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CENTERING AND THE PASSAGE TO ADULTHOOD

by

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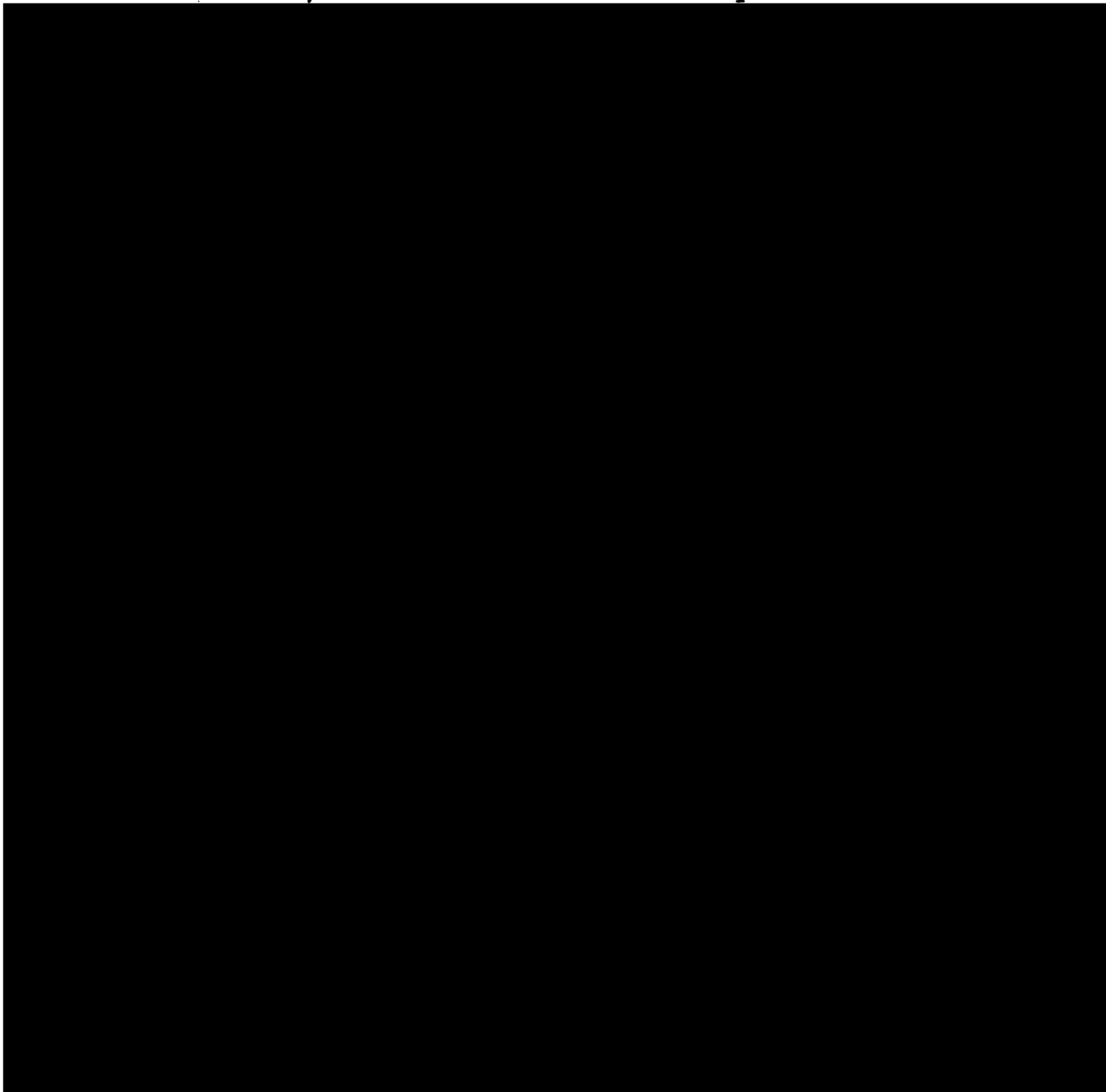

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

CENTERING AND THE PASSAGE TO ADULTHOOD

Betsy C. Robinson

University of California, San Francisco

The focus of this analysis is on the processes by which individuals move into adulthood and develop a sense of self as an adult. The analysis was based on a substantive model of qualitative research which calls for discovering significant categories, the properties which distinguish these categories, and the processes which link these categories into a substantive theory. Using this model, a substantive theory of centering was inductively derived to explain varying life experiences and growing awareness of the self as an adult. In centering, priority is the issue. That is, young people became committed to one situated definition of self over another.

Centering took place on two dimensions. One was an independence dimension revolving around a sense of readiness on the part of the young person to leave home and a perception of parents' readiness to let go. Second, was a social status dimension revolving around priorities of marriage vs. career. Within the first dimension, two ways of leaving home are analyzed--one in which detaching became a central issue; the other in which it did not. Delayed detaching is also discussed and the fragility of the detaching process is noted in an analysis of returning home. Centering on the social status dimension involved two major orientations: one in which adulthood was centered on personal achievement, and another in which adulthood was centered on marriage. These intial centering expectations were linked to a process of differential socialization and resulted in traditional sex-role views of what it means to be an adult. Boys viewed their future as a single, integrated whole; the marriage issue was devisive for girls. Continuity and change in initial orientation are examined through the various routes these young people took to adulthood.

Most past research, in emphasizing the role of higher education in prolonging the passage to adulthood, focusses on only one route to adulthood. Centering processes indicate that there is no single route, but several. Implications of centering for prolongation theories of the passage to adulthood are discussed. Centering processes are also compared to a developmental theory of epigenetic stages and to a formal interactionist theory of the properties of status passage.

The theoretical perspective of this analysis is that of symbolic interaction, incorporating concepts from a phenomenological perspective within the context of interactionist theory. The analysis was based on in-depth interviews obtained by an interdisciplinary and longitudinal study of life change and adaptive processes. The sample was comprised of a cohort of 52 young people randomly selected from the universe of an urban high school senior class graduating in 1969, who were interviewed three times over the period 1968 to 1974. The cohort came primarily from lower-middle class families and was almost equally divided by sex.

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CENTERING

AND THE PASSAGE TO ADULTHOOD

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CHAPTER ONE

THE TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD

The "idea" that there is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood which everyone has to go through (many would say "weather") has only come to the forefront in social thought during the 20th century. Historical analyses (cf., Aries, 1962; Kett, 1977) indicate that stages of life are variable concepts and through, primarily, anthropological research we know that there are currently other societies in which adulthood is acquired differently than in our own. In those societies where young people are needed as soon as possible to assume occupational, political or ritualistic roles and when experience is not an essential element for the assumption of adult responsibilities (such as in some African villages and the early Kibbutz), adulthood is reached early in life with no intervening period between childhood and adulthood (Apoko, 1967; Lijembe, 1967; Spiro, 1956, 1970). In other societies--an example occurs in Italian Alps Villages (Cole, 1970)--full adulthood may not be assumed until late in life as societal conditions restrain the individual from gaining autonomy. This may occur when the individual is still submitting to authority at an "adult" age, where restrictions are placed on freedom to marry, or where a voice in public or ceremonial affairs is based on property rights or advanced age. Young adulthood as distinct from childhood or adolescence appears to emerge as a period of life in its own right in those societies in which an expanding economy requires the need for technical competence and a corresponding demand for higher education. This seems to have occurred to some extent in China and Japan and to a greater extent in France and

the Soviet Union (Smith and Beardsley, 1962; Wagatsuma, 1972; Wylie, 1964; Yang, 1959).

In our own highly developed technocracy, there is increasing evidence that young adulthood has emerged as a distinctive period experienced differently than adolescence. However, since the early 1900's the period between childhood and adulthood has been conceptualized under the term "adolescence" and the survival of this term and its accompanying ideology has resulted in increased questioning of the conceptual significance of this social category for a large number of people (cf., Berger, 1971). There is general agreement that the transitional period between childhood and adulthood begins with puberty. The concept of adolescence, then, began with a social definition determined by a biological process of maturation. Conceptualization, however, as to when this period ends--that is, when one is considered an adult--or whether this period consists of not one, but several, stages remain fuzzy. Problems in conceptualization also increasingly surround post-high school young people who have been variously viewed as "adolescents," "youth," "post-adolescents," "quasi-adolescents," or "young adults." Since ambiguities result primarily from a lack of fit between the concept of adolescence and life experience it is important to ask how these discrepancies may have come about. For this, we shall draw heavily on an in-depth historical perspective (from the late 18th century to the present) as provided by Kett (1977). Like most historians Kett acknowledges that changing demographic and industrial conditions played a major role in the formulation of the idea of adolescence, but he also believes the concept was an expression of distinctive cultural values relating to children and the family.

Kett notes that while verbal distinctions between children, youth, and adults were made in preindustrial America, they were not generally viewed in age-graded terms because of the indefiniteness in the timing of life experiences--such as entering school, leaving home, or beginning work. Moreover, these life experiences were sporadic, movement into one or another being primarily dependent upon seasonal variation of the rural economy. One consequence was a broad age span within statuses as, for example, students in school. Another was variation in the time individuals moved into adult life. For instance, higher status youth could move into adult life sooner because their parents could afford to let them remain in school. And although there is admittingly incomplete evidence, Kett suggests that girls were more likely to leave the family home for the city earlier than boys because they were less valuable on the farm. By the early 19th century, the term "youth" began to be equated with independent status away from home, but there was no single event which denoted concensus for the attainment of adult status.

Adolescence as a stage of life, but not necessarily named as such, began to take place after 1840 and was particularly a middle-class phenomenon. According to Kett, this concept of adolescence "was usually intertwined with a romantic view of childhood, with articulate fears of modern life, cities, overpressure, and overcivilization" (p. 143). The changing social conception that children should be protected focused attention on the years surrounding puberty. Puberty began to be viewed as contributing to moral and psychological change and, consequently, as a vulnerable and awkward stage of life. The views that the years of puberty were dangerous years combined with a

view that youthfulness should be prolonged lest premature activity lead to a premature old age. This resulted in the environment for young people becoming more prolonged and regulated. There was, for instance, a gradual change in the form of the school system to concentration of high school students in the teen years which meant that the age-spread of those in college also contracted. Because puberty was viewed as such a "dangerous" time, a major reason for regulated environments for young people was to instill moral self-regulation and character formation. In this respect, Kett makes a provocative suggestion that because adults worried more about precocity in girls than boys, girls in a sense were viewed as the first adolescents.[1] But while properties of the stage of adolescence were beginning to be formed during this period of history, the term, itself, when used was generally equated with the entire life span between childhood and old age.

The term adolescent began to have its wide and particular usage through the impact the book Adolescence by G. Stanley Hall (1904) had on social influencers (educators, social workers) of the time. Eventual popularization of adolescent psychology led to an assumption that growing up presented problems for parents and, as a consequence, the methods of those institutions directed toward children and adolescents changed from regulation to social engineering. The school became the primary place for social education and consequently adolescence became equated with high school society, or a stage of schooling, not of age. Kett suggests that current conceptualizations of the transitional period

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1. In contrast, Aries (1962) historical study of the French family notes that there was a time-lag of about two centuries before girls as well as boys were thought of as adolescents.

between childhood and adulthood are in another process of change for there is evidence, on the one hand, of a decline in the adolescent group to the junior high school years and, on the other, of the emergence of a distinctive postadolescent youth culture.

This has led other observers (Kimmel, 1974) to suggest that the period of transition into adulthood seems to consist of three different periods. That is, early adolescence (or attainment of puberty through the end of the junior high school years) appears to be different from late adolescence (considered the high school or adolescent subculture years), and the latter period differs from what might be termed the "young adult" years (or the years after secondary education has been completed and where the young person is ready to undertake many attributes of adult roles, but is not yet fully acknowledged as an adult). Several studies have also empirically established young adulthood as a distinct stage of the life cycle in age-graded terms. Cameron (1969), for example, found the years 18 to 25, inclusive, to be perceived as the young adult years, while another study (Neugarten, Moore and Lowe, 1965) found slight differences by sex, ranging from age 18-22 for males and age 18-24 for females. This latter study indicated, however, that social expectations of young adults may also differ. Middle-class persons, for example, tend to perceive the young adult years as a time when issues are explored; lower-class persons tend to perceive these years as a time when issues are settled. These differing views, and we would suggest, most of the ambiguities surrounding this transition period, revolve around its linkage to the educational system. As a consequence, a major feature of this period is that it is said to have become increasingly prolonged. Not only does the institutionalized

postponement of adulthood lack fit with earlier concepts of behavior that are still imposed on young adults, but by linking the transition to adulthood to the educational system the term "youth" (or whatever) has no conceptual significance for those young people who drop out or do not continue with education. We would agree with Dragastin (1975) that we need a nomenclature to define growing up as a process rather than a period.

Whereas the nature of the transition to adulthood lacks conceptual clarity, there are also problems in conceptualizing "adulthood." Adulthood can be defined in a variety of ways, the most common being biological, psychological, sociological, and legal points of view. Puberty, for example, is the event that marks entry into adulthood in some societies and therefore the segregation and categorization of young people is unknown in those cultures (Flacks, 1971). As will be recalled, within our own society puberty usually signals the beginning of adolescence rather than adulthood. Whereas puberty, and therefore entrance into adulthood, in some societies is formalized by certain initiation rites, attainment of adulthood in our society has been formalized through the legal structure (Neugarten and Moore, 1968). Laws regulate the passage of individuals from childhood to adult status by setting minimum age limits for the acquisition of rights (sometimes duties) normally associated with adulthood. Although the 21st year has traditionally been a significant age in our society, the current trend is to legally define adulthood at age 18 at all governmental levels. Inconsistencies in the law still exist, however, for the acquisition of certain rights (drinking alcoholic beverages, for example, is often presumed to take more emotional control or self-discipline than the young person has

acquired)[1] and in many instances females are still legally restricted from assuming full adult rights.

Psychosocial benchmarks for attainment of adulthood are based on age-graded stages of development which result in more mature levels of functioning. That is, progression toward adulthood is usually viewed as sequential and irreversible: early characteristics help to shape subsequent ones. In Erikson's (1968) model of development, for example, adolescence is a time in which individuals seek and learn their self identity and young adulthood is characterized by dyadic relationships. Although these stages are viewed as preparations for adult maturity, there is no clearly defined event that marks transition into the next stage and there is a sense that these stages may overlap or occur simultaneously. One theoretical underpinning of a stage concept is that there is a clear demarcation from one point in development to the next. In this respect, psychosocial theories are lacking in conceptual clarity for the young adult years. Also, the notion that girls as well as boys make the transition from adolescence to adulthood has only been incorporated into developmental theories within the last ten years or so. But, more often than not, the available studies of girls impose a theoretical framework geared to the development of boys (Bettelheim, 1963; Elder, 1975).

