offenders.<sup>3</sup>

If the Darwinian revolution had an extremely profound effect on the thinking of nineteenth century man, then it was the work of Sigmund Freud which had a correspondingly great impact upon the ideas of the twenties. Freud explored the inner recesses of the mind. He discovered that our conduct could be explained by the workings of this unconscious self which we rarely perceived.

One of Freud's disciples, August Aichorn, attempted to strike down the misconception that delinquency was an unalterable hereditary trait. The science of psychoanalysis was brought in to try to understand what makes youth delinquent. It held that the motivation for delinquent action was rooted within the subconscious. Aichorn's basic contention was that it was not sufficient to say that a youth has stolen or has runaway, nor is it sufficient to question the boy, the parents, and others within the environment for they do not know or understand the deeply unconscious origins of the impulses to enact the dissocial deeds.<sup>4</sup> The dissocial deed is simply the indicator that the psychic processes which determine behavior are not functioning harmoniously.<sup>5</sup>

Aichorn contributed not only to present day attitudes about delinquency, but also to methods which are being frequently employed in attempting to deal with the problem. He created an environment in which youth could be re-oriented towards a more accepting view of society, a society that stressed consideration, goal motivation, and a certain amount of acquiescence to authority. This idea of group living has proven to be an effective method of treating delinquents. It has been demonstrated that individuals with like social problems when placed

together in a therapeutic training environment are more efficiently able to learn co-operation within the context of society, then when working individually with a probation counselor.

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Aichorn applied the Freudian concept of the 'ego ideal' toward an explanation of delinquency. The 'ego ideal' is equivalent to the 'super ego' delinquency was explained in terms of a corrupt super ego. Delinquency would be caused when a youth identified with and carried out to fruition the dissocial and criminal tendencies of the parents.<sup>7</sup> This theory placed responsibility for delinquency upon parental actions and attitudes, rather than on inherited characteristics.

Delinquency can also be explained in sociological terms in addition to psychological and biological ones. People often regard it as a phenomena of a single strata of the society. A.K. Cohen's work in the early 50's still is very influential amongst those concerned with the control and prevention of delinquency. He says that 'the established theories of delinquency have tended to locate all the decisive experiences of the child in the family circle, and to ignore the world<sup>8</sup> outside of the family, the school, the street, and settlement house'.

His interpretation held that the phenomenon of delinquency in modern American technological society stemmed from a delinquent 'sub-culture'. The 'sub-culture' had a very narrowly defined limit within the structure of society. It was overwhelmingly concentrated in the male working class sector of the youth population.<sup>9</sup> Due to the fact that they were unable to get into the middle class, they took the values of that strata turning them topsy turvy. For example instead of etiquette and courtesy, they cultivated maliciousness.<sup>10</sup> Here was one of the first successful attempts to demonstrate societies negative reaction to youth unable to meet it's demands. They were severely reprimanded for inverting standards which could not be possibly met by them.

What Cohen's theory failed to do was to adequately explain the phenomena of middle class Juvenile Delinquency. The middle class delinquent is not concerned

with gaining entrance into a higher strata of society. He has experienced life at the top and is fed up with it. He accepts the values of the lower class, rejecting those values that delinquent youth in the lower classes are said to be wanting.

The middle class delinquent is a phenomena of the mid-seventies. His crimes are not the conventional ones like street mugging, auto theft, or gang warfare. He is booked on trespassing, possession of narcotics, and charges arising out of political activism. His crime is very often not directed against the society, but away from the society, towards a new world. The society reacts against this threat by imposing strict sanctions.

In order to get a better understanding of delinquency in the modern age, we must go beyond studies that treat it as a lower class phenomenon ( of an inferior culture trying to break into a culture that is more sophisticated): nor is it entirely adequate to view it in purely psychoanalytic terms, the function perhaps of suppressed libidinal desires or the transmission of parental hostilities, aggressions, and dissatisfactions.

In order to understand delinquency and effectively cope with it, I see the need to understand the total environment of the society in which it erupts. An exciting study, conducted in Israel, points directly to this observation. It is a remarkable work because in it we can see the emergence of delinquency in a new and modern technological society. The main thrust of the study is that it places prime importance upon the assessment of the environment. <sup>12</sup> Is a youth prone towards delinquent behavior if he lives in a healthy and creative environment where he can grow and creatively develop? The study firmly emphasizes this point; it characterizes the total environment of the Shekunot <sup>15</sup> (Slum of Tel Aviv) charging that it is an environment that encourages apathy <sup>14</sup> and deviant behavior, rebellion and despair. <sup>19</sup> The study claims that for change

to come about, an alteration of the social environment of the Shekunah is necessary. When the State of Israel is able to accomplish this and also ameliorate the disparity between what it says Shekunot youth can and should be to what they feel they are condemned to be, relevant steps towards significant change will have been undertaken.

The inhabitants of the Shekunot are living in what Professor Carl Frankenstein terms 'a negative social situation'. This is a very interesting term which has relevance to the direction that I am going in. He states that the negative social situation involves a low standard of living, deficient learning opportunities, negative of leisure time activities, and deterioration of child rearing units.<sup>16</sup>

This concept of 'negative social situation' can be expanded to include such ideas, as a low standard of ethics and morality, a low regard for human and personal values, the desire for material wealth at the expense of these values, and the imposition of depersonalization and isolation. If we do this, then it is possible to understand how so many middle to upper-middle class youths are engaging in deviant behavior patterns.

In addition, people are beginning to recognize the role that social definitions play in branding a person as delinquent; that the social definition is composed by and encouraged in the environment which is creating the problem. There are certain acts which society brands as delinquent which would not be considered delinquent if the society had much more sense. These acts include truancy, rebellion, and runaway episodes.

Although at first reluctant, researchers are beginning to investigate how the label of "delinquent" is distributed and enforced through the youth culture. According to researcher, Anthony Platt, there is a great need for academicians and policy makers to appreciate that delinquency aside from it's psychological



and sub-cultural motivations is the product of social judgement, and procedural definition by public officials.<sup>17</sup>

It is possible that a youth's final choice of adult identity will depend on the way his moral character has been assessed, catagorized, and acted upon by parents, teachers, and officials. Juvenile courts and associated departments, the probation and detention offices, have been nototious for imposing this identity of delinquency upon the young individual. Juveniles are being condemned to a negative identity which is incurred through the dynamic that says, 'you are what the society tells you that you are.'

The Juvenile Court, which imposes this identity on many youths, is a highly imperfect institution.<sup>18</sup> It is able to take great liberties which restrict the rights of a youth; it is able to intervene in a situation even before an individual has committed a crime. It conceives of truancy, rebellion against authority, and a desire for independance to be punishable situations. In effect, it has created a new type of crime, the crime without a victim. The court is authorized to demand certain forms of moral propriety and responses in attitudes without the presence of a social victim.<sup>19</sup>

This attitude on the part of the Juvenile can be extremely detrimental because facilities for juvenile detention in most cities are woefully inadequate. This inadequacy is compounded by the fact that until the 1960's juveniles under the age of eighteen did not have the legal right to council. A right that was finally restored by the New York Family Court Act of 1962, and the Gault decision which guaranteed the right of counsel to juveniles whose cases might lead to institutional commitment.

These realities point clearly to the idea that delinquency can be looked upon as being created out of an inadequate system which makes inadequate responses to attempts of youth who want to strike out on independant paths. This system stigmatizes these adolescents as delinquents.

This passing on of stigma is especially disturbing when we remember what Erving Goffman noted in the opening of his work, entitled 'Stigma'. He said, 'we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human, therefore, we exercise varieties of discrimination through which effectively, if often unthinkingly reduce his life chances.

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Stigmatization by the system is the main reason, I believe, that Jewish youth who deviate continue to pursue delinquent careers. I have encountered situations where contact with the court, police, and probation agencies have delictoriorly affected an adolescents, self image. These authorities who have not responded to his emotional problem; in fact, the situation was so greatly aggravated that future delinquency was inevitable.

I recall the following experience.

I spoke one evening with a young girl, about fifteen, who dropped into a 'coffee house' sponsored by the Jewish Family Service of Cincinnati. She was upset. She was acting out a conflict with her mother by being constantly truant from school. As a result of her actions, the school had complained to the authorities, and the girl was summoned before the juvenile court where she was placed under house arrest and probation. While under house arrest, her movements were strictly controlled by the mother with whom she was in conflict to begin with.

The result of this untenable situation was that the girl not only violated house arrest, but also was again truant from school. Mother, school, authorities, and the juvenile court system combined forces to bring the young lady into line. She was apprehended and placed before the court. Judging her was a court referee, rather than an elected judge. Her openly hostile and rebellious attitude was punished by a three day sentence to solitary confinement in the Juvenile Detention Facility, in addition to a five day incarceration for her truancy. The period spent in the Juvenile Home played a role in stigmatizing her as a delinquent

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amongst her peer group, family, and to herself. Socially defined as a delinquent rather than a youth with an emotional problem, her rebellion intensified, rather than working itself out.

Cases like this are very numerous in American Society. The social branding of emotionally disturbed and rebellious youth as delinquent exacerbated the severity of the situation, and determines future negative attitudes that youth exhibits towards society.<sup>21</sup>

#### Conclusion (to part one)

It is not purely class conflict, inner psychological distress, and environmental inadequacy that produces a delinquent. A youth can be labeled delinquent because someone in authority has so defined him. This is often done on the basis of the 'public face' that he presents these officials, rather than on the offense itself. A delinquent can be created through social definition by the very agencies entrusted with solving the problem.

Many of the youths labeled delinquent are not criminals, they are simply alienated from the environment. It is this alienation and the possible modes in which it can be expressed that will be dealt with in what follows.

#### Conclusion

There are many ways to approach the problem of delinquency. The delinquent has been called a beast; doctors have probed the subconscious for the roots of his deviance; sociologists claim that he is a male working class phenomena, and recent researchers blame the society. They say that youth who have a tendency to deviate are being stigmatized, and this stigmatization throws them deeper into delinquency.

Of all the approaches, the last one seems to me to be the most relevant. Although they all, save the first, have some merit, the last enables us to work toward a solution. For if society changes it's repressive and paterna-

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listic methods of dealing with troubled youth, the delinquency problem would begin to fade in to insignificance.

#### Part II - Youth Despairing - Adolescent Alienation

In the first part of this chapter, I pointed out that the term 'delinquent' encompassess youth who commit deviant actions which involve jeopardizing human life or malicious destruction of another's property. Crimes without victims such as running away, truancy from school, and disorderly conduct can fall within the limits of delinquency because police and juvenile court are empowered to deal with these matters. A youth whose despair may lead him into one of these avenues of escape faces the consequences that he will be labeled delinquent by the society and that this society will greatly influence his future development.

Youth, today more than at any other historic period, stand very much alone. They are terribly aware of this loneliness. Loneliness can lead to despair. It is out of despair that some runaway, others turn to drugs, and petty violence, in pursuit of political or moral ideals. The source of this loneliness is the experience of alienation. I will try to explore it's meaning, and the ways that it is applied. For example, what is alienation?, and how is this alienation experienced?