A common theme among many psychosocial theories of development is that the period between puberty and adulthood is one of preparation for

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1. In 1978, for example, the California legislature will debate whether to lower the age at which a person can buy or consume alcoholic beverages from age 21 to age <u>19</u>, not to age 18 where many other rights of adulthood are presently conferred. This is presumably because at age 18 many young people are still in high school.

adulthood in which tentative choices may be made without commitment. Thus, Buhler (1968) views this period as experimental self-determination of goals, Erikson (1968) views the period as an extended moratorium, and Jung (1933) views it as a time for widening the horizons of life. Trent and Medsker (1968) examined some of these theories with a sample of high school graduates and found that for most youths who did not complete college there was little in the way of a trial period. They concluded that these theories tend to be too general and idealistic, giving little attention to the ways culture, sex, or socioeconomic differences may interact with developmental progression. We would also suggest that they impose a premature order on a life course perspective rather than an empirical assessment as to how people actually behave.

Sociologically, entrance into adulthood is also characterized by shifts in roles (Brim and Wheeler, 1966). Choosing a career, becoming self supporting, getting married, and having children are normative events signifying a changed status from youth to adult (Cox, 1970). A primary consideration for entrance into these activities associated with adulthood is that they be self-chosen and independent. This point frequently can be placed at the time youths leave home (Frenkel-Brunswick, 1963); often at the time the youth leaves school (Neugarten and Moore, 1968). These signposts for adulthood are also ambiguous, however, in that although these activities are associated with adulthood, in themselves, they may have no sequential order (Keniston, 1968). A more important ambiguity, perhaps, is that a definition which utilizes ideal norms does not account for individual and subgroup variation. For young adults, we might suggest that role acquisitions are influences which operate at various times in the process of defining oneself and

being defined by others as adult.

Despite a lack of consensus on the nature of its meaning or the social boundaries of youth, social scientists often emphasize the period of youth as a focal point within the life span of individuals. It has been noted, for example, that this period of life is of crucial importance to the whole social system in providing for the perpetuation of its own structure, norms and values (Eisenstadt, 1956, 1964). Youth has also been viewed as a time when the molding effects of new situations can be taken advantage of and styles of behavior developed where there are no appropriate models. In this context, youths are seen as a source of social change and the carriers of innovation (Mannheim, 1952; Mead, 1970). At the same time, youth has been rather normatively perceived as a period of storm and stress, resulting primarily from rapid social change and the lack of well-delineated benchmarks for guiding progress (Davis, 1940; Goodman, 1956; Parsons, 1963). The degree of potential conflict stemming from these conditions has consequences for individual, family and social system adjustment. Considerable research on youth, therefore, has been directed at discerning the actual or potential alienation of youth from society and to the study of intergenerational relationships (Bengtson and Black, 1973; Bengtson and Kuypers, 1971; Block, Haan, and Smith, 1969; Friedenberg, 1969; Keniston, 1968; Thurnher, Spence, and Lowenthal, 1974). A few writers have questioned that adolescence is a time of turmoil and suggest that there has been a tendency to exaggerate aspects of stress (Elkin and Westley, 1955; Matza, 1964; Offer and Offer, 1975; Simmons, 1971).

Recently, quite a bit of research, generally guided by those theories that view identity formation as the crucial aspect of

adolescence, have been directed toward personality development among college students (Brawer, 1973; Chickering, 1969; Feldman and Newcomb, 1973; Freedman, 1967; Katz and Associates, 1968; Westley and Epstein, 1969). Here, again, we find the study of youth equated with the education system. Somewhat fewer studies can be cited primarily in the area of socialization into specific roles such as occupational, marital, and parental (Becker, et al, 1961; Olesen and Whittaker, 1968; Raush, Goodrich and Campbell, 1963; Rossi, 1968).

The research presented here examines changes in self-conception and life styles among a cohort of 52 young people in the passage from the end of high school to a point five years later where many of them will have taken on adult social roles. The young people generally represent a cohort of the lower-middle class.[1] The intention is a systematic report on young people's own views of becoming adult. As such, it imposes no conceptual order on the passage to adulthood except that which individuals subjectively experienced themselves. The focus of the analysis is on the processes by which individuals move into adulthood and develop a sense of self as an adult. The approach to the questions and to processes of development in becoming adult is a social psychological one. That is, the young person is viewed as an individual in interaction with others in society and this interaction process is central to an understanding of the processes by which individuals come to perceive themselves, and are perceived by others, as adult. The theoretical perspective is that of symbolic interaction (Mead, 1934). In

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1. For a description of sample selection and some characteristics of the sample at three points in time, see Appendix.

this model, changes in human association are assumed to preceed changes in self-concept and these changes become part of experience and a basis for further choice (Becker, 1964; Secord and Backman, 1967; Strauss, 1959). This model also emphasizes that the individual is an active participant in the interactive process--noting, defining, choosing, and acting on choices--instead of a passive respondent to social, cultural, or biological change (Blumer, 1969). Because this model allows conceptualization that is not imposed, but experienced, it should also help us overcome the conceptual ambiguities concerning the passage to adulthood previously noted.

In this study, the process of centering[1] was inductively generated to explain the varying life experiences and concept of self in the passage to adulthood. In centering, priority is the issue. That is, young people become committed to one situated definition of self over

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1. It has come to the author's attention that the psychiatrist Robert Lifton uses the term "centering" for the ordering of experience by the self along temporal, spatial, and emotional dimensions (Lifton, 1976). In his paradigm, centering is an awareness of one's own self and one's relationship to a "world" in which the self is located and it is grounded in experience. "Decentering" (which alters the existing self) is grounded in new experiences and when the individual makes the symbolic transformation necessary to assimilate these new experiences the self becomes "recentered." If an individual cannot make symbolic transformations, the self becomes "uncentered." In Lifton's conceptualization, then, centering is a self-process; in the present discussion centering is conceptualized as a social process. Interestingly, Lifton developed the concept of centering because he felt psychiatry (and psychoanalysis) had placed exaggerated emphasis on unchanging infantile patterns and stable identity and had relatively ignored a dialectical relationship between continuity and change. In his view, the self grows and changes through the assimilation of life experiences. As a consequence, Lifton's concept of centering is similar to the analysis of centering processes presented here in that centering explains continuity and change.

another.[1] Within the five year period examined, some young people's priorities remained consistent, others changed, and there were occasions when young people became uncentered or had trouble in becoming centered.

Chapter Two first portrays high school seniors as they perceived themselves on a temporal dimension in becoming adult--that is, did they feel ahead or behind schedule or on time. Second, two prospective dimensions of what adulthood meant to them--independence from parents and moving into social statuses signifying adulthood--are detailed. In the second dimension, there were variations by sex. Therefore, Chapter Three mainly concerns the social status dimension in examining expectations as to what to do after high school and suggests that centering expectations on this dimension are related to a process of differential socialization. The independence from parents dimension is returned to once again in Chapter Four and the conditions under which independence did or did not become a central issue and how the two dimensions of becoming adult may support or interfere with each other are analyzed. In Chapter Five consistency and change in centering are analyzed in terms of the second, or social status dimension, in becoming adult. Implications of centering for prolongation theories of adolescence are also discussed. Chapter Six compares centering to Erikson's theory of epigenetic stages and concludes with an integration of centering with other properties of status passage. A description of sample selection and the social characteristics of the young people

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1. Centering process is, then, consistent with symbolic interactionist theory (Gubrium and Buckholdt, 1977).

who so generously provided a portrait of five years of their lives will be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER TWO

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS' PERSPECTIVES ON ADULTHOOD

The previous chapter has explicated the various problems in conceptualizing the transition from adolescence to adulthood and noted that attainment of adulthood can be defined in a variety of ways. There has been little systematic information that bears directly on the question of what adulthood signifies from the viewpoint of the individuals involved in making the passage. Through an inductive analysis of what adulthood means to a sample of high school seniors, providing such conceptualization is the concern of this chapter. In doing so, an underlying assumption (following Olesen and Whittaker, 1968) is that becoming is not regulated primarily by biological or legal factors nor is it timed primarily by social and psychological events. Instead, in this view, it is ordered and paced by the individual's subjective sense of himself as he actively assimilates these age-related events.

High school seniors' own perspectives on adulthood occurred on two levels. First, was an assessment of their present position on an adolescent-adulthood continuum in terms of (a) individual timetables, (b) social growth in relation to their peer group and (c) independence from parents. Second, were future perspectives of becoming. These occurred on two dimensions. One was a freedom dimension in which becoming adult revolved around a sense of readiness to act on one's own. Second was a social status dimension in which becoming adult mainly revolved around the issues of marriage and work. Temporal aspects cross-cut both present and prospective levels of becoming.

Present Views in Becoming Adult

Individual Timetables. One aspect of assessing the present level of adulthood is that certain expectations of what it means to be a teenager are recognized. Typically, the young people in this sample expected the high school years to be a time when more freedom and trust were extended from parents; they expected to start dating and, perhaps, engage in sexual relationships; they expected they should begin taking a more personal interest in others and the events going on in the world around them; and they expected to have fun. At the same time, they felt that parents expected them to start making their own decisions, to begin taking responsibility for their own actions, and to start "acting" like an adult. To the extent that expectations were met, there was a sense of being "on time."

Since young people have had previous and varying socialization experiences, however, not all had the same timetable for growing up. For instance, emphasizing the "fun" expectation of becoming may tend to make adolescence so rewarding that the young person is reluctant to join the world of adults. As one girl commented:

> I haven't grown up as much as I should. I don't want to grow up too fast, I guess. I'm just at that stage where I haven't grown up entirely, and I'm having a lot of fun and I don't want it to end.

In instances where young people were eager to join the adult world, they tried to influence definitions of the situation. One way was to test the presentation of self. For instance, one girl recalled testing how old she looked by going into a nightclub and ordering a drink to see if she would be served without having to show proof of legal age. Another way was to devise strategies for conveying an

impression of maturity. For instance, one high school senior commented that she tried to look older by not wearing a short skirt or a wild blouse because if clothes looked too "modern," adults "don't feel you are stable." She also noted, however, that "the other kids resented me for it." Thus, symbols used to convince adults of one's maturity may lead to negative interpretations by peers.

Social Growth and the Peer Group. While adolescents may operate on individual timetables, they, like other members of society, also tend to use the timetable norms of their peer group to measure their own rate of progress (Roth, 1963). In this respect, one oustanding dimension in peer comparison was skill in interpersonal relationships, first, in terms of people in general and second, in terms of relations with the opposite sex. Being out of step in terms of being behind peers on a social growth dimension tended to indicate personal failure. Some indicators, for example, were shyness, not being able to communicate easily, failing to take a real interest in people and humanity, and not being "popular." Being out of step in terms of being ahead of peers on this social dimension indicated personal growth. For instance, a boy who felt he had grown more involved and aware of what was going on in the world than his peers took pride in the fact that first, he had shifted concern away from himself to humanity and second, that he had begun to establish an individual identity by beginning to form concepts of his own that distinguished him from others; a girl who felt she had had more than a normal social growth in terms of becoming remarkably outgoing also felt she was more competent than her peers in interpersonal relationships.

In terms of relations with the opposite sex, youth may become painfully aware of their own inadequacies or they may become concerned about growing up too fast. Being behind schedule resulted in negative feelings about the self. For instance, some females perceived themselves as "wallflowers;" some males asked the question, "Am I normal?" These negative feelings were heightened when adults tried to impose their own conception of the proper timetable for development for which the youth was not ready. For instance, one boy got embarrassed because his father was always "pushing" him to find a girl and comparing his own teenage behavior to his son's; another boy's employer embarrassed and angered him because he was always asking, "When are you going to get a piece?"

Being behind time set the stage for developing strategies for "catching up."[1] One such strategy for girls, for example, was to ask the boy out for a date. Unfortunately, the consequences for her own self-image depended a great deal on whether he accepted or not. Another strategy was to enter the "hippie"[2] scene where sexual freedom tended to be normative. Other strategies were, perhaps, more mundane. One young man commented:

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1. The internalized perception of social norms produces a phenomenon which Neugarten (1968) terms the "social clock." This internal sense of social timing may result in changes in behavior in that the individual takes steps to speed up or slow down one's progress.

2. The word "hippie" was born only two years previous to this study (Smith, Luce, Dernburg, 1970). By the time these respondents were interviewed, all aspects of hip community life had diffused to the high school scene, but few of the young people in this sample actually embraced it.

> Sometimes I feel like walking down the halls, run into a girl, actually run into her and knock the books out of her hands, and then while I'm picking them up, get to know her. Man, I would try anything in order to get started!

Being ahead of schedule in learning one's way around the opposite sex had two consequences. First, it promoted feelings of personal growth. This primarily occurred among youth who identified themselves as "hip" or "cool" and resulted in distancing from the "average" teenage peer group. Conversely, it promoted feelings that one was growing up too fast. This occurred when the youth (in this sample, females) began to feel that both peers and adults were making derogatory inferences about their moral character. One consequence was to drop the "fast" crowd and begin living a more normal life for their age.

Independence from Parents. While, in terms of peers, assessments of progression toward adulthood tended to center around the issue of interpersonal relationships, in terms of parents, assessments tended to center around the issue of freedom. Important dimensions for freedom were (1) levels of family involvement and (2) the symbols which served as external reference points for assessing freedom.

Levels of Family Involvement. In terms that growing up is perceived as being more free, these high school seniors varied in their desire for independence and in their perceptions of their parents' willingness to give it. Level of family involvement, as an indicator of independence, is an analytic concept constructed to account for the level of interaction between high school seniors and their families. Cross-cutting the child's desire for freedom with

the perception of their parents' willingness to let go, we arrive at four levels of family involvement.[1]

At one level neither the desire for freedom nor restraints on the part of parents was an issue. The family organization was characterized by intimacy. The young people tended to view parents in positive terms: parents were perceived as having a good, stable marital relationship (although the father was usually perceived as dominant) and the young people felt they could communicate easily with one and, usually, both parents. One characteristic of this level of involvement was that the family engaged in a variety of <u>shared activities</u> and on weekends as well as during the week. (Sometimes Sundays were reserved for just such involvement.) A second characteristic was that the kinds of activities the family engaged in were <u>just as likely to be ones that young people might ordinarily engage in with friends</u>--going to the movies, playing tennis, outings to the beach or park, and the like. At this level of involvement, then, young people had not yet begun to separate either emotionally or physically from parents nor was it a central issue in their lives.

At a second level of family involvement, young people were in active pursuit of more independence and also felt their parents were flexible in granting it. As a consequence, the young person had reduced the time spent with the family but the family organization was

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1. Situational factors such as an illness of a parent or conflicting work schedules of parents did interfere with family interaction. Such circumstantial disruptions operated to constrain some young people in that any desire for more independence temporarily gave way to helping the family.

still characterized by intimacy. In this instance, the family still took meals together when it could and occasionally spent a day together, but such ritual occasions as birthdays and holidays were invariably spent together as a family. On the other hand, the youth was not forced to accompany parents when visiting relatives or friends for example. For this level of involvement to occur, young people, on the one hand, accepted as legitimate the limits imposed on them by parents and parents, on the other hand, were perceived to accommodate to the youths desire for independence. These young people perceived their parents as understanding, as tolerant within limits, as trustful, and as realizing the youth was growing up and had an own life to live. At this level of family involvement, any restraints on the part of parents were viewed with a sense of sensible restriction.

A quite different level of family involvement occurred when young people wanted more freedom but felt their parents were not willing to give it. The young people characterized their families as leading restrictive, routinized lives and believed that parents did not allow for open expression of feeling. As a consequence, degree of independence became a contest for control. One way parents exercised control was by setting up strict timetables. For instance, one girl explained that she could not go out on weekdays and had to be in bed by 10:00 p.m. Asked what she did on weekends, she responded:

> Then I can go out so my parents barely see me. On Friday I have to be in by 12:30. On Saturdays I have to be in at 6:00 to show myself and then I can go out again but I must be home by 12:30. Sundays I have to be in by 6:00 p.m.

Another way parents exercised control (at least from the point of view of the child) was by refusing to negotiate. A major tactic young

people used was to try to convince parents that they were not going to be doing anything different than their peers. Since this seldom worked, one consequence was overt conflict with parents. Another consequence was that parents (or the dominant parent) tended to be characterized as arrogant, unreasonable, over-protective, and always "right." The unhappy young people tried to escape the family home whenever the opportunity arose and attempted to create opportunities by lying about their whereabouts. At this level of family involvement, high school seniors felt ready to assume an equality of independence with peers and blamed parents for keeping them "behind" schedule.

A variant of this level of involvement was when young people felt their parents to be over-protective but, unlike the youths above who were rebelling against perceived parental restrictiveness, were still able to disengage themselves from the family. Becoming independent against parents' wishes exacerbated conflict between parents and child and, as a consequence, these youths attempted to keep family interaction to a minimum. Such minimal involvement resulted from parents' inability to shut out external influences. Two main mechanisms operated to sustain minimal involvement. First was dependence on <u>referent others</u> who could play an important role in the emancipation of the youth from parental control. The peer group, a boyfriend or girlfriend, and older siblings became important referent others in this respect. Through reliance on such reference figures, young people were not overly concerned with parental approval. Second, however, these young people tried to keep a closed awareness context[1]

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1. For more on awareness contexts, see Glaser and Strauss (1964).

between themselves and their parents as to their friends and activities. One consequence of having to utilize such strategies, however, was that the young people looked forward to the time when they would be free from their continual and pressing use and the high school diploma became viewed as the passport to freedom.

The fourth level of family involvement (which was rare in this sample) might be characterized by parental indifference. At this level young people believed there was no investment in the family as a family. Again, interaction between parent and child was minimal. The young person left what was to them a very unpleasant home situation as often as possible and felt no restraints to this freedom. Such parental indifference or rejection also tended to result in high school graduation as being viewed as the gateway to complete independence.

Symbols of Freedom. One consequence of living within a family framework was that symbols which served as external reference points for assessing freedom became important. The main symbols mentioned by these young people were starting to work and earn one's own money, dating, and having access to a car. These external symbols of freedom were related to levels of family involvement in that they provided a means by which time spent with parents was reduced. Under the condition that parents denied the child access to the means of freedom, such symbols also served to highlight parental restrictiveness. For instance, youths who wanted to get a job so they could pay for the things they wanted without having to ask parental permission could also be restricted from doing so by parents who felt working would interfere with the child's studies. Under the condition that

the youth was still very much ensconced in the family, symbols of freedom had little allure. As one boy commented, "I don't have to work. I have everything I want at home."

A more typical dimension of symbols of freedom was that they provided the means by which negotiation between parent and child could take place. From the parents' point of view, such symbols gave them the leverage to impose their own conceptions of the proper way of growing up. For instance, one girl's parents told her she would have to earn the right to have a car not through working, but by staying in and graduating from high school. From the child's point of view, such symbols gave them a means of negotiating more freedom. One boy explained why his job was currently one of the more important aspects of his life:

> From the money I get on this job I have more privileges. Like, I have to pay for my own car insurance. I am able to go out more and afford different things. I use the family car, but I had to get my own car insurance.

Just how important such symbols are in providing a sense of freedom might be better illustrated through their loss. For instance, when asked what was the most important thing that had happened since high school graduation, one girl mentioned she had wrecked her car:

> It was sad losing the car, because that was my freedom you know. I could just hop in my car and go anywhere I wanted to. I lost that and that was kind of a depressing moment in my life.

Since symbols signifying freedom are crucial elements in beginning to identify oneself as adult, their loss may also tend to cast doubt on attachments the youth had to such an identity. Such losses may also

provide the grounds for others to recast the youth in the role of a child.

This leads to another important dimension in that symbols of freedom provided a <u>sense of growth</u>. One way growth was sensed was to perceive that more responsibility and trust were being extended by parents. For instance, one girl indicated three ways in which her parents trusted her: (1) they let her take the car in bad weather; (2) they let her and her boyfriend have the living room to themselves; and (3) they let her go alone to visit her grandmother in another city. In terms that freedom also entailed responsibility and trust, it resulted in the feeling that one was being treated more like an adult.

The external aspects of freedom also provided a sense of personal worth in that young people began to feel self-sufficient and responsible for their own actions on the one hand, and a sense of a growing capacity to relate to others, on the other. In some cases, for example, just working with adults led to feelings of understanding adults and, consequently, to feelings that one was also becoming more adult. In other instances, a steady relationship with the opposite sex promoted a sense of growth in that youths began to feel they were beginning to know another individual besides a relative as a person for the first time.

Symbols of freedom also provided a sense of <u>being on time</u>. For instance, one girl who was in her last semester before high school graduation commented: "I don't do things on time. I just signed up for Driver's Training and I should have done it a long time ago." The sense of being on time in terms of independence and social growth

tended to result in current assessment that one was half in and half out of the family and consequently on the way to adulthood. Another high school senior commented in this respect:

> You're old enough to do what you want but you have the security. You can go home and eat and don't worry about insecurity. You can go out on your own and stay out relatively late in the evening. You're sort of half independent and half dependent.

Planning to Become

In terms of the future, growing up was expected to occur on two dimensions. On one dimension, adulthood was signified by independence from parents; on a second dimension, adulthood was signified by the achievement of certain adult statuses. The sequential ordering of the social status dimension of adulthood--getting further education, working, marriage, raising a family--also assumes a concommitant increase in the independence from parents dimension. In subsequent chapters we will examine the ways in which these dimensions supported or became competitive with each other and the extent to which growing up was consistent with expectations. These will be examined through a process of _centering_--or placing priority on one aspect of becoming over another. Here, we shall locate some general mechanisms through which such centering occurred.

The Dimension of Freedom. The notion of independence (often used interchangeably with the term autonomy) is prevalent in clinical literature where it is regarded as an important _intrapersonal_ psychological dimension linked to the development of ego-identity (Brawer,

1973). In terms of the family interaction examined here, however, independence is an interpersonal dimension involving relative freedom from parental control.[1] It will be recalled that these young people were at different levels both in wanting and in gaining relative independence from parents. Those young people who sensed their parents as overly restrictive or indifferent were particularly anxious to gain their freedom and looked forward to the end of high school as a time when they would be able to leave home.

According to the Handlins (1971), the emphasis on freedom is rooted historically in American society and, in this respect, they note that the process of growing up has long required youths to leave home. Placing this process in historical perspective, the Handlins maintain that the ways youth leave home have changed over the centuries and, as a consequence, achievement of self-reliance has become increasingly prolonged. For instance, in the late 18th century and until past the middle of the 19th century boys generally left home by going off to live at school, entering an apprenticeship, running away to sea, enlisting in the army, going "West," or moving to the "big city;" girls generally left home when they married.[2] After 1770,

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1. When the autonomy-dependency dimension has been examined in family relational terms, it has generally been viewed as contributing to the presence or absence of psychopathology in individual family members (cf., Westley and Epstein, 1970).

2. Adults appeared to view leaving home except for school, apprenticeship or marriage with some ambiguity: On the one hand, these other ways of leaving home were viewed as "hazardous" freedoms not only physically, but as a threat to the "soul;" on the other hand, they were also viewed as ways for testing and discovering "manhood." Also, while some young women did leave home in advance of

the proliferation of educational institutions widened choices for both parents and children and increasingly over the next century, as the economy shifted from rural to urban, the access to good jobs or professions was gained through formal education. This meant that there was a corresponding shift in the time young people left home as their departure was postponed while they prepared to compete in an increasingly complex, technological productive system.[1] By 1960, they attest that education as a way of preparing youth for life was taken for granted. The next chapter will show that taking further education for granted is only one process by which youths decide on what to do after high school. The emphasis on education in most studies results from "youth" being equated with middle or upper-middle class males. (It will be recalled that the students in this study came from primarily lower-middle class homes.) As with many studies, however, that are purportedly "about" youth, the Handlins' focus on the process of leaving home explicably shifts to a description of <u>social institutions</u> (primarily educational) which presumably

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the Handlins' note that throughout the ensuing centuries the views of how and when young women should leave the parental home were slow to change. Recently, an article in a popular women's magazine (Korda, 1972), contended that coping with "big city" life presents a way in which American girls today may "come of age"--or about two centuries later than boys were using the big city as a testing ground for adulthood.

1. Another historian, however, contends that even when youth did leave home early they could still remain in a semi-independent and subordinate position. Fathers, for example, usually took all the child's wages until the age of majority (21) was reached. A number of factors (such as later marriages) indicate that dependency could be more prolonged in the 19th century than in the 20th (Kett, 1977).

not only delay the transition to adulthood but which also have little relevance to present or future needs of youth.[1]

While the extent of leaving home to attend school has become more prevalent for greater numbers of youth, the ways these young people expected to leave home varied, as did their temporal expectations. Some expected to remain at home while attending college, while working, and/or until marriage; others expected to spend a year or two in the local community college and then transfer to a college away from home. At that point in their lives any felt need to remove themselves from the parental home in order to gain freedom was low. Other youths did plan on leaving home shortly after graduation, for two reasons. First, leaving home was integrated with plans for marriage, entering the military, or attending college away from home. In these instances, leaving home was not given any special priority but was just something that would occur along with the natural course of other status passages. In the second instance, leaving home centered around the issue of freedom from parental restrictiveness or indifference--the high school diploma, as noted earlier, was considered the passport to freedom from parental control. Relationships with parents, however, can change for better or worse and parents also view some ways of leaving home as more legitimate than others. A major mechanism by which centering on the dimension of freedom occurred, then, was "readiness" on the part of the young

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1. In this context, also see for example Denney (1962); Goodman (1956); and Friedenberg (1963).

person for freedom and on the part of the parent to let go. This is explored further in Chapter Four.

The Dimension of Social Status. On a second dimension, growing up was signified by the achievement of certain adult statuses. Temporal aspects related to these future perspectives of becoming and tended to vary by sex. In general, girls planned to be adults before boys; boys believed that, compared to girls, they would take longer in becoming adult. For boys, the deferring of adulthood may not be pleasantly anticipated, but it was expected:

> A girl's got it better. At 18 she can go out and get a job and do what she wants. This is her prime of life. But for me, after high school there's college and then service.[1] Seems like guys are put back 7 years behind girls in terms of when they can do the things they want to do.

One condition which affected temporal aspects of becoming was the point at which marriage was expected to occur. Both sexes tended to take marriage for granted.[2] However, girls expected to marry in

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1. When this sample of young people were first interviewed, the Vietnam War was in progress. Although boys might anticipate they would be drafted, for most this did not become a concrete reality with which to cope until some time after high school graduation.

2. Social expectations regarding marriage are so strong that most young people just presume they will marry (Douvan and Adelson, 1966). And, in American society, marriage has been described as the final stage in the attainment of adulthood (Parsons and Bales, 1955). However, plans regarding a legal marriage varied if the young person was involved in the "hip" subculture. These youths did plan on having a deep and lasting relationship with a member of the opposite sex. A major aspect in not wanting a legal marriage was that its enforced responsibilities implied a loss of freedom and individuality. In this instance, centering on freedom was given higher priority than movement into conventional social statuses, but the alternate life styles they expected to carve out for themselves were also expected to complement the "idea" of freedom.

their early 20's; boys expected to marry in their late 20's. (This is congruent with normative expectations [Neugarten, Moore, and Lowe, 1965]). A usual reason given for the later age of marriage for males is that they first have to establish themselves economically; it is socially acceptable for a woman to be supported. One consequence of adhering to a middle-class norm of deferred gratification was that marriage tended to have low salience for boys at this stage of planning to become. However, another major, and often over-looked, dimension is the <u>feeling as to what marriage signifies</u>. Girls tended to view marriage as "the" major aspect of adulthood ("It seems like marriage is just your whole life. Everything you do revolves around that."); males tended to view marriage with a <u>sense of loss</u>. The boys felt that at marriage they would be forced to live a more rigid routine, would have more restrictions on their freedom, and would miss out on things ("It is the end of something; the end of one part of life and the beginning of another.") Boys also tended to perceive marriage as a time of life in which they would have more responsibilities, more pressures, and would have to work harder. Viewed in these terms, small wonder the high school senior boys were not anxious to get married in the near future! Under the condition, however, that boys did perceive marriage as central in their lives ("Well, you see, there's only one right girl, but I can always find another job"), boys expected to get married about as early as did girls. Under the condition that girls observed an older sister or friend having trouble with their marriage, they tended to accept an (probably family) explanation that the troublesome marriage resulted from marrying "too young." In this instance, girls planned on deferring their own

marriage several years. As high school seniors, views of future adulthood were mainly tradition-oriented. Both temporal aspects of planning for adulthood and the meaning it had for them can be explained by the aspect of centering.