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Before discussing specific instances of alienation, it is important to gain an understanding of the term. In the earliest sense, alienation referred to a person who was insane; today, it is no longer limited to clinical insanity. There is a social and an individual perspective to be considered in discussing alienation. There is the socially alienated individual who does nto experience himself as the active bearer of his own power, but as an unpoverished thing<sup>1</sup> dependant on outside powers, onto whom he has projected his living substance.

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Other symptoms of social alienation are: buying not out of real need, but out of being seduced into purchasing;<sup>2</sup> Lacking knowledge concerning the intricate workings of gadgets which make life easy; and experiencing feelings of remoteness from governmental processes and social forces.

The adolescent's plight is very much a part of those components of social alienation. For example advertising, which is an important arm of the technocracy, affects youth profoundly, because it deals with instant intimacy and leads them away from reality. A recent paper on adolescent alienation included this amongst the main reasons for youth detachment.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to its social context, alienation has been viewed as an individual problem, a form of mental instability and dysfunctionality. It is not necessarily the estrangement of the individual from his environment; it can be viewed as the 'estrangement of the individual from his self'.<sup>4</sup> This is alienation in the clinical sense.

The person alienated is not concerned with the active and spontaneous care of his feelings. He lacks incentive, and has difficulty in making decisions. The alienated self avoids experiencing. When he allows himself to momentarily open up, he applies the breaks cutting off the spontaneous action that he may have initiated. Whatever active relation to life he may have, he refuses to cherish and nurture it.<sup>5</sup>

Although social and individual alienation are interesting, we are especially concerned with adolescent alienation which can be both social and individual. The reason for this is that adolescence is a very delicate phase of the life cycle. The identity process includes not only the establishment of a relationship with the outside world, but also has within it the presence of inner turmoil and possible rejection of the self.

Alienation is normally connected with adolescence because this stage of life

is a period of crisis. During it, society expects youth to make the most positive commitment to a role and to interpersonal relationships that involve a high degree of intimacy. While adjustment to these conditions is required, the growth rate spurts and youth are then rendered very vulnerable.

As he confronts the 'demand for commitment', youth can feel that his search for identity is over; he must quickly make what seem to be life long decisions. It is a condition which Erik Erickson has aptly termed 'identity confusion'. Identity confusion occurs when a youth, who is still in the throes of his identity search, is overwhelmed concurrently by physical intimacy (not necessarily sexual), the demand to choose a life's vocation, and the viciousness of energetic competition.

If a youth experiences physical intimacy, he is susceptible to a wide range of problems which generate important questions. Is he adequate in this new role? Is he performing it with vigor? Is he able to give freely and truly emotionally of himself? Where does intimacy stop? Does it mean sharing the deepest and most secret fantasies which have a possibility of being destructive to the relationship? Can he still consider himself independent? These questions and anxieties exert a tremendous pressure.

At the same time, occupational choice is an issue. American society is still dominated by the work ethic. It commands a person to achieve an occupational identity as early as possible in his life career. To many people, this is a natural and easy process; to others, it can be very difficult. The stress of experiencing intimacy and choosing an occupation can be compounded if he must also suddenly deal with competition. If he has gained a career identity and a close intimacy, he faces the problem of holding on to them. He has to withstand the onslaught of a hostile environment and hostile components of the environment. Withstanding the challenge that others present to him requires an inner strength and resiliency.

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A youth needs inner resources of ego confidence and courage to withstand these potentially destructive tides.

In the identity search, there can be a breaking point when the individual finds himself bound to a simultaneous commitment to physical intimacy, decisive occupational choice, and competition. Erik Erickson believes that this confusion in identity can lead to identity diffusion which is the result of a temporary or final inability of the adolescent ego to establish an identity.

In this condition, a youth exhibits a marked avoidance of making choices within areas vital to acquiring identity. Failure to measure up, leads to a sense of outer isolation, which is experienced as a sense of being cut off from surrounding experiences and environments; also, there is an inner vacuum which is easily filled with guilt feelings and fears.

If this happens, a youth will attempt to postpone and even avoid coming to grips meaningfully with conflicts because he is now in a state of psychic paralysis. He needs to make a minimal choice with a maximum inner conviction that he is still the chooser.

When youth is alienated, there are two very striking diffusions. There is the diffusion of time and the diffusion of industry. In the diffusion of time perspective, there is a great sense of urgency. Youth experiences a loss of consideration for time as a dimension of living. There is a slowing up of action which in a sense indicates a wish on the part of the ego that it should allow itself to die. On the other hand, a diffusion of industry is found in an acute upset in the sense of workmanship, and inability to stick to a single task. Not only is there an inability to concentrate, but also an awareness and abhorrence of competitiveness.

These two conditions mark one stage of youth despair which if prolonged or intensified can be expressed in a more serious form of alienation. Erickson describes this condition as the choice of a negative identity. This refers to a scornful and snobbish hostility towards the roles offered as proper and desirable within

the family or immediate community. It is an identity which is perversely based on all of those roles and identifications which at crucial developmental stages had been pictured as most dangerous and undesirable.

8

Negative identity, identity diffusion, and identity confusion are all aspects of the phenomenon of alienation in adolescence which is marked by the unsuccessful attempt of the youth to shape himself in harmony not only with the outer community, but also within the inner being. The crisis that arise as a consequence of this alienation can vary from the desire to terminate life to the wish to escape from the present either by means of drugs or actual runaway episodes.

The most negative form of despair is suicide. Statistics show that each year more and more adolescents are taking their own lives, rather than facing their turmoil and alienation. In addition to this, there are now many young people under psychiatric care for either threatening suicide or making the actual attempt. This does not include those who openly avow that life is meaningless and not worth living.

Another form of responding to the despair of alienation is a flight into drug use. Use of drugs in order to experience 'a high' means that youth is not at ease with his normal experience of consciousness. In order to feel comfortable with the self, the state of the self has to be changed, and a new level of consciousness achieved where thoughts flow freely, sounds and images take on depth and richness, and waves of exhilaration and joy can be experienced.

The prevalent spirit of drug taking amongst alienated youth is to escape vacuous feelings of meaninglessness, to escape the necessity for meaningful relationship and complete emotional expression. It comes as an escape from families which are impossible to live with; and in response to school situations that place incredible authoritarian pressures upon young people who are trying to express their individuality.



In addition to the despair of drugs and suicide, adolescent alienation can be experienced by running away from the family situation or from the circumstances causing the anxiety and tension. Many adolescents take this road, for last year alone, over five hundred thousand of them bolted away from the family nest.<sup>10</sup>

A runaway episode usually begins with the youth's inability to cope with the home or the school situation. Perhaps running away is a normal response to an intolerable situation because the runaway incident can be prompted by a failure of the parent or other authority figure to communicate feeling effectively. The potential runaway can also experience further alienation when the importance of his feelings are not acknowledged. Since these feelings are new to him, he needs a milieu in which they are dealt with seriously and with understanding; and not rejected out of hand.

A common reason given for leaving home is that either of the parents were unable to communicate. Instead of talking about basic issues, they lashed out at their children's long hair, strange clothes, and odd assortment of friends. Behind these outbursts lay the blocking of direct emotions such as love and care. A blockage caused by fear and lack of confidence in being able to relate.

Although a runaway episode can happen because parent fails to express direct feeling for the youth, the adolescents inability to realize why he is feeling a sense of shame and outrage, is also an important factor in the decision to split the scene. He has no outlet for this feeling. He can not turn to his parents for comfort because they are not able to fully comprehend their own relationship with him.

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Parental control can become oppressive. There are instances in which parent and child can get caught up in a web of deceit, rejection, and mistrust. I had a personal experience of this. It concerned a youth who left his suburban home because mother objected to a close friendship that he had formed. The friend's

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mother had pressured her against the son; she yielded to this pressure. One evening he returned past curfew from an outing with this friend. His mother forbade him association with the boy. Rejected and humiliated, he left home the following day.

Despairing of his chances to make it on the street, he stopped running, and began to work out his problems. He had a story that was replete with frustration and rejection. He spoke of boredom at home, the unreasonableness of mother, and his feelings of being worthless. He decided that since he was not ready to make it on his own, he would return home to try again.

Upon returning home, it was learned by the counselor that mother was just recovering from a nervous breakdown caused by the desertion of father over one year ago. In spite of this, she managed to retain her children, holding the family together but in this instance, she did not communicate directly with her son. His response, a response of despair and alienation, could be interpreted in the following way.

Deeply humiliated by mother's rejection which came out through support of friend's mother against the friendship, he felt a need to act in some way. He could allow his feeling to smolder, making no response at all. He could have responded violently by inflicting physical on either mother or self. Instead he chose to get back at her by running away. By so doing, he was able to express his hurt and rage. Not only was he feeling rejected by mother who acted with excessive strictness, but he was also feeling father's rejection because father had deserted the household.

We can see then that running away is a form of communication. It is a non-verbal form of communication stating that the regular modes of communication have broken down, and that it is imperative that they be quickly repaired. It is an expression of the alienation that the adolescent may be feeling not only towards

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the outside society, family notwithstanding; but also with himself, his not knowing exactly how to deal with the anger, resentment, and humiliation that has built up within the particular social setting.

### Conclusion:

Alienation can be caused by the forces that are playing upon the adolescent from without, the societal milieu in general. It is also caused by inner psychic forces that began to develop in early stages of childhood. It comes to an adolescent especially during the critical period of ego identity formation, and finds its expression when the successful formation of that identity is threatened.

Alienation is manifested in adolescents in many forms. It can take the guise of drug addiction or the ultra-extreme form of suicide. It can be expressed through a runaway situation, and sometimes becomes manifest in expressions of delinquency. Yet many times, it is born silently with pain and anxiety, perhaps never to be outwardly expressed or worked out.

Delinquency, on the other hand, is a definition imposed by the society upon a youth whose alienation becomes too expressive. Delinquency can be seen in terms of societies reaction to the troubled youth; while alienation can be viewed in terms of the youth's reaction to society and also his inner self. Delinquency is a function of alienation.

These conditions are common in our society. In the next chapter, I will explore areas in which we can provide comfort for the alienated youth who has the problem of being labeled delinquent by the society.