Centering. On a social status dimension, centering is a process whereby becoming adult is defined mainly in social terms and in which one social aspect is given priority over another. That is, youth perceive themselves as acquiring the roles which society associates with adulthood. In broad terms, the basic expectations of the young people in this sample had a distinctive temporal ordering in that first, they would prepare themselves for a good job; second, they would become self-supporting in their chosen occupation; third, they would get married; fourth, they would establish a family of their own; and fifth, they would retire to enjoy the fruits of their labor. In general, this is a normative, sequential pattern of becoming which the O'Neill's (1974) term the "guarantee myth." That is, society dictates that if individuals follow the right path in making the transition from one status to another, it is "guaranteed" the end product is security and comfort.

One important dimension in centering, however, is that while these young people viewed becoming in broad terms, they also tended to place priority on certain aspects and these priorities varied by sex. It has already been noted that girls tended to place priority on marriage; only implicitly noted, is that boys tended to place priority on personal achievement, primarily through career attainment.

There was general agreement between the sexes that marriage is dominant in a woman's life but young men were somewhat more apt to

perceive college or work roles as secondary to main roles of housewife and mother than were the girls, themselves:[1]

Typical Male View Regarding Girls:	To get married is the main (goal) from what I've seen. Possibly to go to college, but not as great for men who have to get a job.
Typical Female View Regarding Girls:	I think most of them would like to be housewives, to have children...And some of them will go to college--to be career women. And some will continue to work. But in the end, they'll all get married.

While girls perceived personal achievement as a major focus in a man's life, they also, unlike the boys (at this stage of life at least), viewed marriage as an important aspect of a male's adulthood: "Eventually, when the boys become men they will want to settle down and have a happy married life."

As a consequence of these traditional sex-role views of becoming adult, centering revolved around the question of marriage vs. career and tended to be expressed in two ways: (1) integrated views, which were held by boys; (2) either/or views, which were held by girls.[2]

<u>Integrated vs. Either/Or Views of Becoming</u>. In an <u>integrated view</u>, planning to become adult was perceived as a series of inter-

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1. Various studies show that boys consistently hold more conservative opinions about women's roles than do girls (Entwisle and Greenberger, 1972; Papanek, 1969).

2. Similar findings are reported by Madison (1968): boys view their future as a single, integrated whole; the marriage issue is divisive for girls.

related steps in which one step is completed before starting another. For instance, completing college precedes establishing oneself in an occupation which precedes marriage which precedes establishing a family. The condition of "completeness" precludes the expectation that one step should be discontinued or disrupted for another. It remains to be seen how much these expectations will match later reality. One consequence of the condition of completeness in an integrated view is that becoming adult is often typified as being prolonged in American society.

An integrated view also contained an element of continuity. One way in which continuity was expressed was by expecting to prepare for both a financial rewarding and interesting career in college which would sustain a happily married life. In this respect, fathers could become negative role models in that boys perceived fathers as unhappy because they were no longer interested in their jobs. As a consequence an interesting job became a focal point in their own plans for adulthood. Another way continuity was expressed was by expecting a future spouse to have the same interests as oneself. This included liking to engage in the same kinds of activities, having the same ideals, philosophical, and political values, and taking an interest in the man's career. In terms that planning to become centered on personal achievement primarily through career attainment, an integrated view allowed such centering to remain dominant.

In an either/or view, planning to become was perceived as discrete and primarily incompatible stages. For instance, if priority was placed on marriage, education or work could be disrupted or discontinued; if priority was placed on work, marriage may be perceived

as out of the question. As noted previously, girls tended to center on marriage rather than work which was expressed in a number of ways. Four will be considered here.

First was a sense of stigma in not marrying. For instance, one girl commented: "If you don't get married, you're like an old maid and when your friends find out, you're ashamed." Another girl commented that a friend of hers "was afraid she would be the last of our group to get married. Now it looks like she will be the first." The sense of stigma resulted not only from not marrying but also from the view that there was a "right" time for doing so.[1]

Second was an expectation of deference to the husband's wishes regarding their own continuing educational or work experience. A typical comment regarding college was: "I will probably get married during college, and if my husband does not want me to go to college, I might have to drop that goal." Regarding work, one girl commented: "The only thing that would stand in my way would be if (boyfriend she wanted to marry) doesn't want me to work at all. I would do whatever he says," or conversely, "After I get married I'll take care of the house unless my husband wants me to work. Most of them don't." Deference to husband's wishes led to a third way in which centrality of marriage was expressed in that girls tended to perceive that either education or work would necessarily be disrupted or discontinued after marriage or parenthood. For instance, working was

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1. Riesman (1964) notes that persons who do not marry about the same time as their peers have always been considered somewhat "odd," but the failure to marry young has now taken on a monstrous or unnatural quality.

perceived as an in or out sort of existence resulting primarily from economic necessity; further schooling was viewed as a luxury to be pursued only if one had sufficient time and sufficient money. As a consequence of the centrality placed on caring for husband and children, work or college did not take on any real importance in a woman's life until "after the children are grown."

But what about the girls who did plan on four or more years of college in preparation for a career? In terms of either/or views of marriage vs. career, inner conflict was a typical consequence as the following so poignantly illustrate:

> When I'm married I'll probably want kids and to raise a family. And when I get my degree I'll probably want to be a doctor. That'll be a conflicting thing. Last time I was talking to a doctor and he said he'd never let a girl into medical school because they get married and get kids and never practice anymore. That's probably what I'll do. (Interviewer: After devoting 8 years to becoming a doctor?) I don't know. I don't think I'll get married for awhile after I'm graduated. But I think once I do get married and have children I'll stop practicing.
>
> I still want to get a very good job and I would like to have a career, but I wouldn't want to become a career woman. I like the thought of people recognizing that I have a lot of talent, but on the other hand I don't want to be the type that is a loner, so that I'll never get married. I want to get a good job and keep it for maybe two years, but I also want to get married. Maybe if I could go back part-time, but I don't want to be stuck in a job where it dominates my whole life. I think you miss out on a whole lot that way. On the other hand, there are people who weren't meant to get married, it just happens that I do want to get married, but I...I want so many things and I know that I can't have everything. And sometimes I think that I would give up the marriage before I would give up the career. But on the other hand, I don't want to go through life alone.

Since there have been protestations in recent years that marriage and career are compatible for women, the stereotypic sex-role definitions these young people had for themselves and each other may appear as an anachronism. It is therefore important to ask under what conditions such views arise. In this respect, a discussion of the influence of parents and other adults will be deferred until the next chapter where such influences are more pertinently highlighted in deciding what to do after high school.

One condition under which stereotypic sex-role definitions may occur is when social influence for differing roles for women is low. One way this can occur is through lack of exposure to differing viewpoints. For instance, these students were first interviewed in late 1968 and early 1969--about the time the Women's Liberation Movement was just beginning to receive attention in the mass media. The students were not unaware of the events going on around them, but were primarily concerned with what was going on in their immediate environment. Racial prejudice was a major social concern because they had everyday contact with racial problems at school. Similarly, the war in Vietnam was of direct concern for several reasons: the boys could be drafted and the student protests over the war were interrupting the educational process at nearby colleges that they expected to attend. When asked to name major social problems, not one single young person mentioned discrimination against women.

Nor, as has been noted, were any new perspectives on women's roles forthcoming from their peer group. While high school males perceived that boys have to go to college, have different career objectives and must commit themselves to work, they believed that

all girls want to do is get married and raise a family. High school girls tended to believe their same-sex peers wanted a good job, maybe some college, or to work in an occupation for a couple of years, but also tended to perceive these roles as something to do to mark time between high school graduation and marriage and after marriage, as secondary to husband and children. The attitude of peers toward the appropriate role of women and lack of reinforcement for divergence were conditions for sustaining traditional patterns. Rather than being encouraging, peers may actively discourage a different perspective. For instance, one girl who was the only one among her friends who wanted to go to college noted that they kept asking, "Why are you going to school when you are going to get married anyway? Then all this time will be wasted." When peers did provide some role support, the young person, herself, could be reluctant to make any fundamental modifications in her social reality:

> (My boyfriend) thinks I should just major in one field and become something like a famous lady scientist, you know. But I don't want that. I don't want a career all my life. I want something to fall back on, but I want to be a housewife more.

Other studies have shown that consciousness raising among women usually takes place in college (which these girls had yet to reach) and among women whose families were politically liberal, college educated and upper-middle class (or from achievement-oriented backgrounds).[1] Stereotypes of women's roles are more common in the lower

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1. This has led one researcher at least to suggest that lower-class women are unlikely prospects for conversion to the Women's Liberation Movement (Nicossi, 1970).

and lower-middle classes. The respondents in this sample came primarily from lower-middle class families, although the boys were at a somewhat higher class level than the girls. From the tradition-oriented views of these young people, we can conclude that there probably is a relationship between socio-economic status linked life experiences and how one views women's roles.

Since either/or and integration were typical views in becoming adult, we shall next explore the extent that expectations order what follows. This is examined through the initial decisions high school seniors made concerning what they were going to do after high school graduation. The influence of parents and other adults on this decision-making process may also help to explain the emergence of either/or vs. integrated views of becoming.

CHAPTER THREE

DECIDING WHAT TO DO AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

One of the most important decisions confronting the high school senior was, "What do I do now?" Since there has been a shift toward higher education in the United States since World War II, it is not surprising that deciding what to do after high school graduation revolved around the issue of continuing in or leaving the formal school setting. It also, perhaps, is not surprising that most youths decided to go on with school. Obtaining further education not only provides a way of meeting expectations of parents and other adults which the youth has more or less internalized as his own, but also offers continuity of experience ("I don't really expect to experience many more changes because I'll be going to school.") Continuing with one's education, however, does not necessarily mean going to a four-year college. Within this sample, plans in the education dimension ranged from short-term training in public or private vocational schools to graduate studies. How is the decision made? If questions as to what to do after high school mainly revolve around the issue of some type of further education or training, does it take more effort on the part of the young person not to continue school than to stay in?

Leaving School

Deciding whether to go on to college varied by the extent to which higher education was seen as necessary for attaining what one wanted out of life. For instance, the young person who plans an early marriage may decide that going to work and saving money is more important than further education; one with musical ability decides that

college has nothing to offer toward the formation of a rock band; the youth who has never done well in school perceives it pointless to make additional efforts and plans for a job for which a high school education is deemed sufficient.[1] While those who planned no further schooling took seriously their parents' desire to have them graduate from high school, they also felt overburdened by the intellectual demands placed upon them and/or took school lightly--cutting classes, doing homework only when it was convenient, or going to classes "high."

Plans for leaving school varied by the extent of involvement in the drug-hip scene. Youths who were not involved chose such conventional alternatives for themselves as entering the labor force or the military. Youths who were involved planned alternative life-styles for themselves which emphasized "experiencing life and people" and "doing one's own thing," which was closely related to both emancipation from parental control and a rejection of social structures which would interfere with their personal freedom. While most youths who were involved in the drug-hip scene realized they would have to support themselves, they were not interested in jobs that required too much hard work or that would diminish personal freedom. When priority was placed on personal freedom it resulted in plans for leaving home immediately after high school graduation. Financial dependency may delay leave taking but counterculture norms not only de-emphasize the need for large amounts of money but provide for assistance in the form

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1. While the career prospects for a high school graduate in 1969 were not as good as they had been a decade earlier, the job market did not begin a rapid decline until about a year after the youths in this sample had graduated (cf., Knox, 1977).

of communal living. As a consequence, some young people felt they could realistically plan on leaving home without having available the financial assets to support themselves. One girl who desperately wanted to ensconce herself in the hippie subculture where she expected to find a romantic heterosexual relationship and to be accepted "for myself" commented:

> I just want my freedom. Of course, I've had pretty much freedom all my life. I've never really been restricted. I don't plan to work, so living with people would be about the only way that I could live on the outside.

While the decision to leave school may result in an awareness of some social pressure ("People ask me why I didn't go to college but, Hell, I had enough just getting through high school."), plans for leaving or continuing school were mainly complicated by parental expectations. For instance, one girl was peripherally involved in the drug culture through an emotional and sexual involvement with a boyfriend. After graduation, she wanted to go to work so that she could eventually help support her boyfriend and herself. Her father, however, was constantly pressuring her regarding her college plans. She discussed this with the interviewer:

> The other night I was washing out some blouses in the bathroom and he (father) came in and said, 'You're going to go to junior college after the summer, aren't you?' I said, 'I'll see what happens after the summer.' He said it would be better for me that I would enjoy it more. He always tells me what I would enjoy the most. Then, of course, he had to walk out saying that I would break their hearts if I didn't go. I don't think it is fair that parents make you feel quilty if you don't do what they want you to."

One condition which could change parental expectations was poor grades. Young people who were just barely making the "D" it took to graduate could use poor grades not only as an indicator to themselves but as leverage for convincing parents that further schooling would be a waste of time. While they felt their parents were disappointed in them, they also tended to feel relief when parents stopped "pushing" them to attend college.

Poor grades was also a condition under which parents pressured a child <u>not</u> to go to college. For instance, one boy had always looked forward to college but as a high school senior he came into conflict with his parents because of his poor grades. As a consequence, his parents absolutely opposed his going to college and refused to pay for any further education because they thought it "would be a waste of time and money." Conceivably, he could have decided to get a job and pay his own way. Conflicting parent/child expectations, however, heightened feelings of parental restrictiveness and as a consequence the young person began to center on the idea of leaving home. This boy, for example, chose to enter the military where he felt he could achieve both goals of further education and removing himself from the family.

<u>Continuing School</u>

The fact that some youths decided to leave the formal school setting means that there were perceived alternatives available from which to choose. This raises two questions: first, do all young people perceive alternatives? If they do, then why do some choose further schooling? The process of deciding on further education or

training took place in two ways. In one, it was taken for granted. In another, it was a consequence of the realization that high school graduation was rapidly approaching and that one had to do something. This leads, then, to a discussion of two general problems. The first has to do with how these two ways of deciding on school differ from each other; the second has to do with the differential consequences of these two processes in planning for adulthood.

Taking Further Education for Granted. Youths who took further education for granted indicated that they had always assumed they would continue their schooling after high school graduation. Commonly, taking something for granted tends to signify obvious facts which no longer have to be seriously reflected upon. This process, however, did not take place in a vacuum. We have to ask under what conditions such a perspective arose and what consequences it had for further action.