## Footnotes

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1. Social Darwinism flowed from Darwinian ideas applied to social organization. Implicit in this were ideas of 'natural selection' and 'survival of the fittest' which carried the implication that the way a thing was or person acted was part of the design of nature which nothing could possibly change.
2. Platt, Anthony M., The Child Savers, University of Chicago, 1969, p19-Lombroso posited that there was a certain criminal type which deviated from the non-criminal type in the fact that he had a degenerative nature which was either directly inherited or gotten from some distant ancestor. He proposed (p21) 'that the delinquent was a morally inferior human species, characterized by physical traits reminiscent of apes, lower primates, and savages. He was thought to be morally retarded, and like a small child, instinctively aggressive and precocious unless restrained.'
3. Ibid p27, for example, the warden of the Illinois Industrial School for Girls was convinced that 'original constitution is a much more important factor than either education or surroundings in determination of character.'
4. A possible underlying cause for deviancy or aggressive behavior could be the re-occurrence of an unresolved Oedipal conflict. Take the case of a child whose inability to act like a man caused him conflict. He tried to master this discrepancy by excessive brutality. This Aichorn concluded was due to a lack of success with identification to the father figure, and the overidentification with the mother.
5. Aichorn, August, Wayward Youth, Viking Compass, 1968, Macmillan, p38.
6. Freud, Sigmund, The Ego and the Id, London, Hogarth, 1927, p46-7., ego ideal is 'the representation of our relation to our parents'. We later in our childhood incorporate something of their outlook and ideals into our framework.
7. Rubenfeld, Seymour, Family of Outcasts, Free Press, New York, 1965, p70., 'the emergence of delinquency occurs when the psycho-cultural adaptations of adults are re-enacted in the interactions with their children. The historic and current hardships of a group may become encoded into the character of the child, not only this but also the fact that parent is able to build up within the child, the same sense of personal defeat and alienation that he, the parent, has experienced within the society.
8. Cohen, A.K., Delinquent Boys-the Culture of the Gang, Free Press, Glencoe, 1955, p55
9. Ibid, p45.
10. Ibid, p76-88, for in depth discussion of Cohen's central hypothesis, that the position of the family in the social structure, particularly it's status vis-a-vis other families within that structure determines the experiences and the problems which all members of the family will encounter in their dealing with the world outside of the family.
11. Leissner, Aryeh, Research Project on Forces Acting in Street Corner Groups, Jerusalem, 1967
12. Ibid p 148.

## Footnotes

### Chapter III Part 1

13. Ibid, p. 199.
14. Leisners study delves into the sephardic pattern of family life and tradition. In this family pattern, the father is considered to be the dominant male whose authority is supreme within the family. In practice within the Shekumah, the authority of the father has become shabby, and it is the mother who makes the important decisions. In fact, when father and son come into conflict, the mother acts as an intermediary - sometimes supporting the boy against the father.
15. Also part of the picture is the transmission of parental values. In Sheik Mounis, for example, the youth experiences a great amount of apathy and very severe frustration. It is in this section that researchers found the parents to be the most apathetic and powerless.
16. Leissner, p. 49.
17. Platt, p180.
18. The establishment of a juvenile court system and concomitant institutions for dealing with youthful offenders did not in actuality herald a new system of social justice. What it did was to assume the natural dependance of adolescents thereby creating a special court to impose sanctions on premature independence.
19. Platt, p159.
20. Goffman, Erving, Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1965
21. Piliavin, Irving, 'Police Encounters with Juveniles', in Vital Problems for American Society, ed. Winter, J. Alan et al, Random House, NY, 1963, p212

## Footnotes

### Chapter III Part II

1. Fromm, Erich, 'Alienation Under Capitalism', Man Alone, ed. Josephson, Eric and Mary, Dell, N.Y., 1966, p.56
2. Ibid, p71.
3. Williams, Frank S. 'Youth Alienation and the Urban Scene', American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 40, No. 2 March 1970, p 79.
4. Weiss, Frederic A. 'Self-Alienation: Dynamics and Theory', Man Alone, p 464.
5. Ibid p 465-468, this person will say, 'I shall not participate in the game of life, get emotionally involved or make a move on my own, until there is a guarantee for the fulfillment of my needs'
6. Erikson, Erik, 'The Problem of Ego Identity', in Identity and Anxiety, Stein, Maurice, R., et al, Rose Press, N.Y. 1967 p 54.
7. True intimacy is so very difficult to achieve. Some youths may play around with entering into it, other practice isolation and entering into stereotyped relationships.
8. Erikson, Erik, Identity - Youth and Crises, W.W. Norton and Co., N.Y., 1968, p.60.
9. Gioscia, Victor, 'LSD Sub-cultures; Acidity Versus Orthodoxy' AJO, Vol39, No.3 April 1969, p428 ff.
10. This statistic refers only to the number of reported runaways. There is no way of determining the actual number because there are so many unreported instances of the phenomena.
11. Parents, unable to control or communicate with their children sometimes turn them over to the authorities. One of the most flagrant instances of many normal adolescents whom the parent has been unable to control. Youths are placed in these institutions in flagrant violation of their rights and the mental health codes of the various states.

## Chapter IV

### Potential of Coffee House for Dealing with Youth Alienation

#### Part A

### Personalities and Their Interrelations in the Coffee House Environment

#### Introduction

I have described the loneliness and the alienation that youth living in America are experiencing. Having dealt with youth needs and the consequences of failure to meet these needs, I now turn to one experimental program which is being implemented to cope youth alienation. It is the concept of an environment which brings people together in a relaxed, unstructured, non-stressful atmosphere, a place where there is little pressure and harassment. In our society, there is an emerging need for environments that are accepting and that do not exploit people financially or psychologically.

The idea of free and open environments for people is not particularly new and original, although it may be a novelty on the suburban American scene. For centuries, men have congregated in the hope of not only transacting business but also socializing in a warm milieu, mingling freely without restraints. Whether provided with a Greek Agora, Jerusalem market, or Old American town square, people, in the past, had readily accessible areas in which to come together. Today in the United States, the shopping center replaces the town square, the street corner hangout gives way to the group tuned into an electronic machine.

The idea of a coffee house for youth is intended to represent a return to the concept of a people's place; it is the restoration of an environment in which free interaction can happen without fear of recrimination. Within this non-stressful environment, there can be possibilities for youth to interact with peers and relate to older, more settled and experienced individuals, to unload aggressions and to work out fears or anxieties arising from frustration in realizing basic needs.

### The Creation of a Coffee House

During the summer of 1970, the Jewish Family Service of Cincinnati, Ohio established a coffeehouse for youth below its office facilities which are located in the predominantly Jewish suburb of Roselawn. The idea was motivated and inspired by the Director of the Family Service, Mort Startz, the Director of Casework, Mr. Henry Ovadia, and the Senior caseworker, Doris Wolfenstein with the help of students in social work from Smith College and Rabbinical students from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

It became an experimental project which was designed to explore methods of reaching out to youth who were in trouble either within the family, in the school, or with relationship to their peers. In addition, the coffeehouse potential in responding to the drug condition was to be explored. How would youths use the coffeehouse? Would they trust the people who worked there as counselors and volunteers? These were among the more crucial questions that the staff of the Jewish Family Service hoped to answer.

Initially, a group of thirty youths, many of them former clients of the Family Service, were contacted. The idea was presented to them, and they received it very enthusiastically. During the summer, this group, aided by their advisor, Roger Klien, searched out and prepared a facility for their coffeehouse. Due to the difficulty of procuring a separate facility, the Family Service donated to the committee the use of its basement for the coffeehouse. The kids were free to do with it whatever they desired.

They utilized the three rooms in the following way. The main room served as place where people could mingle and socialize, there was a room for bands to play or folk singers to entertain, and finally, a small private room, 'the meditation room', intended for serious discussion. The people spent weeks decorating, designing, furnishing, planning activities and entertainment. They were able to open



in mid-July, and it ran successfully for a month and a half. In late August, Roger resigned as director due to school and congregational obligations. I was appointed by the Jewish Family Service to succeed him. What follows is the result of six months of observation through participation in this experiment, conclusion and hypothesis concerning what took place, and suggestions for future implementation of the experiment.

#### Population of the Coffeehouse

The best evening to observe the full scope of personalities is Saturday, during which time the coffeehouse is wide open. This particular evening is a time of perpetual motion. Kids are constantly on the move coming in and out. At peak periods there are at least seventy-five to one hundred people in the place. These are youth of diverse backgrounds. There are Jewish youth, particularly from the middle and upper-middle class background; groups of non-Jews mostly from Catholic middle class and working class and Blacks who live on the fringes of Roselawn. Although this fluctuates, the youth are of high school age. I would say that the average level of the main population was tenth to eleventh grade.

The population of the coffeehouse is mainly a reflection of its location and the composition of Woodward High School which is a few blocks up the road. Since it is situated on a main thoroughfare, the coffeehouse attracts a broad sampling of people from all classes and religious denominations. Because it is located in a Jewish neighborhood and connected with the Jewish Family Service, the main group attending happen to be Jewish.

The composition of the group is always changing. There is an inner core who appear regularly throughout the week and an outer mass who show up a few times a month. Members of the outer group will attend regularly for a while then drop out of sight, only to re-emerge after a few weeks. The people in this group come for social reasons. It is not homogeneous. There are youths conforming to societal

and parental expectations, and there are those who are rebelling against the pressure to conform to values which they believe to be de-humanizing, values such as materialism, status, and competition. Within this outer mass are drug people and non drug people. There are youths who habitually take drugs such as marijuana, LSD, and Methedrine; there are youths who have never and are against using these drugs; and there is a group who have at one time used drugs heavily, but have seen the dangers involved, and have stopped. There are youths who have serious family and emotional problems, and youths who are very happy and well adjusted.

The inner core drop in on a fairly regular basis. They number about thirty five. They range in age from thirteen to seventeen, with the main body in the upper age bracket. The group is approximately sixty percent Jewish. Within this inner core, there is the committee composed of ten people who make policy decisions for the coffeehouse; this committee is fluid. I shall first describe the general nature of the inner core, and then I will talk about the committee.

In this inner core, there are drop outs from college and high school, children of recent immigrants to the United States, youth who have been rejected from other cliques and status groups, and people who are seeking involvement in something relevant and worthwhile. There are youth who have been in trouble with the Juvenile Court and youth who are experiencing unhappiness and turmoil within the home.

Although they experience strong religious and cultural feelings, many of the Jewish kids in this group have been alienated from the Synagogue. If they participate they find religious school and other temple activities irrelevant. Very few of them have serious youth group affiliations, nor do they attend synagogue regularly. They do, however, participate to a limited extent in school and Jewish Community Center orientated activities, since they are either theatrically, technically, musically, or athletically inclined. They do not have a place in which to just relate to one another and to find total acceptance, a place of their own. Extra-curricular activi-

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ties of the school, Jewish Community Center, and Synagogue provide activities for them; the coffeehouse is for them to use as they wish.

Within the inner-core there is a sub-group of high school and college drop outs. They have no job, some are into drugs, and are terribly anxious about the future. The college dropouts have no peer group, and they look to youth of highschool age for acceptance. In this state, they are frustrated in breaking away from the home and achieving independence; they are not growing socially or intellectually. The high school drop outs come mainly from working class families. They make serious attempts to find employment, but are frustrated by their lack of training and the tightness of the job market. At the coffeehouse, they find acceptance, lack of stress, and people with whom they are able to relate.

The inner core also includes youth whose families immigrated to the United States. Some are not native born Americans, others are first generation. Due to contact that their family had with Jewish Family Service during the acculturation period, these youths have an initial confidence and trust in the Family Service.

A small clique of Polish immigrants represent the most recent grouping. Due to the outbreak of anti-Semitism, they were forced to leave Poland. When they periodically drop in, they remain within their own group. Their main purpose in coming is to meet girls; but they are hampered in this search by linguistic difficulties which produce stigma of strangeness. When they relax, they often speak of their personal experiences with anti-Semitism. One said, 'the Jew, today in Poland, is treated like a dog'. They feel that America is a land of liberty and opportunity; but they look to Israel with love and pride. For these youth, the coffeehouse is a secure, supportive and non threatening environment in which they can test their newly acquired social skills.

In addition to the Polish youth, there are children of Israeli yordim. These youth manage to fit in quite well, while others experience a bit of difficulty. Take for example, Uzi who came to America three years ago. He is extremely conscious of the cultural differences that exist between his peers and he is trying desperately

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to close the gap. He makes aggressive attempts to gain acceptance, but is constantly being rebuffed. He has the hutzpa and the aggressiveness of a sabra which his peers find difficult to cope with. He forces himself into situations where he is unwanted. Everything he does, his flamboyant dress, his hair, his mannerism, is geared towards gaining acceptance. Although his peers pick on him, he is reinforced by the volunteers at the coffeehouse who accept him and take a sympathetic interest in his struggle for identity and respect.

In addition to these groups, there are youths facing the basic problems of maturation. There is Mike who is in constant conflict with his father whom he claims does not respect him and takes advantage of him. Myron whose mother is transferring her nervousness comes to talk of an explosion that just took place at the dinner table. Miriam experiencing a sexual relationship with a boy for the first time, comes in all upset over a fight they have just had. There is Dina who faces high school graduation with the need to focus on future career identity; Scott who comes from a strict Orthodox home, attempting to strike out in his own religious direction, and Linda, an ex-drug person, who being very lonely, comes seeking love and companionship. All of these youths and more come to the coffeehouse to escape the loneliness that can be imposed on the adolescent in our society.

Many of these youth make up the membership of 'the committee' which describes the overall policy for the coffeehouse. The 'committee' takes care of choosing entertainment, purchases food, and cares for the physical premises of the coffeehouse. There are ten people on the committee. It was formed four months ago. At first it was closed, the members were active, enjoying the status that it afforded.

After a few weeks of successful functioning, new names were presented for membership. Amongst these proposed candidates, there were people who were both unpopular and who had little intention of working constructively. In spite of this, all of the aspiring members accepted, and a suggestion was made that the committee now be completely open. One member suggested, 'shouldn't everyone who comes to the coffeehouse take equal responsibility for running it?'. A motion was passed that anyone interested in participating could come and contribute their ideas.

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The next meeting was packed with people; personal squabbles erupted; and the meeting ended in utter confusion. The original members began to lose interest; the committee met less frequently. With a large group of younger kids coming in drunk, a major crisis developed. In order to cope with this problem, the director assembled the original committee members. Once together again, they voted to close the committee. Their enthusiasm returned, and they began to work actively to solve the problem.

What happened here was that with the return of their status, the committee became motivated to work for the coffeehouse. This indicates that the youths have internalized the value of 'status' which is very much a part of their parental value system. Although they may claim to reject materialism and social climbing, there are values which they have assimilated and accepted; one such value is status. In order for the committee to function effectively, it must be a small cohesive group who feel a sense of importance and responsibility in the position. Loss of motivation occurred when responsibilities were diffused and not specifically assigned.

In general, the members of the committee respect each others opinion. Although they may disagree, they are rarely denigrating or insulting. They are not particularly close. When the committee began meeting, it was unusual to find one member who knew anothers address or phone number. As time passed, friendships were formed; people began coming together. Through an interest in the coffeehouse, they began to develop an interest in one another.

After the committee was formed, active participation increased. Instead of sporadic attempts to organize and maintain, there was informal regular participation. The structure arose through the lack of structure. It was not imposed by the director or by the members of the Family Service. It developed spontaneously, as a need on the part of the coffeehouse people, to make the place more alive and active. As the

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structure came from within and not from without, the ambition and motivation of many of the kids was channeled.

Another interesting point is that although the committee represents structure, most of the real work is done by independent action on the part of committee members. Although the nominal power resides on the hands of the chairman, there are a group of about five girls who actually do the busy work, making arrangements and purchasing food. A rigid structure could never be imposed on this situation.

From the workings and composition of the committee, we can conclude that when programs are provided and structure imposed, there can be involvement, but this involvement ceases when responsibility is delegated. If decision making and responsibility are handed over to the participants, they become intensely motivated, and carry out projects with purpose and enthusiasm.

### How People Relate in the Coffeehouse

The youth who come to the coffeehouse are capable of aggressive, rough, and insulting outbursts towards one another without realizing the hurt that they may be causing their fellow. They also can make kind and loving gestures. They can be self centered and unaware that there are other people in the coffee house who are sharing what they are getting from the experience. They also have interesting methods of communication.

Their communications falls into two categories, verbal and non-verbal. There is a special type of verbal communication that they have which is worth investigating. It is termed the 'rap' session, 'rap' I think coming from the word, rapport. In effect, rapping is used to establish relation; when two youth 'rap', they consider themselves to be connected. Rapping is meaningful verbal communication either in a group or on a person to person level during which important information and ideas are communicated; it can also be a verbal exchange of feelings. When a

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'rap session' develops, it is a designated event. It is usually initiated by the phrase, 'do you want to rap?' which means the same as, 'lets talk for awhile'.

It is important to remember that there is a difference between 'let's rap' and 'let's talk'. The world of 'let's talk' is the universe of verbal communication with little recognition of the worth of non-verbal communication; the world of 'let's rap' accepts and expects non-verbal communication. In fact, there is implied within the term 'rap' not only the idea of 'talk' but also that of relation and contact.

Rapping, also, involves sending out 'vibes'; 'vibes' are vibrations. A person sends out 'good vibes' when he acts warmly, non-hostily, and accepting; he sends out bad vibes when he acts hostilely, aggressively, and unsympathetically. When they rap, youths not only talk, they also exchange these non-verbal feelings and attitudes towards one another.

The coffeehouse people are very sensitive to these non-verbal communications. It is because of 'vibes' that they can constantly sit silently together with electric music pulsating through the room. Standing in such an environment, one can feel the skin vibrating from the thunder of the amplifiers and fancier guitars. The noise level makes verbal communication impossible, so communication becomes non-verbal through gestures and bodily movements.

There are a number of reasons for the increasing level of non-verbal communication amongst our youth. The first is drug use. While ten years ago people in high school got drunk in order to assert their independence, today's youth get high. At least three quarters of the kids coming into the coffeehouse have experimented with marijuana, though which they have experienced deep withdrawal into the self, in addition to increased sensitivity to expression and movement. There is perhaps another reason though. It is being exposed to a technology that limits the need for verbal communication. The desire to verbally communicate lessens in the presence of inhibitors such as television and highly amplified music; the communication becomes the beat, not the word, the tactile image, not the phrase.

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These are only partial answers. Although verbal communication may work for many other people, for the youth of the coffeehouse, it has sometimes failed to meet their needs. Verbal communication has led to conflict at home, in school, and in instances of personal relationship; they have not been able to use it effectively in working out problems. Since verbal communication does not adequately serve them, they explore methods of non-verbal communication. The coffeehouse is a setting in which this exploration can take place and be accepted. The opportunity to non-verbally communicate gives youth room to grow, in order that they can communicate verbally more effectively. As one coffeehouse observer stated, 'the freedom for the kids to express themselves non-verbally provides a tremendous amount of security for them. Without stress, they can feel themselves out as individuals within a group. In silence or in non-verbal talk, they have the opportunity to discover themselves. Giving them this leeway, the effort to engage them in verbal conversation is eventually rewarded'.

They communicate with each other through actions that are both aggressive and considerate. Although there has never been a brawl of major proportions, fights sporadically break out between the boys. The other members of the coffeehouse exert group pressure to break these fights up. The altercations center around an insult or a condescending remark. There are usually self-appointed enforcers who make it their business to cool things down. This is because there is a general feeling that in order for the coffeehouse to successfully operate; there must be order.

Aggressive and destructive behavior comes out in many other ways. There have been holes punched through walls, destruction done to the ceiling, and wax dripped upon the floor. People will play with fire and sometimes throw food around. These out breaks are caused by frustration and boredom that many of the youths experience. At the coffeehouse, they act out these aggressions without fear of serious consequences. Due to rejection or personal hurt, a youth may run around the coffeehouse shouting wildly, he may roll on the floor, or make cacophonous sounds upon musical instruments.



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They do this without embarrassment and without fear of being reprimanded. The ease that they feel at the coffeehouse is the reason for the security they feel acting out their aggressions.

On the other hand, the coffeehouse youth take an active interest in undoing the damage inflicted during these moments of aggressive release. Pat who slammed his fist through a wall in disgust; later fixed the wall, as well as initiating other repairs. Ben and Shelly who threw potatoe chips helped, the next day, to clean the room they had just despoiled. A group of girls used their school vacation to thoroughly clean and vacuum the coffeehouse.

The aggressive action manifested in the coffeehouse is employed to relieve disappointments and frustrations. When these actions turn destructive, there are compensatory constructive attempts to rectify the destruction, to restore equilibrium and balance to the coffeehouse.

Another area of coffeehouse youth interrelations are sexual attachments. Since the coffeehouse has areas reserved for sex, there is frequent sexual contact. It is difficult to determine precisely the exact nature of these sexual contacts, although the probability of intercourse is remote.

Many couples will meet in the coffeehouse to exchange affection because it affords them a low level of physical and psychological risk. Physically there is virtually no danger of being attacked or arrested. The threat of being caught in the act of having sex is done away with. In addition, since these designated areas lack privacy and intimacy, youths as yet unsure of themselves are not prematurely forced into a sexual responsibility for which they are not emotionally ready. Thus the coffeehouse provides a non-stressful and safe setting in which to experiment sexually, an experimentation that is so vital in adolescent maturation.

Aside from the youths who have paired off, the majority are single and not permanently attached. They may tolerate one another, yet make little attempt to

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become intimate. This is probably due to lack of physical attraction, but there are probably issues of competency and self-worth involved.

In the process of their interrelation, the sexes can be rough rather than genteel. The boys take pride in not being gallant; the girls in not being feminine. For example, a young man and an attractive blond made sexual advances in the form of combat style wrestling. She claimed that she could defend herself; he threw down the gauntlet, and they fought to their mutual humiliation to a draw. Later, a boy who, the previous evening had been affectionate with a girl, sat down violently on her back as she lay prone on a couch in the main room. In both of these examples, there is the non-verbal communication saying 'I want you sexually, but I am unable to communicate this want verbally. Since I cannot express my frustration adequately, I will act out of frustration and act aggressively towards you'.

The process in term 'maturation process' implies that there is growth and advancement. An important aspect of this growth is the youth's development from self-centeredness to a growing awareness of other selves. The self-centeredness can be the cause of insulting behavior. It comes out in the following ways. M. playing a record suddenly cuts it off in the middle of a song, although there are a group of people listening to it. Without asking them and in blatant disregard of their feelings, she puts the record away and leaves without a word of apology. In addition, Paul notices a loud-speaker that is not being used by the coffeehouse. He feels that since it is not serving a function there, then he has exclusive rights to it.

The messages which these youths are sending say, "What is in it for me?" They are saying, 'what does this situation or relationship have to offer me, rather than what do I have to bring to it?' In these instances, the coffeehouse can be a milieu in which the self-centeredness is challenged by the presence of other people to whom the self-centered youth gradually begins to feel a sense of responsibility.

Position of the Director and Volunteers in the  
Coffeehouse Experiment

A picture of the coffeehouse would be incomplete without a few words about the role of the director and the group of volunteers, composed of social worker, Rabbinical students, and young married couples.