A main condition for taking further education or training for granted was parental pressuring. In terms of the viewpoint of the child, parental pressuring occurred in four ways: First, educational attainment was strongly cathected as a central family value ("Well, it's always been as far as I can remember the accepted thing to do.") Second, the necessity of a college education was constantly reinforced ("My parents have always told me how important it was to get good grades;" "The older people in my life have pounded on me that you have to go to school so you can get a good job and have a lot of money.") Third, the authority of the parent was accepted ("If I didn't go to college, they'd cream me;" "I want to go, but they'd make

me go no matter what.") Fourth, the value of college education was internalized ("I have an obligation to myself to go to college.") In taking further education for granted, parental pressuring resulted in a mutual parent/child expectation of educational attainment.[1]

Taking further education for granted reflects societal values which impress the importance of higher education for success. As a consequence, these youths tended to perceive career-oriented and long-term educational goals (baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate degrees) for themselves--or adherence to middle-class norms of deferred gratification.[2] While some parents (primarily upper-middle class) tended to emphasize the value of a college education in and of itself, the

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1. Similarly, Trent and Medsker (1968) have shown that subsequent college attendance varies by degree of parental encouragement: as high school seniors 70 percent of their respondents who later persisted in college had reported that their parents had expected them to attend; less than 10 percent of the non-attenders had reported receiving parental encouragement.

2. Social class, in terms of economic resources, is a condition which may vary length of education plans. For instance, when financial resources were low, some young people planned on a two-year technical training school. In general, however, lower-class youth who took further education for granted also hoped to receive scholarships or other forms of financial aid which would allow attendance at a four-year college or university. Therefore, socio-economic status tended to be less important than perceived parental pressuring and encouragement from others, not only to attend college but also in finding the means of supporting oneself while doing so. One condition which tended to result in such parental pressuring and encouragement was early demonstration of a particular skill which might lead to a scholarship--athletic ability, for example. Other studies have shown that young people from lower-level families who expect to attend college were exposed to upward mobility attitudes within the family home and parental pressure to attend college is a more important variable than sex, religion, or socioeconomic status (cf., Turner, 1969).

background of most parents had exposed them to the American tradition of upward mobility and the value of a college education as a means to this end. While these young people tended to accept their parents' judgments that college is necessary for a successful future and while people, in general, try to do what they are interested in doing, working in an interesting career tended to be perceived as important as financial gain. In this respect, youths may perceive a difference of opinion in terms of their own and their parents' definitions of "success." One boy commented:

> Well, I think my parents don't disapprove of my goals of teaching political science and helping people, but my father, for example, says I should go into the business world, which I can't see. They say only, 'why don't you have a good job,' but I want more than this.

In some respects, these differing parent-child expectations are a reflection of changing cultural values. For instance, a small minority of these students had been exposed to ideological aspects of counterculture values which resulted in their repudiation of a quest for money and power and emphasis on individual potential and humanitarian goals. More commonly, differing expectations reflected a more personal awareness of the centrality of a work career in an individual's life and that such centrality may not always be satisfying. Work was taken seriously as a priority in life concurrently with a view that its economic necessity does not justify a life of predictable routine. In this instance, fathers became negative role models:

> Look at my father. He has been working all these years and his job is not satisfying and he hates it. He has four years to go before retirement and he can't wait.

The emphasis placed on finding an interesting career was a main strategy for trying to insure a happy life.[1]

This led to another consequence of taking further education for granted in that the questions one asked through the deciding process took on different forms. Since the question of going to college had long since been resolved, rather than asking "Shall I go to college?" decisions revolved around such questions as "Which school?" "What shall I prepare myself for?" Some conditions which affected choices of school were (1) financial resources, (2) the need for remedial work (including bringing up grades and taking prerequisite courses), (3) career choice and (4) the desire to leave home. Being high on the need for remedial work and/or being low on the other conditions resulted in planning to first attend the local community college and then transferring to a four-year college or university. The fact that they definitely planned on transferring is an important aspect of taking further education for granted. While young people tended to take the initiative (and they felt their parents generally expected them to do so) in choosing which school to attend, their parents exercised some control. For instance, one boy with a B- average explained why he planned to attend an out-of-state university:

> Well (the local university) I couldn't get into and community college, well, I wouldn't mind going there but mom says no. She doesn't say no very often, but she doesn't want me to

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1. Similarly, the child of movie star parents may take show business rather than further education for granted, but at the same time try to insure future happiness by not emulating parents in getting caught up in the "fame game" (Beck, 1977).

> go to the community college. She thinks that
> the community college is a glorified high school.
> She calls it a high school with ash trays.

When further education was taken for granted, young people have the time to decide what school they want to attend and what kind of career they want to prepare for. As a consequence, the process of deciding was related to the process of planning.

One dimension of planning was taking the steps needed to get into college. For instance, these steps included obtaining information about various schools and programs, talking with a counselor, filling out application forms, taking placement tests, applying for scholarships, or undertaking extra-curricular activities both within and outside the high school setting (for example, working on the school newspaper, taking courses at the local junior college, taking a special program in speed reading, or undertaking vocational counseling). Another dimension of planning was the early formulation of career choice. In this respect, not planning what one is going to "be" was problematic. One young man retrospectively commented on this problem:

> High school was a time when I had to make
> decisions about my future that I wasn't really
> prepared to make. People expect you to know
> what you're going to do and I didn't really
> have any direction. It's also a time when
> you're too young to admit you don't know.

A major aspect of not planning was that taking college for granted was viewed as more one's parents or another adult's idea than one's own. That is, when it was always assumed that the child would go to college, he or she just went along with the assumption but lived for "today" instead of planning. In this instance, college was not intimately connected with career plans but simply a way of satisfying what society asked them to do. Another boy explained:

> When I was about ten years old everybody said (pointing finger), 'you're going to college.' I got it from every angle: 'You're going to college; you'll get nowhere if you don't.' It seemed to me it was so far away that I didn't want to trouble myself about it and I just put it in the back of my mind. Every so often I'd get pinned down by my uncle. I would listen but I felt the conversation was not of immediate use. They all want me to go to college. I never got my satisfaction out of school. I got it out of other places. Hopefully, after I'm working at a good job I'll be happy I went to college. I'd look down and see a guy sweeping the street and say, 'I'd be doing that.'

More commonly, however, taking college for granted resulted in making plans regarding a future career. General, if not specific, career plans tended to be made early enough in high school (if not before) that other plans such as taking the steps to get into college revolved around career choice. One factor which influenced the formulation of career plans was having long-standing interests or hobbies--a fascination with chemistry led to planning a career in criminalistics; a member of the school golf team planned to manage and design golf courses; a planned major in electrical engineering became an extension of a hobby of electronics. Initially, at least, these young people were choosing careers for themselves that they thought would be "stimulating" and "fun" rather than work. This is related to the previously mentioned feelings regarding career: that is, if you are going to have to live with something the rest of your life, you might as well enjoy it. When related to long-standing interests and hobbies, career plans were integrative and offered continuity of experience.

Other factors which influenced the formulation of career plans were the availability of role models and mentor relationships.

Wanting to follow in the footsteps of a parent, teacher or relative was not uncommon. For instance, one boy became interested in biology in the ninth grade through an in-law who was a doctor of bacteriology. As a nurse, his mother's interest in this area also influenced him as did the advice and encouragement of his science and biology teachers. Other young people spent as much time or more with mentors in both formal and informal situations as they did with parents or peers. Work experience was also a factor which influenced career plans. In this respect, it was not only the experience which was important but the availability of employers or co-workers as a resource, both for gaining information as to what to expect in college and for potential help in getting into a particular school (by writing letters of recommendation, for example). Circumstances in which young people related to a number of people older than themselves--college friends, pastors, relatives, employers, co-workers--and with whom they could talk both about themselves and their career plans and receive support and encouragement was an important condition for continuing to take college for granted. Role rehearsal situations, role models and mentor relationships also helped young people to focus on career plans and reinforced the condition of parental pressuring.[1]

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1. Some writers have suggested that today's youth are deprived from learning adult roles and activities because they are segregated from adults (President's Science Advisory Committee, 1973). Another study complements the findings here that other adults are important influences in taking college for granted and for reinforcing the mobility strivings instilled by parents (Ellis and Lane, 1969).

Because the young person's educational plans were congruent with the expectations of the parents, taking further education for granted also resulted in perceived lack of alternatives ("I don't know what I would do if I didn't go to college. I've always assumed I would go.") An early choice of career and encouragement from others were other conditions under which young people failed to consider that their own expectations may not be met.[1] Perceived lack of alternatives lessened the potentially problematic aspects as to what to do after high school and young people began to center on personal achievement. The extent to which these expectations were sustained is examined in Chapter Five.

Further Education as Doing Something. The decision to continue school also occurred upon the realization that high school graduation was rapidly approaching and that one would have to "do something." The necessity of "doing something" was a dawning experience and marked by immediacy:

> I know I had to do it sometime--when you get out of high school you have to decide on something. My family encouraged me to think what I wanted to do. They didn't encourage my plan of living on my own. They did encourage getting a job. They feel I can do what I want. They want me to go to school. They are pleased, I guess.

Continuing school as a means of doing something after high school was marked by the perceived absence of parental pressuring, at least in

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1. A study of student nurses also shows these conditions are important in failing to consider the possibility of alternate career choices or the possibility of failure (Olesen and Whittaker, 1968).

the continued and intensive manner which occurred when college was taken for granted. While these youths might have felt parental pressure if they had not made a decision (albeit a fairly recent one) to continue their education is, perhaps, open to question. There are, however, varying degrees of parental pressuring. While most parents would <u>like</u> their children to go to college, not all parents <u>expect</u> them to do so.[1] As a consequence, parental pressure to attend college may be low. Within this sample, three indicators of low parental pressuring were, first, both the parent and the child perceived there were <u>alternatives</u> as to what to do after high school. While parents may wish their child to go to college, parental support of whatever decision was made tended to be couched in terms of "whatever makes you happy."[2] One girl commented on the choice she had made:

> My parents don't mind either way whether I stay home or go to work. (Interviewer: Have you discussed it with them?) I talked to them once about getting a job and they said fine. I haven't really discussed community college with my parents although they know I want to go.

Second, the fact that the child was soon going to have to do something <u>may be a "dawning experience" for the parents as well as the child</u>.

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1. Extrapolating from a study which included data on parental aspirations for low-income black and white children, we find that while 89 percent of the parents said they would like their children to go to college, only 42 percent actually expected them to do so (Lorenz, 1972).

2. This tended to occur irrespective of whether or not parents had the resources to send their child to college. When parents lacked the funds to do so, they may still support a child's decision to go but caution him that he will have to find the means to pay his own way.

For instance, one girl related that her parents had attended a party where other parents talked about sending their children to college. They realized that she had made no decisions regarding her future and decided that she should go to college, too. Third, the parents may not take the plans of the youth seriously. For instance, one girl decided that since she had to do something after high school, she might as well be a doctor. Perhaps believing she had set her ambitions too high, her parents and other relatives laughed and teased her about her decision at first. Another girl also chose to go to college as a way of doing something with her life, but her parents refused to pay her way because they said she "never finished anything she started."

When going on to school was decided upon through having to "do something," the decision was left more to the child. Faced with immediacy, lack of parental support, and alternatives, deciding what to do after high school became so problematic for a few young people that professional help was sought out. One girl spoke retrospectively about this experience:

> I was just emotionally insecure and went to a psychiatrist for two or three years. It was just a bad point in my life. When I hit 18 or 19 it was a little much to have to make a decision about going to school or going to work.

Seeking professional help, however, was not a common route for deciding what to do after high school graduation. If there were perceived alternatives available from which to choose and parental pressure to attend college was low, what conditions influenced decisions to continue one's education?

One reason for deciding to continue school resulted from feelings of having few marketable skills. The most viable alternative to continued schooling was to get a job. Few youths, however, felt equipped to enter the world of work immediately after high school. These feelings tended to stem from the idea that further education provides the necessary skills which enable young people to get a better paying job. In this respect, teachers, boyfriends or girlfriends, employers, or the mass media had as much, perhaps more, influence than parents. When asked who influenced their choice to go to college, some comments were (italics supplied):

> My parents said, 'you know you have to get an education to get a good job.'
>
> In high school they really pound on you that you have to get a good education to get a good job.
>
> Teachers, friends, especially friends in college. (Family, too?) No, not so much. (A male friend) brought up the good points and made me understand it's really important to get anywhere today. He gave me examples among our friends.
>
> At my job they take kids with high school diplomas, but they like you to have two years of college. Your life is easier when you have two years of college.
>
> I just influenced myself. I decided that without a good education I couldn't do what I wanted to do. I still don't know what that is, but I want to have the education I can get.

Note that the emphasis is on getting a well-paid job rather than preparing for a life-long career. This had two consequences. First, educational plans were short-term or vague--whatever it might take to learn the skills and get out and work. This, in itself, could be a cause for indecision:

> Like, I'd like to be a dental assistant, but right now if I go to college, I have to go two years, and if I go to a private school and pay them money, I would only have to go for a couple of months. I'm really mixed up about what I should do. I don't even know if I want to do that (dental assisting). I've got to start thinking about it, but I just don't know.

Second, the immediacy of having to "do something" toward getting a job meant that no long-term planning for college major had taken place. Lack of planning was related to a process of discovery in that it resulted in a belief that somehow what one was going to do would spontaneously materialize.[1]

Lack of planning was indicated in a number of ways. One was the uncertainty as to how much education was needed which in turn is related to the fact that most youth who chose to go to college as a means of "doing something" did not know what they wanted to do. Under the condition they were pinned down (as in an interviewing session, for example), there was a tendency to jump from one possibility to another in terms of what kind of job one wanted. There was also a tendency to choose occupations that sounded glamorous, fun, humanitarian, or financially rewarding without any realistic evaluation of how to obtain any of these choices.[2]

> See, I haven't really decided if I really want to go to college, but I'm pretty sure I want to

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1. Similarly, another study indicates that many students view life passively and whatever channels they take in college determines occupational decisions for them (Katz, 1968).

2. Various studies show that girls are more unrealistic in planning the future than boys and that they may also be unaware of having contradictory expectations (Putnam and Hansen, 1972; Rose, 1951).

> be something like a social worker or be in the business world, too. Or do something that is interesting to me. Or even being a beautician or a fashion consultant. That's one thing I'm not satisfied with and that is I haven't really decided what I want. Something has got to hit me and something has got to happen.