The director's role is to provide non-directive guidance. The Jewish Family service gives him complete freedom to exercise his creativity and originality. They rarely check on his activities and seem to have confidence in what he has been attempting to do. They see him as a responsible agent for the physical premises, as well as the security and safety of the youths while they are on the property of the Family Service.

His role is organizer, motivator, and initiator of ideas. He is an elder person who ought to be understanding and empathetic, who the kids can talk about their fears and problems. He should be available in a counseling capacity to aid youths when they are upset and help them achieve deeper self understanding and realization.

During the first half year of the operation, the youths have grown to respect and trust the directors; they accept his presence. Their attitude is that he is not to interfere with them, and he should respect these wishes. In this arrangement, his presence rarely limits their freedom to act; yet his presence is often enough to quell a potentially explosive situation.

The authority and trust that the director should inspire comes through his continuous presence because it is very difficult to form a relationship with many of these kids over a short period of time. They can be very closed and mistrustful. It is through this continued and reliable presence, appearing on time, night after night that the door is open to relationship and communication.

The Director is non-directive. He allows the youth to do almost whatever they want to do, whenever they want to do it..This means tolerating a lot of noise and seemingly purposeless movement. He recognizes that the coffeehouse is an environ-

ment where each person can do their own thing, as long as they respect the rights of others.

If possible the director makes his life an example. He influences others through his life-style. He is not coercive; he does not impose his ideas and beliefs. An example of this can be noted in considering the drug problem. The director can attempt to re-enforce those youths who resist the peer group pressure to take drugs. Through his life style, he can make the statement, that an individual can be opposed to the status quo and to the establishment, yet also not get involved in drugs, that there are other alternatives--drugs are both mentally and physically damaging. This approach may have some value, but what it ultimately comes down to is developing relationships with the kids, it is out of these relationships that pressure not to use drugs can be applied.

The director is approachable. He attempts to reach out to those youths who feel withdrawn and reserved. He is outgoing giving them the impression that if they have something on their minds, they can tell him about it. He uses the non-directive approach which involves subtle motivating.

He is also responsible for bringing new personalities into the coffeehouse. Five Rabbinical Students from the Hebrew Union College periodically assist him. This is healthy because it lessens the danger of the coffeehouse being dominated by the personality of the director. Other volunteers include young married couples, and members of the Jewish Family Service. One young social worker has been a tremendous help in the coffeehouse program.

How do the people of the coffeehouse react to these volunteers and outsiders in general. Since they feel at home and relaxed in the coffeehouse setting they take it upon themselves to welcome outsiders and volunteers, The basic response to these people depends upon their personalities. If they do not make attempts to talk to the kids, then they are ignored. As long as they make no attempt to interfere with their freedom, they are tolerated.

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To those outsiders who attempt to communicate, the kids are very open, and willing to talk. They act as host and are very gracious. It is more a question of making the outsider feel at home, than a question of the coffeehouse population being disturbed by the presence of that particular person.

### Conclusion

I am presenting a concept that may be employed in dealing with youth alienation. I have examined the population of the coffeehouse setting showing how they benefit by association and participation; I have examined how they relate to each other, and how the director and volunteers function within this setting.

There is every indication that a non-stressful, non-demanding, accepting atmosphere, under empathetic supervision, can have value in aiding youth in coping with the demands of the maturation process in this technological society. In the next section of this chapter, I will relate specific instances in which the existence of the coffeehouse has aided troubled youth.

Counseling In The Coffeehouse

Introduction

I have covered the structure and basic philosophy behind the operation of the coffeehouse. I will now relate specific instances in which youth have used the coffeehouse and sought the counsel of the volunteers. These instances include not only problems, but also attempts to express feelings and convictions. By describing these specific contacts, I will bring out the essential value that the coffeehouse environment can have in meeting youth needs within American society.

Group Contacts:

There are two possible perspectives that can be taken; there is the value that the coffeehouse can have for the group, and the value that the coffeehouse can have for in individual. Periodically, the attendance of the coffeehouse sharply rises. This usually relates to events that effect the high school community at large.

This phenomenon was first noticed the day after an event that shocked the entire Roselawn community. They suffered the loss of a young girl who had been brutally murdered. Many of the people at the coffeehouse knew her, infact, some had been in her confirmation class and youth group. They came to the coffeehouse frequently that week; they were shocked and stunned by the tragedy.

At first, they did not talk very much about their grief, for what was there to say. They seemed to find solace in their silence, comfort in each others presence. When they did talk with the director, they expressed disbelief that such a horrible thing could possibly happen. One friend began to cry, wishing that it had been she who was the victim; another friend vowed to somehow avenge the crime.

The director and other volunteers endeavored to be open and to face their grief, aiding them to express it. At this moment of intense grief and bewilderment, gathering together was a comfort to the shock that this tragic and brutal loss touched off. Death had brushed by unexpectedly; very close to their own 'selves'. One of their

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own peers was suddenly and violently struck down. In a sense, their coming together represented security from individual isolation. They could not face being alone with the thought of their finitude, and so they sought out the group. Fortunately, they were able to find such a group.

They also come when they experience political unrest. During the evening following an anti-war demonstration, there was an increase in attendance. In the course of this demonstration, minor property damage occurred and an American flag was torn down. The event upset many of the kids because they had become intensely involved in the action. They feared that the authorities were singling them out for punishment; they were frightened and scared.

The people who gathered in the coffeehouse that evening discussed their feelings about what had just taken place. One group was very involved in the action, another said that they had just joined in because of the excitement, and others were apathetic with a few supporting the school authorities.

The youths who played a major role in ripping down the flag felt that they were being singled out for punishment and prosecution. They were quite paranoid; they feared that at any moment, they were going to be apprehended by some investigative agency. Given the chance to air their fears, they were re-assured that if the authorities wanted to apprehend them, they would have already done so. The director and others attempted to convey to them that the situation was not as bleak as they perceived it to be.

The coffeehouse played a twofold significant role in this incident. First, a place was provided in which people who were in a turbulent state could come and wait things out. They gain time to form a perspective on the issue. Secondly, to those youths who managed to get a distorted picture of the situation, the staff members on hand, were available to relate and relay unbiased, reliable information. They could aid those who were in a state of paranoia, realizing that the only anxiety that they had to worry about was their own. Coming into this secure re-assuring,

atmosphere, calmed their nerves, and aided them in getting themselves together while diminishing their fear.

INDIVIDUAL CONTACTS (include as sub-leveling)

Aside from group experiences, there were a number of individuals who used the coffeehouse at moments of personal crises. In the first instance, there was the youth who regularly came to the coffeehouse from his suburban home, a mile away. Although he had dropped out of high school, he was working for a high school diploma on a part time basis. He had additional troubles. With recently divorced parents, his family situation was anything but stable. He also had a clinical history; for two years ago, he was institutionalized for a nervous collapse.

He was a talented singer. Many of the words that he sang had personal meaning through which he expressed feelings of love, loneliness, and rebellion. He loved to talk about popular music, interspersing his conversation with poetic stanzas of song and rhyme.

He spent much time with his girl friend; they were very happy together. She had a calming and moderating influence upon him; yet when they argued, his pattern of behavior became erratic. He was moody; and at times, he would explode violently. His tantrums could be non-verbal, as well as verbal. When agitated, he would pace wildly to and fro, almost out of contact with what was transpiring around him. As the result of such a temper tantrum, his girl friend and he split up. This event must have increased his vulnerability for a week later, he appeared in the coffeehouse in a complete daze.

He had been with some other boys who had given him a table of LSD in order that he could feel happy. Since he was so depressed and rejected, he was readily willing to experiment with the drug, and he yielded to their pressure. The effect was very harsh and sudden; he unexpectedly felt withdrawn. He started to hallucinate. He felt worms crawling all over his body; he saw flashes of multicolored lights. He



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panicked at these sudden feelings of detachment.

He managed, by chance, to successfully hitchhike from where he had taken the drug, to the coffeehouse. When he arrived, he told of feeling distant, strange, and detached. The director was assuring, and stressed the point that the youth was still in the real world, that he wasn't being spirited away. The other people in the coffeehouse sensing the situation responded by being very friendly and assuring the youth. In awhile he began to calm down. He felt security in the coffeehouse; there nobody was going to 'hassle him'. He spoke of feeling rooted and belonging; he started to feel a vital and significant relation to reality. At a period when he was about to 'freak out' or experience a bad trip, he was able to find an environment which tended not to be hostile or threatening.

It is important that he thought of coming to the coffeehouse, for he said, 'I was feeling flipped out, and this was a place for me to come, so that I could get my head together.' In his moment of crises, the fact that he had available such an atmosphere could have saved him from a deep psychological wound. For when a youth is 'tripping' or 'speeding', his psyche is in great danger. More damage can be inflicted if he encounters hostility and lack of understanding.

The coffeehouse has it's lighter moments. A thirteen year old girl sat quietly and tearfully in a corner. She was not going home that night. Why? It seems that somewhere between school and the home of a friend, she had lost her mother's department store credit card. The young girl was paralysed with fear to confront mother's wrath.

Her fears were abated when she talked the situation out with one of the volunteers. They considered the possible consequences if she failed to return home. There would be a missing person's report filed. Where would she go now? How would she support herself? How is mother going to know that the card was lost, if she

isn't told? The suggestion was made that honesty and confronting the situation might win mother respect. With a twinge of anxiety in her face, the young girl decided that it would be best to return home and face up to the situation.

In an other situation, the director was asked to be on the lookout for a runaway girl. It was suspect that if she were to cease running; she might use the coffeehouse as a means to return home. Although she did not appear, a greatly agitated friend of hers did come in. He was concerned and upset over her disappearance. He said that he had been searching all over the city for her; he was trembling and wringing his hands. The person who spoke with him realized his plight, and began to rap with him. He gave the youth a few ideas with which to continue his search, thus opening up new hope and future possibilities.

Sensing the concern of the counselor, the youth continued to talk about the situation. He told of his fondness for the girl, and his fears that she may have come to harm. As he talked, he began to unwind; towards the end of the evening, he was sitting with another group of friends listening to the folk singer. Again, the non-stressful, relaxing atmosphere of the coffeehouse setting provided a milieu in which this individual could successfully relate and cope with the tension that was weighing so heavily upon him. It centered around this runaway incident.

There is another point that relates both to runaways and the potential value of the coffeehouse. It is surprising the number of youth who have already run away from home, or who are threatening to do so. There are both 'former' and 'potential' runaways. This does not mean to imply that the mere existence of the coffeehouse provides the rationale for a youth remaining at home, yet it does provide a setting where the pain can be worked on. It is also a setting in which the 'former' runaway can find release from family problems that may still be acute. From telling about runaway episodes, they begin to talk about the present home situation. For example, Lou Ann relates how her father used to beat her, but now, as a result of his therapy, he has learned to control his violent outbursts. She still complains

of father's insensitivity and unwillingness to communicate. She comes to the coffeehouse, at least twice a week; and she takes an active part in the functioning of the committee.

Lou Ann also finds an additional reinforcement. A year ago, she was a heavy drug user; she frequently took LSD and methedrine. About four months ago, she stopped. At the coffeehouse, she encounters others who have rejected drugs, from them she receives positive reinforcement. She is also supported in her affirmative stand by the director and volunteers.

Although the coffeehouse environment is not the answer to the drug problem, it can be an environment that discourages rather than encourages drug use. There are many youths who attend fairly regularly who have either totally ceased using drugs, or have cut down considerably on them. These people represent a kind of negative peer group. One of the reasons that a youth will turn on is that all his friends are doing it. As a peer group, they exert pressure on the youth to experiment. Those who have stopped exert a countervailing force. This is not an organized force; it is highly disorganized. The anti-drug people work on their own; any attempt to organize them into a cohesive group might be met with resistance.

The coffeehouse provides a milieu in which these people can operate. In this free atmosphere there is a danger; the 'pusher' can appear. It is at this point that the coffeehouse becomes restrictive; for dealing and even holding are strictly forbidden.

In addition to drug problems and runaway incidents, there are youth living in tense family situations from which release is sought. One night, Ben ran in to the coffeehouse very upset. He wanted to get something off his chest, for his father had just forbidden him to bring his close friend into the house. This decree insulted Ben. He said, 'I'll get my parents back, you'll see, I'll wait till the end of the month, and then I'll leave home without telling them.' Although Ben dropped out of college, he is still tied to the home. In this

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recent explosion, he feels the need for independence, but is economically and psychologically frustrated in achieving it. He talks about leaving home, but he is unable to do so. He sleeps in; futility looks for employment during the day; and in the evening, he spends time at the coffee house.

As a result of this argument, he was upset and hurt; he was ready to talk. He acknowledged the fact that perhaps his lack of initiative brought on the parental wrath. He began thinking not in terms of leaving home and lashing back at them, but in trying to do something constructive about his situation. He decided to intensify his hunt for employment, and considered returning to school. Although he may never act on these ideas, he expressed them when confronted by the director with reality of his situation. Instead of the negativity that 'getting back at parents by leaving home suddenly' implies, his hurt and anger were turned to engaging in positive and constructive solutions.

Another son of a troubled family came in to the coffeehouse one evening. He, too, arrived directly after the outburst; he was very nervous and agitated. He said that he had just kicked in the door of his bedroom. He was completely down on himself, thinking his action to be dumb and stupid.

What led him to kick in the door? Mother told him very abruptly that he was not allowed out, that he had to remain in to study. He became angry particularly over the tone of his mother's voice. He went off to his room to strum his guitar; father, not incensed, came into his room and grabbed the guitar out of his hands. Father then slammed the door behind him as he left the room without saying a word. As a result of his pent-up inexpressible rage, Dave kicked in the door that his father had slammed in his face. The curious thing is that he blamed himself for this deed. "How could I be so immature", he said sadly, he could not see beyond his own supposed failings.

He spoke further about his situation. He told the counselor about his low grades, about the vocational counseling he was receiving; and how the vocational

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counselor suggested to parents that they be more strict. He described mother as a very nervous person. She had heeded the counsel to increase strictness; she was indeed clamping down on her son. In the process, she was succeeding in transferring her nervousness to David.

David lamented that he wanted to improve his school performance, but he found it impossible to study in the home environment. Realizing that David was asking for help, the counselor recommended a worker at the Family Service. David knew the worker, and enthusiastically agreed to an appointment.

The interaction did not stop with that suggestion for he was still upset over his outburst. In talking through the incident with the counselor, he began to feel that the situation was not all totally his fault, that the fault should be shared. His violent reaction could perhaps be explained by the frustration and anger that he felt when father snatched the guitar away from him, slamming the door. It was almost logical that he should instead of beating father, lash out at the door. The intense guilt that he was feeling could be the guilt of having made the gesture of destroying father. In any event, when he went home at the end of the evening, he said that he felt better. He had hope for a future course of action; and he saw the problem in a much broader perspective.

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### Conclusion

I have related several scenarios. There was the group working out it's grief and the group experiencing turmoil after a political demonstration. I described the individual over-reacting to drugs, resisting pressure to take drugs, and experiencing anxiety and pain as the result of family conflict. All of these situations took place within the setting of the coffeehouse; what does this mean?

The youths who brought their problems into the coffeehouse did not emerge totally liberated. The coffeehouse is not a clearing house for personal problems; nor is it an outpatient clinic. All of the people who brought their trouble needed an escape from the pressures that were closing in on them. The coffeehouse represented an escape valve. In time of stress, youth may come there to receive support and acceptance in the non-stressful environment that was created. They could then re-emerge into the world with renewed confidence in the 'self' that is striving to become strong and independent.

## Conclusion

Two basic youth needs have been presented. First, the fundamental need to focus upon an identity has been seen. If the adolescent comes to understand who he is in relationship to himself as well as to others around him and learns to love, to work, and to maintain his gains, this identity is successfully attained. If this does not happen, problems such as alienation and delinquency can arise. In order to complete these tasks and avoid the pitfalls, youth requires an environment in which to experience and to test out his 'self'.

Secondly, we have seen that a youth as he matures needs to learn to communicate inner conflicts and crises to parents and society. He has much to communicate. There are the issues of biological change, attainment of intimate relation with others, and expression of individuality and independence through focusing upon a life's task. The problem in adolescence is that all of these issues converge simultaneously. The two sources of conflict the internal and the external merge. The awareness that change is taking place within the body and the mind is intensified by an external conflict, the contact of the self with others. These others can possibly be the family, peer group, or members of society at large. The conflict can be so great that instead of working it through the adolescent represses it. This repression of true feeling can cause him to lose touch with his real and basic desires and emotions. In which eventuality, he will become unhappy and lonely. Again a healthy and supportive environment is required for the conflicts to be worked out.

Two environments have been described. There was American society, the macrocosm, a unique environment, an open 'coffeehouse' through which a first hand picture of youth was obtained with the author as a participant observer.

The first environment studied was that of American society. In American society, youth finds obstacles to need fulfillment. They confront the problem of rapid technological growth. They also face a value system that places material

gain and progress before the development of feelings and emotions. Some observers have argued that American society ( is orientated away from fulfilling our spiritual and emotional needs). The contradictions of such a society are readily perceived by it's youth. This perception can have an isolating effect upon them.

Youth frequently despairs in a society that does not respond to their confusions and struggles. It is out of this despair that an increasing number of American youth turn to anti-social action, placing themselves in opposition to the expectations and standards of this society. Instead of coolly coping with this rebellion, American Society through her duly appointed authority figures, the juvenile courts and police departments, oft-times react by stigmatizing the youth as a juvenile delinquent.

We found it constructive to take a brief look at delinquency, since it is very much a part of the youth scene. Although delinquency can be viewed in terms of class conflict and psychic distress, the area that was considered in depth was the youth's becoming delinquent through the consequence of social definition which often happens on the basis of the 'public face' that he presents to officials, rather than on the offense, itself.

The loneliness of some American Jewish youth can turn not only into 'socially labeled' delinquency, but also into alienation. There is societal alienation and self-alienation. These forms of alienation are much more common than instances of delinquency. The socially alienated youth feels that he is not the creator of his own destiny, that he is dependant on outside powers which he can not control; while self-alienation is not so much estrangement from the environment, but rather divorcement from the self. Youth experiences both forms of alienation. For example there is the socially alienated individual who turns to drugs as an escape from the demands of society, while another youth can be making the same response as a flight from the self.

Alienation is most frequent amongst because during their crisis periods society expects them to make the most positive commitment to a role and to inter-



personal relationships that involve a high degree of intimacy. While adjustment to these conditions is required, the growth rate spurts and youth is rendered very vulnerable. Alienation comes to the adolescent during the critical periods of ego identity formation, and finds its expression when the successful formation of that identity is threatened.

Given this background of youth needs, the possibilities for meeting these needs within the framework of American Society, and the results when these needs are frustrated, a very special environment was presented in which many of these points were observed at first hand.

The second environment, the coffeehouse environment, provides a microcosm within the broader macrocosm to observe youth in American Society; and it, thus, provided a comparative perspective in which to operate. As compared with other institutions within our society, the coffeehouse is unique. It differs from the school, the family, and religious school environment that the Jewish youth is constantly exposed to. Relating to these institutions, they face an imposed structure from without and to which they are expected to conform. For example in the school, they are required to act in conformity to rules and regulations. This creates feelings of repressiveness, for the school not only imposes curriculum and teachers which have dominion of the youth's intellectual development, but it reaches into his personal life, determining what he does with the time during which his creative potential is operative. It molds him into an image which the society believes is proper.

Although there is merit to structure, the dominant institution within our society tend to misapply this structure by imposing it arbitrarily and without (flexibility).

The misapplication of structure can be seen in many of our Reform Jewish Religious Schools. Unfortunately, they have structured themselves to the point that youth endeavoring to grow and discover Judaism meet only a rigid curriculum that he has taken no part in forming, and has ideas imposed upon him which he

cannot test out experimentally and through other forms of verification. Although many of our schools are becoming less rigid, this is still the dominant pattern; it saps the vigor and creative vitality of our youth, creating resistance.

Perhaps a clear example of the overstructuralization of the religious school can be seen in the following episode. A teacher of a weekly Hebrew school class in a large congregation left his class to a substitute. The substitute as an experiment, did not uphold the traditional disciplinary devices. The class, faced with the sudden lack of structure, lost it's ability to cope; and instead of engaging in creative exploation, it reverted to childlike acting out. The youths digressed becoming disruptive, insulting and destructive. They regressed into early childhood stages in which strict discipline would be essential.

One of philosphic underpinnings guiding the coffeehouse experience is that it is not structured in the conventional sense; an informality pervades it. Because of the lack of structure and demands that are made upon them, two very interesting responses have been noticed.

The first response is an appreciation for having the opportunity to have a place in which just to 'be'. As one young man so aptly phrased it, 'the coffee-house is a place where when you are doing nothing, you can say that you are doing something'. This first point is very interesting in that it underlines a psychosocial need which the coffee-house serves. The comment of this youth is also the unspoken comment of many of the youths who regularly use the coffeehouse. A basic youth need is a psycho-social moratorium in which an adolescent can exist while developing the necessary psycho-social life skills. The coffeehouse environment provides, if only for a few hours each day, an atmosphere in which the youth can get away from the structure of the outside society which they may feel is giving them such a great deal of trouble.

The second response noted was that when a structural vacuum is created youth are not adverse to creating their own structure, and in doing so they accept the

guidance of experienced responsive and responsible elders. When this situation occurs, they become intensely involved and active in carrying through their plans. In response to a lack of structure, they have said, 'we want some structure, but on our own terms'. A difficulty in this was that the involvement was not sustained. There would be periods of intense involvement followed by periods of restraint and lack of participation. This is understandable when we consider the intense emotional and psychic strain that many of the youths who regularly attend the coffee-house are under, either in the family, in the home, or in peer group situations. Since many of them face the problem of not being able to get involved enthusiastically in any constructive activity, the periods of involvement do provide a therapeutic effect in that they serve as a springboard through which to motivate, however temporarily.

Another contrast between the environment of the coffeehouse and that of the regular institutions to which youth are exposed is that the coffeehouse environment is relatively non-stressful and relaxing, while in our regular institutions we find the disturbing fact of an impersonality and unresponsiveness to real human need. An environment in which the individual is made to feel that people truly care is a milieu in which the tension, stress, and anxiety produced by reaction against societal institutions would be greatly reduced.