In other instances, quick role models may be adopted. For instance, one girl told the interviewer that she would like about two years of college but didn't know what she wanted to major in. Possibly believing she had not given an adequate answer, in a later interviewing session she had suddenly decided she wanted to acquire a Bachelor of Arts degree and become a psychologist:

> Since I've been seeing my psychiatrist, he has given me insight, and maybe if I major in psychology, I can figure out myself and other people. If I get a degree, it will give me more insight into marriage and that's my one big goal.

The availability of a public, two-year college also promotes a situation in which continuing school becomes the easiest, and possibly the "automatic," thing to do. (One wonders if it was not available, what would they do?) With its minimal cost and open-door policy of admitting all students from the local area, the public two-year college offers a vocational subculture for job-oriented youth who view college largely in instrumental terms (President's Science Advisory Committee, 1973; Clark and Trowe, 1960). It has also been noted that junior colleges provide a service to four-year colleges and universities by "cooling out" those young people who do not have the ability for upper-level college work (Clark, 1960). Less is known about how young people themselves plan to use the public two-year college to their own advantage.

In terms of acquiring the marketable skills needed to obtain a good job, the community college tended to be perceived as the place for discovery, not only in terms of what one will be but in terms of how long it will take. Rather than using the community college as a stepping stone to a four-year college or university, it was viewed as a place for experimenting with various curricula until one found out what one wanted to be. This was also related to the hope that the community college degree would somehow deliver them from the likely prospect of low-paying and boring jobs.

Another reason for deciding to attend junior college was to mark time. For instance, some young people had tentatively decided on jobs which had age requirements (firemen, airline stewardess) and college became a way of marking time until they were old enough to apply for such a job ("If I didn't go to college, then I would be around for a year and a half without doing much.") Also, for girls who really wanted to get married and be a housewife but who had no immediate prospects, college was not just a way of marking time until marriage but a way of expanding the field of eligible mates.

Deciding to go to college was also a tactic to gain freedom without having immediately to leave the parental home. For instance, one girl chose to both work and go to college because these activities offered greater independence from her parents. On the other hand, going to college was also used as a delaying tactic for the full assumption of adult responsibilities. For instance, young people who disliked a first work experience decided that college was a better alternative than immediate entry into the labor force. In neither of these instances was college chosen for the education it provides.

Whereas an orientation to personal achievement can be explained by a process of taking college for granted, decisions made because one had to do something can be explained by an orientation to marriage. It will be recalled from the last chapter that most girls in this sample (and few boys) placed priority on marriage. As a consequence, the place that future education and jobs had in their lives was contingent upon the timing of marriage and the wishes of their husbands. This theoretically suggests that centering on marriage leads to vagueness as to other aspects of becoming adult. Since the two centering orientations--centering on marriage; centering on personal achievement--varied by sex, this also suggests a process of differential socialization.

Deciding Processes and Differential Socialization

In this sample, deciding on college was significantly related to both socio-economic status and sex: the typical young person who took college for granted was more likely to come from a higher social class level and to be male; the typical young person who decided on college because they had to "do something" were more likely to come from a lower class level and to be female (Tables 1 and 2). Neither social class nor sex distinguished those high school seniors who decided to leave the traditional school setting after their graduation.

That most youths did decide on college (or some type of further training) is a testament to the continuation of an achievement motive and upward mobility in American society, but it also suggests that continued schooling may no longer be considered a dispensable

luxury for working class girls (Komarovsky, 1962).[1] Of particular interest here (referring to the tables once again) is that while the ways in which college was decided upon varied by both socio-economic status and sex, sex is the more highly associated (v of .51 vs. v of .34). In terms of college expectations, then, boys and girls were treated differently by parents and other socializing agents, as well as by themselves.

Whereas girls were more likely to choose to go to college because they had to "do something," boys had always taken it for granted; whereas girls received little pressure to choose college over other alternatives, boys perceived no alternatives; whereas girls had not planned for the future, the boys had; whereas the girls' educational goals tended to be short term or vague and centered in the local community college, boys planned baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate degrees and related their future careers to long-standing interests; whereas girls thought of further education as preparation for a well-paying job that they could work at intermittently in life, boys planned for a life-long career. Such attitudes reflect a conventional lower-middle class definition of the priority for women of sex roles over occupational roles.

Among youths who took college for granted, ambiguities in socialization experiences for achievement were apparent only among

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1. But most girls planned on attending the community college which, because of its vocational emphasis on training, is generally viewed as an extension of high school. Most studies fail to distinguish community college goals from higher education goals.

girls. For instance, one girl wanted to follow in the footsteps of her mother and become a nurse while her father pressed her to become a secretary because it was "easier;" another girl, who worked in a hospital and wanted to become a doctor, received support from some doctors but active discouragement from others who felt women tended to drop out of medical school for marriage; still another girl was actively encouraged by a male teacher in her ambitions to enter the field of journalism, but discouraged by people in the field who told her how hard it was for women.

The girls in this sample planned for both marriage and work and viewed obtaining at least some college education as the pathway to a better job. At the same time, girls would defer to husband's wishes regarding the continuation of their own education or work. These views of appropriate adult roles are related to socialization experiences which emphasize the priority of sex roles over occupational roles for women and the opposite for men. Both boys and girls in this sample tended to incorporate the appropriate stereotype into their self-concepts which related to the emergence of either/or vs. integrated views in the process of becoming adult.

Various studies have found parental social status to be the principal determinant for educational aspirations but the values specific to different status positions are more consequential for girls than for boys (Alexander and Eckland, 1975; Sewell, Haller and Straus, 1969). Coleman (1961) also notes that girls' college plans are more a function of social class than are boys, but also suggests that girls' intentions can be influenced by the high school climate. That is, some high schools regard college-going as more prestigious

than do others. However, other studies indicate that the major variable which influences educational aspirations is parental encouragement.

Turner (1969) found that young people from lower-level families who expected to attend college were exposed to upward mobility attitudes within the family home and parental pressure to attend college was a more important variable than either sex or socio-economic status. Similarly, another study (Kandel and Lesser, 1969) showed that parental encouragement can override a social class background; expectations to continue beyond high school also increased when parental encouragement was reinforced by others. However, parents more often have college expectations for sons than for daughters (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). The influence of mothers, particularly in the lower-middle class, on the college expectations of sons has been noted by Ellis and Lane (1969). (This suggests that mothers are so busy pushing mobility aspirations on sons that they neglect them for daughters.) Their study also indicated that lower-level girls who expected to continue their education were more likely than boys to mention nonfamilial influences. Parents also offer differential encouragement for educational expectations. For instance, for high school boys, parental encouragement is a determinant of grades; for high school girls, good grades can bring about parental encouragement, but not vice-versa (Sewell, Haller, and Straus, 1969). The latter study also found that even when parents encouraged further education, occupational concerns had little salience for high school girls and the authors suspected, therefore, that the girls had done little occupational planning at this age. This is not too surprising when the

societal view of education for women is that they should learn the skills to take care of themselves, yet the view is also expressed that they will get married and never have to use much of what they have learned (Kluckhohn, 1969).

The young people in this sample expected to conform to socially accepted patterns which suggest they were traditionally educated and reared. The low level of parental encouragement for mobility aspirations for girls found in this study as well as others suggests that achievement orientations and realizations must be gained by outside social support and direction. While the history of the feminine role is changing and there have been promises of the alteration of the position of women by the Women's Liberation Movement and the Equal Rights Amendment, the evidence suggests that beliefs in sharp role differentiation of men and women has not been relinquished (cf., Komarovsky, 1973). Because of differential socialization, young people had differing centering expectations to begin with. These expectations of differing life trajectories suggest theoretically that deciding processes affect subsequent action. This is examined in Chapter Five.

TABLE 1

DECIDING PROCESSES BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

	Lower SES (Prestige Score 12-45)	Higher SES (Prestige Score 46-82)	Total
	N	N	N
Taking College for Granted	9	14	23
Going to College as a Way of "Doing Something"	14	4	18
Leaving the School Setting	6	5	11
Total:	29	23	52

$x^2 = 6.12263$ $P = .05$ $v = .34$

TABLE 2

DECIDING PROCESSES BY SEX

	Male	Female	Total
	N	N	N
Taking College for Granted	17	6	23
Going to College as a Way of "Doing Something"	3	15	18
Leaving the School Setting	5	6	11
Total:	25	27	52

$x^2 = 13.29453$ $P = .001$ $v = .51$

CHAPTER FOUR

DETACHING

If the process of leaving home is, as was noted in Chapter Two, a traditional one for gaining self-regulation, there is still a marked paucity of data on this process and the conditions under which deliberate steps may or may not be taken to achieve freedom in this way.[1] Perhaps this is because in our society separation from parents emotionally, physically, and economically is considered inevitable and universal.[2] However, the speed is not rigidly prescribed. This means that there is an essential element of readiness, both on the part of the young person in wanting to leave home and on the part of the parent to let the child go.

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1. This appears to be especially true in the social sciences. As noted previously, most psychological (and clinical) attention on the separation process of the child from the family has concerned the developmental task of emancipation from childhood dependency for identity formation (Erikson, 1969, 1968; Loevinger and Wessler, 1970). Levinson, et al (1972) consider leaving home as an essential part of the developmental process to adulthood but Katz (1968) notes that while achievement of independence from parents is a well-known developmental task, the processes involved in its accomplishment are not clear. There is a definite lack of concepts of sociological independence. Alienation from parents is a related issue, but this investigator could find no past sociological research on young people's orientation to leaving home.

2. In this respect, independence from family or origin has been related to physical, emotional, and financial independence which manifests itself in marriage and the establishment of one's own household. Therefore, a main function for parents is socializing the adolescent out of the family for dual roles of spouse and parent (Parson and Bales, 1955).

Readiness

A simple cross-classification of child readiness and parent readiness establishes a paradigm for analyzing the detaching process.[1] A category which would entail a context in which the parent wanted the child out of the home before the child was emotionally ready to leave did not occur in this sample (and we would surmise it is generally uncommon.) There were occasions, however, when young people detached or were afraid they might have to detach before they were financially ready to do so. There are, then, various forms of readiness. Here we shall mainly consider emotional readiness which leads to physical separation (or detaching), realizing that economic unreadiness may operate to delay detaching even though the child may be emotionally ready.

First we shall consider what happened when the child was emotionally ready to detach and the parents sanctioned the process. In this instance, detaching was integrated with other status passages, such as marriage. Then we will consider a situation in which only the child was ready to detach. In this instance, detaching became a priority issue. Next we shall consider the circumstances under which detaching was delayed. That is, when neither the child nor parents were ready for the child to detach (within the five years of this study). Detaching is, however, by no means fixed. Finally, then, we will consider what happened when the child returned home.

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1. Henceforth, the term "detaching process" will be used simply because it is easier to carry forward descriptively and analytically than "leaving home process" would be.

Integrated Detaching. When young people's temporal expectations for leaving home were linked to movement into other statuses, detaching became integrated with the social status dimension of becoming adult. To the degree these temporal expectations were met and to the degree that parents, as well as the child, believed there was a legitimate reason for detaching, freedom from parental control did not become an overriding issue. In integrated detaching, leaving home was perceived as a logical and temporal concommitant of another status passage and, consequently, severance was not so disturbing. Three main ways integrated detaching occurred were (1) entering the military, (2) getting married, and (3) attending college away from home.

The reality that the nation was at war in Vietnam and that boys were being drafted legitimized entrance into the military or the military reserves. While most young men wanted to avoid the draft, most would also serve in the military if they were forced to do so. Parents were perceived as supportive of whatever decision was made as long as it was appropriate to basic family values:

> My parents support my filing for Consciencious Objector status if I have to. They would be upset if I refused induction, however.

In terms of detaching, entering the military can be voluntary or involuntary. For instance, some young men planned to join one of the armed forces immediately upon high school graduation, viewing the military as the functional equivalent to a college education. In this sense, detaching was integrated with other plans in becoming adult. The involuntary nature of detaching occurred when the threat of being drafted impelled the young person to defer college plans

and enter the military reserves. While involuntary detaching served to move young men out of the parental home sooner than expected, it was also viewed as an interim experience unrelated to the issue of freedom from parental dependence. When single adults left the parental home, however, they seldom returned to live there for any length of time. A return from such involuntary leave-taking heightened the awareness of renewed dependency and, consequently, accelerated temporal expectations for another form of detaching.

Commitment to the idea of marriage, particularly among girls, has already been underscored. However, marriage is not a clearly delineated status passage as one does not know for sure when, or if, it will occur. As a consequence, the time-table structure for integrating detaching with marriage was obscure. For marriage to be a way out of the home through integrated detaching, three conditions were met. First, college was generally not taken for granted (thus, the young person could discontinue school for marriage without incurring parental pressure).[1] Second, the young people were of legal age to marry. Third, temporal expectations for marriage were

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1. When there was high investment in career by both child and parents the child felt pressured to delay marriage. Among girls, however, ambiguities in socialization experiences for achievement (Chapter Three) could lead to re-planning for marriage. Within the confines of this study, none of the young men and only one young woman juggled a college education with marriage. In the latter instance, the young woman perceived that her parents were proud that she had graduated from college, but they had rejected the idea of college initially and had given minimal financial support. Rather than having to convince parents that the time of marriage was appropriate, she resembled Cartwright's (1972) "counter-strivers" who have a tendency to say "so see there" to those who are unhelpful and doubting in terms of education and career.

determined early: generally, the young person was married or going with the person they planned to marry within one and a half years after high school graduation; later marriages tended to occur after the young person had already detached.

The third typical way in which integrated detaching occurred was for the young person to attend college away from home. This was legitimized in several ways. One, a local college may not meet the requirement for a given career choice and attendance at an out-of-town school consequently becomes mandatory. Second, parents may expect that an out-of-town university will provide a better education (or offer more prestige for getting a good job) than a local college and they consequently pressure the child to attend the "better" school. In these instances, detaching is related to the deciding process in that going away to college is a temporal expectation that is organized.

In integrated detaching, leaving home was taken for granted as a natural concommitant of movement into other statuses. Readiness to detach, however, is a variable concept: detaching could be accompanied by feelings of wondering whether it is the right thing to do or if one is really ready to cope with new situations without guidance from and reliance on parents.

> When I knew I would be accepted at ________, I thought it would be great to be away from my parents. Then I started worrying about it. Whether I could handle it or not.