The coffeehouse provides this atmosphere. It is a comfortable and protective atmosphere, fairly free of stress and anxiety, to which a youth can come, if he is suddenly confronted by tensions. Numerous examples of this dynamic were presented: the youth turning to the coffeehouse in time of bad drug reaction, the youth who as a result of intense family unrest felt the need to talk things over - not to mention the many youths who come just to be themselves, and act out with behavior that would not normally be countenanced in society. Examples of this might be rolling on the floor, running around yelling and screaming, and playing, in a way that at times seems infantile.

Given an environment that contains minimal stress allows the youth to grow socially in learning about how he can better relate to his peers and also to mature more naturally through relating to those many years older. Within the insti-

tutional settings that youth are placed, the older person is most often an authority figure. The youth relates not only to the personality but primarily to the authority.

Authority, of necessity, does exist in the coffeehouse, yet the authority is experienced by the youth in a unique way. The authority found in the coffeehouse is extremely flexible, allowing the youth to approach it in a non-stressful manner. The authority of the volunteers or director is not what the youth primarily relates to, for they are able to relate to these older people on a more meaningful basis. Youth experience the person with authority in a relaxed setting, he is not a threat, he is well received and accepted. The elder is in a unique position for through his life style and his attitudes he may be able to exert a positive influence, if he is able to gain the respect and the good-will of the coffeehouse population. In this way, the coffee-house differs from other institutions.

Finally, the coffeehouse represents a force that naturally draws people together, it is warm and intimate. Institutional rhetoric makes this claim but has great difficulty in realizing it. For example, our institutions like to picture themselves, as an extension of the family. The rhetoric blandly refers a college family" or a "congregational family". We would like to believe this; but when confronted by the facts, of lack of intimacy and caring, we are unable to do so. Without the need for this rhetoric, the environment of the coffeehouse draws youths closer together. Race and class conflict disappear; there is little open prejudice, there is acceptance. Although personalities frequently clash, the tension centers around differences arising out of interpersonal interaction. This leads to the conjecture that the freedom, intimacy of the environment, where all are truly equal and accepted is a healthy salutary soil in which brethren of all races and creeds can dwell securely together. Perhaps other institutions will take notice. When youth can mingle freely without pressure or tension, the tensions and frustrations that lead to racial and interclass struggle become subordinate to the general group interest.

The intimacy which the coffeehouse environment has to offer presents another advantage. Throughout the months, the coffeehouse attracted very lonely youths,

particularly those lacking an in-group. It was interesting to observe the process of acceptance. How over a few weeks span a community is developed, and relationships formed out of which they are able to find support in each other. Here is the loner has a place. Those who do not wish, nor who could not fit into the group structure within the institutional setting find a natural peer group, within the coffeehouse setting.

The coffeehouse symbolizes the place of belonging. To those who manage the initial entry, it becomes a place for easy interrelation and setting in which fears and tensions can be reduced. It has the magnetic quality of drawing youths momentarily away from the loneliness of a troubled family situation, and the isolation that life in American society can oft-times induce. It draws them into a warmer and more intimate setting.

Thus in all three areas, lack of structure, stresslessness, and intimacy, the coffeehouse answers basic youth needs in providing an environment where the psycho-social moratorium of adolescence alluded to by Erikson can transpire. A setting where the tensions and traumas that develop during adolescence can be worked on through contact with empathetic and knowledgeable adult figures, or simply by being left to themselves to brood and to work out the problem on their own - in their own terms - and time.

Environments similar to the coffeehouse are good milieus for Rabbis and Educators to reach Jewish Youth. These environments can be created within the Temple. Although it is filled with promise, it is a high risk proposition for educators because it means meeting the youth on their own terms. It means first bringing them together, and then working with them. The youths are not attracted to a particular program; they are attracted to a particular environment. Once in that atmosphere, meaningful contact through content can be attempted. The role of the Rabbi-educator is to be flexible, adaptable, and knowledgeable enough to meet the challenge of this unique situation.

The 'coffeehouse' is not only a physical establishment; it is also a concept. It has the potential of being adopted in Temples throughout the United States;

it's function would be reaching out to youth who have become disassociated and disaffiliated, It is a way of saying to these youth that the religious institution is flexible and is willing to serve not only the needs of those in the 'establishment', but also the needs of those who are in conflict with the establishment. By opening it's doors to all, the Temple becomes a symbol to our Jewish Youth of constant 'presence' ready at all times to serve.

Some Resources for Treating the Alienated Adolescent

- Introduction-

I have been painting a picture. It has included youth needs during the maturation process, the problem posed by a society in which these needs are difficult to achieve, and the alienation of youth manifested in the responses such as, drug abuse, suicide, and running away.

Faced with this situation, what methods can the Rabbi turn to in dealing with problems of severe youth despair? What resources from the realms of psychology and psychiatry are available to him? In this appendix I describe resources of possible merit in dealing with adolescent alienation.

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In coping with an alienated youth, the Rabbi must not only rely upon his own skills, but also on those developed in the field of psychology and psychiatry. Although not a therapist, the Rabbi might find an inspiration or some insight if he has a familiarity with various modes of clinical treatment. He can also provide himself with a broader scope for choosing which treatment to refer an alienated youth and his family, especially if that youth requires further and more in-depth counseling.

There are two basic orientations available to the Rabbi for referral, namely the individual and the group. I will first consider the possibilities that exist for treatment involving a one to one relationship.

Aside from the conventional orthodox modes of psychotherapy, there has been developed a method called Reality Therapy. Although it is a radical break from Orthodox forms of psychotherapy, it owes a great deal to those who pioneered the field and who devoted their lives to working with alienated adolescents.

## Appendix

There are many elements that make it different from conventional therapy. It holds the person responsible because the therapist relates directly, not through being an object of transference; it involves work in the present and the future, but does not get involved in the past; it doesn't look for unconscious conflict, but delves into the morality of behavior; and finally, the therapist is actively involved in teaching the person how better to fulfill his own needs.<sup>1</sup> Reality Therapy was developed by William Glasser; it has been applied in his work with deviant and delinquent girls but he also uses it with adolescents who have not been institutionalized.

From a theoretical standpoint, Reality Therapy centers around our need for fulfillment. It contends that most psychiatric problems are a manifestation of a person's inability to fulfill his own needs. It further contends that no matter how irrational and irresponsible a mode of behavior may seem to society, to a person it is valid if he is able to fulfill his needs through it. Since the youth in need of therapy denies some or all aspects of the reality of the world around him, the purpose of Reality Therapy is to help him accept the real world, and help him fulfill his needs in this world.

What are these needs? For Glasser, they are a sense of involvement with others. He says, 'we need a group of people with whom we are emotionally involved from the time we are born until the time we die - many emotional problems are a result of this lack'.<sup>2</sup> For example, senility would be the reaction of the elderly to isolation.

Reality Therapy is based on two needs essential to human well being. The first is that every man has the need to love and be loved. When he cannot satisfy this, his reactions vary from mild depression to withdrawal from the reality of the surrounding environment. Secondly, he needs to feel worthwhile not only to himself, but also to others. A person failing to improve his conduct when it falls below his standards, can get hung up on his own sense of worthlessness.



## Appendix

Whatever the case may be, the most critical factor for need fulfillment in another person who really cares and about whom one can care. Since the role of the therapist in Reality Therapy is to become such a person to the patient, the whole enterprise depends crucially on the ability of the therapist to become involved and also on the trust that he has been able to inspire in the patient.

Although there are many elements within Reality Therapy, I shall only touch on what I think are the most helpful points and ideas. One of the major issues in Reality Therapy is responsibility vs. irresponsibility. An individual under treatment is not considered mentally ill, rather he is 'irresponsible'. The goal then becomes bringing the irresponsible individual up to a measure of responsibility, so that he will be enabled to fulfill his own needs.

The involved therapist confronts the patient with the present situation. He might ask, 'are you presently taking the most responsible course of action'. The therapist tries to become the person who cares about the patient so greatly that he will reject behavior that will not help the patient fulfill his own needs. A usual question in Reality Therapy is 'what' and not 'why'.<sup>3</sup> Therapist will ask patient, 'what are you doing?', and not 'why are you doing it?' For example, in working with a person on drugs, the Reality Therapist would contend that all the reasons 'why' a youth takes drugs will not stop him from taking them. The change will only occur when his needs are more strategically being met.

It is hoped that change towards responsibility in outward behavior will lead to deeper inner personality changes towards the same end. Glasser gives the example of an adolescent girl, a potential runaway, who threw terrible and violent temper tantrums because her mother refused to allow her to date a certain young man. The girl was brought to the therapist who was able to make her feel that he was sincerely and completely involved in her life. He then asked her to discuss the subject with her mother making at the same time a conscious attempt to control her temper. This method was successful because the girl was willing to try a new pattern of behavior,

regardless of the conviction that such a form of behavior would not work'. A change in behavior became linked to change in attitude. If Reality Therapy is to be a successful method, it must get the person to realize that it is possible to achieve a responsible attitude to most of life's facets.

An approach similar to Reality Therapy but applied in much more action orientated way is Comprehensive Vocationally Oriented Psychotherapy, C.V.O.P. It has the special orientation of drawing the high-school drop out back into social participation. Through providing special educational assistance, getting together job placement, and finally psycho-therapeutic intervention.

It is based on the finding that when a youth drops out of school, the immediate attempt to simply get him to return fails leading to him dropping out a second time. This situation calls for a more personal and involved approach. Not only is involvement called for on a psychoanalytic level, but also it is deemed necessary on a very practical level. Involvement in the real situation is the first and most immediate step in therapeutic relationship.

A therapist using C.V.O.P. makes a total commitment to the youth who has to cope with the failure of dropping out of school because the moment of sudden departure from the sheltered confines of academia is a time of high anxiety content. His fragile ego, striving for identity, has been severely threatened and open to stress. As soon as the crisis develops, C.V.O.P. advocates making immediate contact with the adolescent. Contact is made by the therapist who should set it up outside of the school setting since that environment has been the cause of the crises. The contact is made within twenty-four hours, in order that the therapist becomes immediately identified as a positive force. In addition, it lessens the chances of violent self or outwardly destructive action by the drop out. Contact means intervention at the crises point and dealing with the real tasks at hand.

C. VOP is begun on the spot with the therapist offering to help in any way possible; it's primary principle is application of minimal pressure to return to the school situation. First, the therapist assists the client in finding a job.

## Appendix

Since the crises has aroused fears of dependancy and lack of masculinity, a job release from this stress, for the ability to procure and hold down a job is a sign of manhood and a symbol of identity achieved. The serious hurt suffered by the ego can be mollified by direct and immediate transition into some form of employment.

Job procurement is a realistic task at which youth and therapist can work together. They can search out the job opening and prepare for the interview. If the client is rejected, therapist lends consolation, support, and further encouragement. In addition, the attempt is made to secure the position that will have the most therapeutic value in the long run. For example, if the youth is exhibiting destructive impulses, a task that involves destruction, like demolition or wrecking, might be sought out. Having been given the opportunity to act out his destructive impulses, it is hoped that the person would turn to creative acts.<sup>5</sup> During the period that they are in contact, lines of communication are constantly open.