Some young women questioned whether they were ready for marriage but eventually gave in pressure from the boyfriend; some young men wondered if they had made the right decision to drop out of college

and join the military reserves. Remaining near to home acted as a buffer for these feelings as frequent visits to the family could be made. As one young man who attended college close to home noted: "They are overlapping circles." Young married couples also tended to visit their families often, at least during the first year or so of marriage. As a consequence, integrated detaching generally allowed for gradual emotional detachment from the family.[1]

The more young people enjoyed and felt secure in their semi-independence the less the contacts with parents became:

> We used to go to my mother's house all the time. Now we don't. We (husband and I) do things together.
>
> When I first moved away I went home practically every weekend and if I didn't my mother would ask me why. And last quarter (her third) I came home for about three weekends and not the whole weekend at that. Sometimes I just breeze in and breeze out.

Implicit in the latter statement is that parents also began "letting go." For young people who left home to attend college, one condition for parents' willingness to let go was demonstration by the child of competence in being able to handle him or herself away from home. One indication of competence was, of course, the child's grades, but

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1. One conditon which varied gradual emotional detachment was geographic distance from parental home. In contrast to the young man who found college and family home "overlapping circles," several young women whose husbands' jobs removed them far from home found that they had to quickly adjust from parental dependency. Because of the institutional structure of the military and college, they are thought to provide an environment in which the young person is "weaned" away from a parental home to a home of their own (Katz, 1968).

this could sometimes be misleading ("As far as my parents knew, I just had the grades they saw.") Better indicators of competence were perseverance in college and growing commitment to a career choice. For instance, one young man felt that by living away from home he had learned to cope for himself and as a consequence, he also began to feel increasingly self-assured regarding career decisions. Also, growing involvement in activities relating to his choice of career allowed him, and his parents to accept, fewer trips home to visit the family.[1]

Two consequences of integrated detaching are first, realignment of aspects of the self and second, increased acceptance and respect for parents. As young people learned that they could handle the various situations that occurred through detaching, they also began to feel themselves change as a person. One young woman wrote her interviewer:

> The most important thing has been living away from home. It was important because it was the first time I had been away from home and totally on my own. It has made me a lot more independent from my mom and dad--not completely though--and I am glad I have gone through this change because I had to start pulling away sometime. I've always been very dependent upon them but I know I can be less dependent on them and more dependent on myself. I feel I am becoming a woman now and no longer am a girl.

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1. Similarly, Chickering's (1976) analysis of the development of autonomy among college students suggests that instrumental independence (one component of which is ability to cope with problems without seeking help) and emotional independence (disengagement from the need for family reassurance and approval) are linked and mutually facilitating.

In terms of integrated detaching, some indicators of realignment of aspects of the self were: responsibility for one's own actions (e.g., studying without being told); freedom to make one's own decisions (e.g., going out when and with whom one wanted to); maturity (e.g., discovering one is ready for a different type of love); economic independence (e.g., paying for one's own things); awareness (e.g., meeting more of a variety of people); and coping (e.g., dealing with employers, landlords, and just learning to live in the world).[1]

While integrated detaching resulted in feeling more grown up it also moved young people into situations where they could transfer some dependency from parents to others--the spouse or friends, for example. One young woman who left home to attend college noted:

> Because I became more independent of my family, I have become more dependent on my friends. I see them more. The time I spent with my parents, I now spend with my friends.

Young people who moved into an early marriage felt more adult than their peers who had not ("I've outgrown them [friends]. They're just beginning to take the steps I made three years ago.") However, freedom is also a variable concept. For instance, the issue of one's personal freedom may be of more concern after marriage than prior.

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1. According to Feldman and Newcomb (1976), difficulties in measuring increased maturity among college students often arise because they are based on personality tests which are open to various interpretations. When college students, themselves, were asked to indicate how they felt they had changed, they reported indicators of growth similar to those of self-realignment reported here.

As a consequence, the extent to which one is free may be experimented with. Doing the same things with friends that were done prior to marriage was a typical test of freedom. Growing responsibilities, disapproval from spouse or relatives, or expressed shock by peers ("Like, I went with three girlfriends to a bar and I saw some boys there that I knew and they said, 'You're married! What are you doing here?'") were some ways the young married person was pressured to settle down. The early arrival of children, in particular, resulted in feelings of lost freedom ("You have to make a lot of changes when you have a baby. Gee, I used to do more of what I wanted to do in my free time.")

Integrated detaching also resulted in feeling closer and on a more equal basis with parents.[1] Some sources which operated to strengthen the parent-child relationship were marriage which placed the young person in the same status position (husband or wife) as parents; more contact with adults which led to greater understanding of and respect for the adult world; realignment of aspects of the self wherein feeling more adult led to interacting on a more adult level; and the separation, itself, which led to appreciating being together with parents.

Centralized Detaching. It will be recalled that, as high school seniors, plans to leave home generally centered on the issue of

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1. Several studies of college students (only) indicate that as independence from parents becomes more firm, there is a complementary shift toward increased warmth and understanding of parents (Chickering, 1976; Freedman, 1962).

parental restrictiveness which was also expected to diminish once the young person graduated and began to enter an adult or young adult world. As one young person had commented:

> When I finish high school there will be a drastic change. Everything routine will break. It will be a complete change from the way this household is run. Like I will go out and come back whenever I feel like it.

One consequence for whether or not freedom remained an issue was the extent to which these initial expectations met later reality. For instance, one young man who had felt restricted as a high school senior became engaged after high school and was holding down two full-time jobs. He commented:

> My parents treat me different and I have more freedom. They talk to me like a man, not a boy.

As a consequence of the perceived accommodation by his parents, he was able to remain at home until he integrated detaching with marriage. Other parents, however, were apparently not so willing to "let go." For instance, one young woman who both worked and attended school full time felt her parents were denying her independence by requiring her to be home for meals at specified times, demanding to know with whom and where she was going, and waiting up for her to come home from a date.[1] As a consequence, there was an increasing need to deal with the confrontation between expectations and reality. Gaining freedom from parents became a central issue.

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1. Komarovsky (1950) notes that in American society girls are allowed much less independence from parents than are boys.

Another condition for deteriorating relationships with parents was a consequence of an expansion process, or the exposure to various types of people, new ideas, and the like. Such expansion usually entails modifications in persons' identities (cf., Goodman and Feldman, 1975). This became a source of disagreement with parents when they still viewed the young person in terms of past identity. To paraphrase one young woman:

> My major problem is my parents. All along they have been saying they wanted me to get as good an education as possible, but now when I come home and try to tell them my ideas about literature, politics, and the like, they get terribly defensive and call me a show off. There is a complete generation gap.

Wanting to detach also varied by personal threshholds for tolerating differences of opinion. For instance, one young person may view differing opinions with parents as a "natural part of growing up" and consequently the need for freedom never becomes paramount; another young person may view these differences as a threat to becoming an independent person that only can be removed by leaving home.

Under instances where the young person felt ready to manage his or her own life, conflict generally centered around the issue of restrictiveness. In those instances where young people were beginning to form their own rather than their parents' view of the world, conflict generally centered around the issue of communication. Two important conditions for remaining home with conflict were viewing the situation as only temporary and having a girlfriend or boyfriend as a buffer ("My boyfriend has taught me about compatibility

with my parents [i.e., not to talk back]. I said to myself, I can hack it a bit more 'til I graduate from college.") Leaving home was generated when the young person was not willing to accommodate and there seemed virtually no way of getting parents to change.

In the latter instance, one way centralized detaching occurred was when negotiation was used as a major strategy based on a premise of legitimacy. Because parents accepted the military, marriage, or college attendance away from home as a legitimate reason for detaching, these also became ways in which some youths who desired independence could negotiate freedom. For instance, one young woman who desperately wanted freedom from parental restrictiveness was able to convince her parents that she should marry, despite their initial objections that she was too young.[1] Other youths, either initially or later, deliberately chose to go to school some distance from home just in order to get away from their parents:

> Being independent from my parents and living away from home without my parents is important. I could have gone to (a university ten miles away) but the fact that mom would have me come home every weekend makes me think I would prefer to go somewhere else. I am thinking now of (a university 500 miles away).

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1. Actually this girl was past the legal age to marry (age 18) but did not want to hurt her parents' feelings by marrying without their permission. Caring for parents' feelings was one condition which kept the child at home (for at least a time) despite a growing need for freedom. Since, subsequently, the law in this state was changed to accord both young men and women most legal rights associated with adulthood at age 18, it raises an interesting research question (which cannot be answered here) of the relationship between legal rights and parental consensus.

A condition, however, for effecting plans and priorities was parental consensus. The strategy of gaining independence by going to an out-of-state college became problematic for one young woman, for example, when her father, while supportive of her education plans, adamently refused to pay the higher expenses an out-of-state college education would incur. Continuing to center on the idea of freedom interfered with other aspects of becoming adult. In this instance, college (which had always been taken for granted) was dropped in order to put more effort into gaining economic independence as a way out of the home.

While some youths were unable to negotiate themselves out of the house, other youths who, for example, did not plan a college career or had no marital prospects, had nothing to negotiate their freedom with. As a consequence, moving to an independent residence came to be viewed as the solution to the problem. This decision led to more conflict, however, as parents apparently did not accept as legitimate an independent residence in the same city as that of the family.[1] The actual departure was generally delayed for two reasons. First, the young person had to become economically self-sufficient before leaving the family. Second, the young person felt guilty that leaving would hurt the parents' feelings. Some parents actively used guilt as a strategy to influence the timing of the departure. Saying they would be lonely or accusing the child of not helping the

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1. Since these youths already lived in a metropolitan area, they were unable to negotiate a move to the "big city" in order, for example, to get a better paying job.

family (either financially or physically) were two examples. Once the economic problems were resolved, however, confidence in being able to care for oneself and the need for freedom tended to overcome guilt feelings and resulted in a conflicted departure. In some cases, departures were speeded up by critical incidents. For instance, one young woman angered by a scene her parents had precipitated with her and her boyfriend abruptly departed the parental home the next day. Such departures generally had unfavorable consequences because the crisis precipitated a move earlier than the young person expected or was prepared for. Problems in other spheres of personal life (boyfriend/girlfriend problems, flunking classes, being disappointed with college or various jobs, not knowing what one wanted to do in life) also exacerbated conflict with parents and resulted in a conflicted departure. In this instance, some youth turned to religious sects; others placed geographic distance between themselves and the family home.

Under some conditions--a child's embarrassing life-style, for example--parents also helped the child to detach. For instance, one young man and his parents took it for granted that he would go to college and after high school he entered college in his home town. The parents viewed his college education as a legitimate reason for continuing to live at home; his life-style and appearance (interest in Zen Buddhism, hair hanging to his waist, a fish-shaped beard, for example), however, were apparently threats to their upper-middle class existence. Before open conflict took place, it was negotiated that the son would get a job to enable him to live away from home while the parents would continue to pay his college expenses.

The conflicted departure had two main consequences. First, it affected the emotional well-being of the young person--they spoke of loneliness and depression, for example. While integrated detaching enabled young people to transfer some of their dependencies to others, centralized detaching through conflict placed young people primarily on their own. Becoming involved in various activities served to lessen feelings of emotional insecurity for some young people; others felt compelled to turn to professional help. Second, in a conflicted departure it took time to heal the wounds. For instance, one young woman's parents would not see or speak to her for over a year after she moved out. While the child may consider moving back to the parental home (money problems were the main reason), gradual rapproachment with parents occurred only when the child perceived the parents were beginning to accept his or her independence and they could interact together on an adult level.

Another way of leaving home occurred when the parents were perceived to have little or no control over the plans of the young person. This tended to happen (1) when the young people perceived little emotional link between themselves and one or both parents, (2) when the young person as a high school senior had already begun to move into the hip-drug subculture, and (3) when young women (in this sample) decided to move in with a boyfriend. Moving in with a boyfriend may be a reflection of changing values ("I don't believe very much in the institution of marriage.") but in terms of freedom it was also viewed as a way of avoiding one dependency for another:

> Like he wants to get married but I don't want to. I don't know why. I'd like to see first

> and then we'll get married. I want to decide whether I want to spend the rest of my life with him. Maybe it's just the sense that I want to move out but I don't want to be tied down.

Whether or not parents tried to interfere with the detaching process is a moot point: young people tended not to "hear" what parents were saying. As a consequence, detaching was not viewed as conflicted, but as tolerated. In tolerated detaching, the young person expected to leave home without prohibition or hindrance from parents. While as in other types of detaching, economic dependence could keep the youth attached longer than he or she desired (particularly in instances where wanting to detach stemmed from little affective relationship between child and parent), movement into unconventional life-styles also provided alternative sources of economic support. It was when these alternative sources of support were not immediately available that detaching became problematic. Under these circumstances, the youth could find himself in the awkward position of having to negotiate remaining in the family home. The situation of one young man provides an example: As a high school senior this boy was involved in the drug and "hard-rock" music aspects of the "hip" subculture and looked forward to the day he could leave home. Right after high school, he began "dropping acid" every day and was afraid he'd get thrown out of the house before he was prepared to leave. Wanting to move but not having the resources he decided he could temporarily shape up and appease his parents. Already somewhat involved in Buddha, he became more involved as that helped him to stay off drugs. Being "clean" of drugs he was also

able to get a good job which enabled him to move in with a friend and eventually out on his own.

One consequence of tolerated detaching for those who left home because of parental indifference--at least within the confines of the present study--was that the young person remained relatively isolated from the family, seeing them rarely, if ever. While this could also be a consequence for young people who moved into alternative life-styles, a more usual consequence was continued parental pressure to settle down:

> My dad keeps telling me about what it'll be like when I'm 50.
>
> It doesn't matter that much to me that we got married--but it mattered to my mother!

Ordinarily, it was only when the youth began acquiring the social statuses signifying adulthood--holding down a job, getting married, for example--that rapproachment with parents on a more or less equal level occurred. For instance, referring to our Buddhist once again, he thought that his parents and other relatives found the chanting and other aspects of his religion rather weird, but also that they preferred it to his drug abuse. Subsequent steady employment, marriage and fatherhood led to rapproachment with his parents and the feeling "they are beginning to respect me now."

Delayed Detaching. Some young people were not ready to leave home either initially after high school nor within the five years of this study. It will be recalled that one young man who felt ready to detach had chosen the strategy of attending a college far from home; other young people who were not ready to detach chose the

strategy of attending a local college. As one young woman explained:

> I think I'm a coward. I'm afraid to go away to a four-year college, afraid to leave home where I don't know people. That's why I'm going on to the local community college.