Therapist also makes periodic contact with the youth. They go on outings designed to stimulate creative interest. Therapist is also the teacher. In this aspect of the relationship, it is hoped that the person will develop some sort of desire to get further along with their education. As these basic things are being worked out, it is hoped that a psychotherapeutic relationship will develop in order that the client can begin working out his deeper psychic problems.

C.V.O.P. requires a dedicated and skilled therapist who is willing to take his art beyond office confines. It tackles the problem in a direct and forthright manner. Yet what of the youth that cannot be reached by social worker or psychiatrist? How is help extended to him?

Another interesting approach was developed by the Jewish Family Service of Long Island, New York. In order to reach drug alienated youth, out reach workers

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are used. These are especially trained high-school students who meet their peers in the high-school setting. The worker raps on drug abuse and misuse. Relationships are established, and out of these relationships the youth is placed in contact with trained professionals. Even after this contact is made, the relationship is maintained, and the workers use negative peer group pressure which might involve attempting to counteract any peer group pressure that might be exerted upon the youth to revert to use of drugs.

The therapeutic approaches so far investigated are those in which the therapist maintains a one to one relationship with the youth. There are elements common to most forms of individual, and I would like to briefly touch on some of these points. The process includes only two individuals who are in confidential interaction; the mode of this interaction is predominantly verbal; the interaction between the therapist and patient is relatively prolonged; and, finally, the relationship is structured to promote changes in behavior of one of the participants.

In the early fifties, a movement began that had an orientation quite different from the individual approach. A group of therapists began to theorize that family and individual problems could be more adequately handled, if the family was therapeutically treated as a unit. The movement was called family therapy. It became a most effective way of dealing with problems stemming from adolescent alienation; its influence as a movement is also experiencing rapid growth. In order for the Rabbi to have more complete resources for referral, I will discuss the family therapy movement, and various approaches to counseling found within that movement.

Family Therapy differs radically from individual therapy in the following ways; there are more than two people involved, consequently interactions are brought out of the realm of confidentiality; non-verbal communications and interactions play far greater role; it can be completed in a relatively short time

period, and, finally, relationship has for it's definite and agreed upon purposes changes in the family system of interaction, in addition to changes in the behavioral system of individuals. It's premise is that individual change comes about by and through a product of system's change.<sup>7</sup> The goal of change in the family system of interaction is family therapy's most distinctive feature.

Family therapy is emerging as an additional and sometimes more effective than the individual variety because in certain instances members of the family constellation attempt to interfere with or become part of the individual treatment as if they had some stake in the process. It was, also, noted that hospitalized members of the family unit regressed when a family member came to visit or was returned to the family. Not only this, it was, also, observed that other family members<sup>8</sup> tended to get worse as the person who was placed under treatment got better. These were amongst the major considerations leading to the growth of the family therapy movement.

Within the movement, there are many approaches, each depending on the style and the technique of the therapist. The two major categories are the conductors and the reactors. The style of the reactors is very low keyed. These therapists have less compelling public personalities; they present themselves to the family not only as themselves, but in various roles that have been dictated by the tactics or the group dynamics of the family.<sup>9</sup> Their technique is similar to that of the psychoanalytic process in that the individual is assumed to carry some truth that is being suppressed in his subconscious. The task then is to reveal that truth and meaningful work it out. It is hoped that this will serve to give the patient freedom. In addition, there are the conductors who take a more aggressive role. The therapist using this approach stays on top of the group; he is the acknowledged leader. He manages this through sheer force of a vigorous personality, and through having a strong sense of his own goals which he attempts to transfer to the family.

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One of the most inovative people in the movement has been Virginia Satir. Through an examination of her method, perhaps the worth of the approach of Family Therapy can be more greatly appreciated. Satir's approach is to present herself to the family as a teacher and expert in communication, for she believes that faulty communication has caused the pain in the family. This faulty communication lies at the heart of youth alienation within the family unit.

Satir's goal is to bring the youth into clear communication with the family. In order to achieve this new sense of attunement, either the faulty communication system has got to be cleared up, or a sustem and mode of communication introduced where none previously existed.

For a youth to have the vital possession of a sense of self-respect, the relationship of parent should be functional and gratifying. If they have achieved this, then a sense of respect will come easily to the youth. For functional and gratifying relationships to take place, there must be communication, very clear and vivid communication.

In an effort to facilitate communication, Satir refers to herself as the 'very embodiment of clarity and perception in communication, using simple words and keeping up a running explanatory gloss on what is happening. It is this emphasis on communication that lies at the heart of her theory.

What are the difficulties faced by the family endeavoring to communicate effectively? Since somunication is the proecess of giving and getting information, the effort to attain absolutely clear and lucid communication is virtually impossible, because when they are sent out, communications can have a variety of different meanings. In order to attain perfect communication, it would be necessary to carry on a conversation where every word is explained precisely. This could throw human verbal intercourse into the realm of impossibility. Yet there exists a point at which it might be said that a person is not communicating functionally. At this point, his communication is labeled as dysfunctional.

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for most of his verbal transactions are very unclear and incomplete.

Communication can be difficult because in reality words are symbols for what people have on their minds; and since ( as far as we are able to determine) no two human consciousnesses are exactly alike, conveying precise meaning with even the simplest of words is extremely difficult. Words can have both connotative and denotative meanings. The same word can mean not only two different things, but it can also convey two or more different moods. For example, the word 'mother' can refer to a warm responsive woman, or a cold unaccepting one.

Satir posits that words are at different levels of abstraction. There can be words about words about words.<sup>12</sup> As the words become more abstract, their precise meaning can become more obscure. In addition, there are many aspects of experience that can not be described verbally. All of these factors lie as barriers to communication.

The use of full language in order to achieve functional communication within the family is only one of the orders that Satir is attempting to fulfill in her very complex work. Communication is also a non-verbal process. In order to understand a family and to get it to change it's behavior for the betterment of all, this non-verbal process needs to be actualized, examined and understood.

People not only communicate on the denotative level which contains the literal message content; they also communicate on the meta-communicative level. Metacommunication is a message about a message; it is a comment or explanation about a message that has been given. For example, if the communication is 'that was a request', the verbal metacommunication might be (consider it) which would follow in the speech pattern directly after the message just given. The metacommunication conveys the senders attitude to the message that he is sending, to the person who he is sending it to, and also to himself. It is in this respect that it can be non-verbal, in addition to being verbal.

For example, a husband can make a denotative statement like, 'the cat is on the bed'. An automatic non-verbal metacommunicative statement is made by the tone

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of voice with which the communication is sent out. Perhaps the tone is angry and irritable. He can then verbalize metacommunicatively by explaining what he meant by his statement when he says that 'I wanted you to take the cat off the bed!' <sup>13</sup>

It is the task of the receiver to balance both the verbal and the non-verbal metacommunicative statement against the denotative statement. If there is a harmony then the statement is congruent, is fully communicated by the sender, and apprehended by the receiver. If it is not, the statement is incongruent and the communication is not functional. For example, a sender can make the statement 'come closer darling', he can then send out both a verbal and a non-verbal metacommunication. He <sup>14</sup> can stiffen and then say, 'I want to make love'.

Not only does the sender have a problem because he may be unable to send out a clear communication, the receiver also has a set of problems. He needs to determine which statement he should respond to. Should he respond to the denotative statement, and simply come closer?, or should he respond to the non-verbal 'stiffness'?, what is he to make of the request to make love? A dysfunctional sender can completely baffle a functional receiver.

Although this overview of communication theory is sketchy, I feel that it conveys an idea of what it is all about. The method employed by Satir is that in treating the IP (identified patient), the total family network of communication is worked on. To this end, she uses an active style of therapy; she strongly intervenes and frequently structures.

The first session, for instance, is used to change the emphasis from the alienated youth to an emphasis upon the parent's marital relationship. It may also provide the framework for re-education, the correction of communication techniques, and also an introduction to concepts through which change can be introduced.

Though a constant repetition of the idea of 'this family', it is hoped that a realization of family in terms of a unit will take place. Once this happens, the therapist proceeds to define his task which is basically to help the family members see themselves as not being especially bad or hopeless. Satir might say:



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'As you know, we work with families here, and we have found that when one member has pain, all share in this pain in some way. Our task is to work out ways in which every one can get more pleasure from family life, because I am sure that one time this family had a better life.<sup>15</sup>

From this point on, the process of the re-education of the family as a unit is begun. They learn to recognize each others individuality in that they possess mutually acknowledged areas in which they are different from one another. They recognize that they have disagreements, and finally, they learn to communicate with one-another more freely. The family is taught to say what they see, think, and feel; it is educated in methods of bringing disagreements out into the open.

Family Therapy helps mates see where they have been giving conflicting messages to their children. The parent and youth become aware of the pain existing between them, and they are helped to communicate about behavior which brings them pleasure. The lessons that can be learned from Satir's form of Family Therapy are indeed quite meaningful, and have great potential in drawing the alienated adolescent back into the family, in a new on going and creative relationship.

Conclusion: In helping the alienated adolescent, the Rabbi has at his disposal many possibilities for referral. He can recommend individual or family therapy. I have, therefore, presented a brief sketches of a few of the newly evolved therapeutic methods with the hope that they will be added to this existing knowledge of basic psychiatric referrals.

The methods just described are treatments for deeply and clinically alienated youth. They are scientific, involving a precise doctor-patient relationship. In the final chapter of my thesis, I will offer an approach that Rabbi or layman can use in order to reach out to troubled youth.

Footnotes

1. Glasser, William, Reality Therapy, Harper, New York, 1965, p44.
2. Ibid p8.
3. Ibid p32
4. Ibid p26.
5. Shore, Milton and Massimo, Joseph, 'The Alienated Adolescent: A Challenge to the Mental Health Profession', Adolescence, Vol IV, No. 13, Spring 1969, p772
6. Ibid p9.
7. Beels, C. Christian, 'Family Therapy: A View', Family Process, Sept. 1969, Vol 8 #2, p292.
8. Satir, Virginia, Conjoint Family Therapy, Palo Alto College, 1967, p2.
9. Beels, C. Christian, 'Family Therapy: A View', p283
10. Take for example Multiple Impact Therapy, It is performed over a limited space of time, usually two days. It is a team approach in that the team must meet with the family which has come all the way to where the Therapy is to take place. After the initial meeting the team splits up in meetings which are held with different members of the family constellation. The team in the MIT process is composed of psychiatrists, psychologists, social caseworkers, clergy men, it is also composed of men and women of various ages. The team is set up as a model. It is a model of role differentiation, flexibility, open criticism, and communication; while it is this, it is also examining the family.  
Throughout the examination it makes the areas of authority and autonomy of the mother and the father are explored and confirmed. In addition to this, the child's expression of anxiety about the parental relationship is acknowledged.  
What is the goal of this process? It is hoped that the family will learn that the family can be under the leadership of the father whose wife has first place in his heart, whose child knows his place in the developing separateness of the family.
11. Beels, C Christian, 'Family Therapy: A View', p287.
12. Satir, V., Conjoint Family Therapy, p65.
13. Ibid, p78.
14. Ibid. p83.
15. Ibid. p117

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