The more introverted young person needed more time to gain confidence in experimenting with new situations. The longer it took to feel secure in social situations, the more the youth felt unready to leave the family. Throughout the five years, a major source of delayed detaching were problems in social relationships with peers which tended to keep the child in the family for the emotional support it provided. For instance, two years post-high school one young woman had not yet had a "real" date and one young man spent five years getting his Associate of Arts degree ("I wanted to hide."). Some young people deliberately slowed down leaving home. For instance, one young man who was miserable all through his school years because he felt he had no friends (which he attributed to others antagonism towards his homosexuality) finally thought he had found friends within a liberal college environment. As a consequence he deliberately started taking fewer classes so he could spend another two years as a senior relishing this new experience. Parental pressure to work toward a career and to delay anything which might interfere with his progress (work, marriage) allowed him to remain at home while continually testing the new situation. Occasionally, parents may not believe their child is moving toward independence fast enough. However, these introverted young people felt secure within the family home and mentioned only mild parental pressure to speed their progress.

Two other conditions which served to delay detaching were (1) a pleasure orientation which resulted in a docile response to social expectations ("I'm just having fun and enjoying myself") and (2) an inability to find a direction in life. Either of these conditions could result, for example, in postponing starts in going to work or entering school, in bouncing back and forth between work and school, or in slowing progress once some kind of initial commitment had been made. In these instances, detaching became problematic when the young people began to realize they had also delayed gaining freedom from parental authority. As a consequence, they felt "locked into" a situation in which they had to reluctantly live at home because it was convenient and cheap.

Returning Home. In many respects detaching is a very fragile process. Once young people left home it did not necessarily mean that the situation was permanent. One way returning home took place was when reversals started to occur--for the young person who got a divorce, quit or lost a job, or whose life just wasn't going right, the family home was a safe haven which to return. Sometimes, returning home was planned as, for example, young women who returned home to have a baby. In these instances, returning home helped to maintain continuity during change. For youths who went away to college, the door to home was usually a revolving one. Such detachments/reattachments had several consequences. First, as young people became more sure of themselves the interval between visits home tended to lengthen thereby facilitating the detaching process. Second, infrequent contact served to strengthen the parent-

child relationship ("When I go home weekends to see my family there is not so much strain and there are more enjoyable things to talk about.") Third, when the college youth felt the parents were placing him in an unequal relationship once again he was more apt to put up with it because he felt the situation was only <u>temporary</u>:

> With my father I don't get as mad. I let it pass, because I'm only here for a couple of weeks.

Thus, temporal expectations are a major property of returning home. In the revolving door approach to home the shortness of stay is known. As a consequence, much of the interaction between parents and youths was based on their temporal expectations. The fact that these young people were in college also provided what Berger and Luckman (1966) view as a ready-made, interpretive scheme for explaining changes in individuals. Thus, parents may expect and accept certain changes in the child. On the other hand, they can also expect the child may begin to drift away from them in terms of their ethics and standards and express disapproval (Freedman, 1969). Under anticipated threats to their newly-found independence and changing identities, young people were apt to devise strategies to avoid even a temporary return home. Traveling within or outside the United States and getting a summer job away from home were two such strategies.[1] One young man commented in this respect:

> Well I didn't want to work in my dad's office for the summer. I had read about working

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1. In this respect, Chickering (1976) notes a preference among college students for spending vacations at the homes of college friends rather than their own.

> abroad this summer. This work-trip to _____ was the most inexpensive thing. Then I got a small inheritance. I had decided to go before but that kind of reassured me. I knew I didn't want to be at home.

Young people who planned a return home or returned because unwanted consequences of detaching had begun to appear also viewed the return home as transitional and temporary but, in these instances, temporal aspects were more open-ended. That is, young people expected to remain home only long enough to re-orientate themselves and then once again move on. The feeling that the situation is only temporary tends to offset any conflict which might occur through experiencing some measure of former obligations or discipline. The fact that obligations and disciplines do occur, points once again to the fragility of the detaching process.

Since parents have reorganized their lives after the child's departure the return home can also cause some disruption within the family. As a consequence, parents and child may work together to set detaching in motion once again. For instance, one young woman who entered the hippie subculture immediately after high school returned home after being raped. Her mother had since moved in with the grandmother and apparently had neither the space nor financial or emotional resources to care for her daughter. She was, however, able to help her daughter find quasi-institutional living arrangements within which to replan her life.

The return to the family home became particularly problematic when the situation was viewed as more prolonged than temporary and more involuntary than voluntary. Two ways this occurred were when young people redefined, or parents influenced them to redefine, their

plans for becoming adult. A typical way a young person redefined goals was that after working and living away from home for several years, a decision was made to go to college and prepare for a career. In this case, a more or less involuntary return home took place based on both financial considerations and in being able to take less physical responsibility for oneself. In these instances, the need for instrumental dependence could clash with the need for emotional independence. For instance, one young woman who returned home in order to attend school explained the situation:

> It's hard to care for yourself and go to school at the same time. I've done it with friends in the past. I'm dissatisfied living at home. School is also not that satisfying. I spend most of my time on things that don't give me the greatest satisfaction. I'm not getting along with my parents. Oh, we get along okay I guess, but I'm dissatisfied with the relationship. I really want to get out of this house! Leave home! It will make me happier. I mean I feel I'm old enough to get out.

When young people left home through a conflicted or tolerated departure, parents might pressure their child to redefine their lives but seldom had neither the rapport nor the influence to make it "stick." For young people who left home to attend college, however, financial considerations alone gave parents the power to exert influence. Therefore, when the parents' perspective of the child's progress changed, the parents negotiated a return home. Two indications of lack of progress were (1) staying in school too long (one young man spent three years in out-of-town community colleges before his parents decided he had fooled around long enough and negotiated his return home), and (2) preparing for what the parents think is an unrealistic career choice. In these instances, parents negotiated a return home so that they could have their child under

closer supervision. An indication that parents were also aware that a return home could be problematic for the child was that they did tend to negotiate, rather than demand, a return home. One strategy in negotiating was to offer symbolic freedom. For instance, one young man's parents gave him his own apartment in their home; a young woman's parents gave her a car.

Once independence had been experienced, the awareness of the return to at least semi-independence which could not be viewed in temporary terms was heightened:

> When I first moved back it was like high school all over again. They told me what time to be home. It's changed now, but it's still hard because you know they're there watching what you're doing. A lot of times I just stay home because it would be a hassle if I told them where I was planning on going. Like we (boy-friend and self) used to go to (a resort) for the weekends. They'd never let me do that. I suppose I could if I put up a fight, but it's not worth it.

Whether the young person redefined goals or parents redefined goals for them, a main consequence of heightened awareness of the renewed dependency state was that freedom from parental control began to become a central issue. For these young people, returning home was a condition which forced them to begin the detaching process over again.

Detaching and the Sentimental Order

Following Glaser and Strauss (1971), the sentimental order means "that people involved in the passage (in this case, detaching) will have feelings that things will happen according to expectations" (p. 43). In general, temporal expectations as well as centering

expectations were related to time of departure from the family: those who centered on personal achievement or marriage as high school seniors and who consequently expected to remain in the family home during all or some of their college career or until marriage generally did so; those who sensed parental restrictiveness or parental indifference and consequently placed their freedom over other status passages tended to leave shortly after high school graduation. In the analysis of integrated and centralized detaching some changes in temporal expectations were also noted. The draft, a growing need for freedom and critical incidents were conditions which intervened to speed up the detaching process; economic dependence, parental interference, and feelings of guilt were conditions which slowed down the detaching process. Some young women also re-centered from personal achievement to marriage which resulted in earlier than anticipated detaching for them.[1] Either speeded up or slowed down detaching disrupted the sentimental order in that disturbances in the expected rate of passage had unfavorable consequences for other plans and for family interaction. However, detaching also served as a symbolic reference point for recognizing changes in the self. In integrated detaching wherein freedom was not an issue, change was <u>retrospectively</u> recognized and attributed to the process of detaching and what it entailed. In centralized detaching wherein freedom was the major issue, recognized changes in the self <u>preceded</u> wanting to

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1. That early marriages were not disruptive for young women can be accounted for by either/or views of becoming (Chapter Two).

leave home and were instrumental in setting the detaching process in motion.

On the two dimensions of freedom and social status, integrated detaching and status passages tended to support each other while centralized detaching, at least temporarily, interfered with centering on the social status dimension. Unreadiness to detach had a circular effect with status passage: unreadiness delayed passages through the social status dimension which, in turn, further delayed detaching.

As signified by returning home, detaching is also a fragile process and detaching/reattaching entailed modifications in identities or strategies to maintain newly-claimed identities (cf., Strauss, 1959). Integrated detaching strengthened the parent-child relationship while centralized detaching strained the relationship, at least temporarily--and occasionally, permanently. Generally, detaching resulted in a growing recognition and acceptance of interdependence with parents (Chickering, 1976). That is, there was recognition of an independent self apart from parents, but at the same time a recognition that one doesn't want to dispense with parents either.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOVING INTO THE SOCIAL STATUSES SIGNIFYING ADULTHOOD

A second dimension of the centering process is movement into the social statuses signifying adulthood. When the initial expectations of high school seniors for becoming adult were examined (Chapter Two), it was found that centering within this dimension involved two major orientations. In the first, or integrated view, adulthood was centered on personal achievement. Becoming adult was perceived as a normative, sequential pattern in which one step--graduating from college, establishing oneself in a career, getting married, establishing a family--was to be completed before starting another. In the second, or either/or view, adulthood was centered on marriage. In this view, becoming adult assumed no linearity in the early stages (but parenthood was expected to follow marriage) resulting in a low level of educational and occupational commitment. These initial centering expectations were linked to traditional sex-role views of what it means to be an adult. Consequently, placing priority on personal achievement tended to be expressed by males whereas placing priority on marriage tended to be expressed by females. These different priorities were also expected to have consequences for the temporal passage into adulthood in that females, because of low educational and occupational commitment, could settle into marriage and parenthood sooner than could males. In a few instances, centering expectations were not linked to the social status dimension but revolved around the issue of personal freedom. High school seniors who centered on freedom expected to carve out alternative

life-styles for themselves and rejected moving into the conventional social statuses signifying adulthood.

The question that concerns us here is whether these initial expectations matched later reality (within the five-year period under study). Therefore, this chapter examines stability and change in the social status dimension of the centering process. Since centering within this dimension involves two different orientations (priority for personal achievement vs. priority on marriage), we would expect empirical regularities in these routes to adulthood to be structured differently. Examination of the data reveals that this is, indeed, the case. When becoming adult is expressed by an integrated view of becoming, regularities in this pattern may be empirically accounted for by a structure which is focussed. When becoming adult is expressed by an either/or view, the structure is determined by the indeterminacy and uncertainty of marriage. Consistencies in this route to adulthood may be better viewed as a series of contingencies which move toward fulfilling and enhancing the marital state.[1] There may also be movement between these two routes to adulthood. For instance, one young person may initially view college as a contingency to marriage but gradually become focussed, while another young person may experience an opposite pattern. It will also be recalled from the last chapter that centering on the freedom dimension may replace centering on the social status dimension. (For example, the young person may drop out of college in order to hasten

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1. Kluckhohn (1969) has also labeled the kind of education women get as a "contingency education."

instrumental independence from parents.) Generally, however, problems in becoming or remaining centered on the social status dimension may be accounted for by a structure which is transient.

The Focussed Route to Adulthood

A focussed route to adulthood occurred when young people continued to work in a progressive fashion for goals of personal achievement. Three interrelated mechanisms operated to sustain a focussed route. One was the continuance of the socialization factors (such as taking college for granted, parental pressuring, other adult and peer influences, early formulation of career choice which was integrative with former experience--see Chapters Two and Three for further delineation) which combined to produce an orientation for personal achievement. Another was movement into what can be called a constricted social space. A third was a group definition of deferred gratification.[1]

Socialization. One consequence of prior socialization was the incorporation of personal achievement and the importance of a college education, as the means by which it is acquired, into the

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1. Change in initial orientation to one of centering on personal achievement were rare and occurred only among young women. This change to centering on an achievement orientation occurred in two main ways. First, there was an apparent misreading of initial cues of parental pressuring. Upon graduation from high school, parents pressured the young person not only to go to college but to remain there. Second, the young person became "locked" into the college environment, primarily through the mechanism of constricted social space, thus providing the social supports to start focussing in motion.

self concept. In a focussed route of becoming adult, young people continued to accept the importance of a college education. The success of past socialization is depicted by such comments as "Doors open for you with a college degree," "I owe graduating from college to people who have an interest in me," "I have no choice in the matter. I have to go to school." Socialization involved the recognition by the individual of an identity within oneself and permitted one to sustain this identity without feeling wrong decisions had been made. As one young man commented in this respect:

> The experience of being here is unbelievable--what you learn in school. I've learned a lot about living. I feel that the things I've learned and done are worthwhile, even if I didn't get accepted to graduate school. Other people might say, 'Look at the time you have wasted'--like friends of mine from high school who got jobs right out of high school. A lot of them are probably making good money right now. But I don't think I've wasted my time.

Socialization experiences were also perpetuated by continued parental pressuring, particularly concerning grades ("They don't give me as much lip since I got on the Honor Roll. They don't bug me anymore about grades.") and through reinforcement by counselors and teachers ("The teachers are interested in students, not like in high school. They make you want to push yourself.") However, while all young people who initially took college for granted did--at some time during the five years of this study--enter college, late starts, disruptions, and changes in centering from personal achievement did occur. Past socialization is, then, not a sufficient condition to explain a focussed route to adulthood. One external influence which operated to sustain focussing was the threat of the

draft. As one young man explained:

> As far as I'm concerned, the draft kind of decides your whole life, because if I got a high lottery number, like 360, I could drop out of school for awhile if I wanted to and travel and do something. But with the draft hanging down your neck, that sort of controls your life.

While the threat of being drafted induced young people to stay in college when they began to waver,[1] a more important condition which accompanied past socialization to sustain a focussed route to adulthood was movement into a constricted social space.

Movement into Constricted Social Space. Movement into constricted social space occurred when the young person became immersed in the college environment with an accompanying sense of narrowing of self.[2] One property of constricted social space was that the persons significantly involved in the formation of one's own identity shifted from parents to the peer group and, to some extent, to teachers. Another property was that time became a commodity to be employed to best advantage.

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1. The draft was a threat during the early years of college. During this time, United States policy regarding the draft was in a state of flux. To many young people, it seemed as though decisions both at the national and local draft board level were changing almost daily. As a consequence, the young men worried about its affect on their college plans while, at the same time, they could devise no concrete strategies for avoiding the draft. Most developed a "hang in there" attitude which eventually paid off: the draft and involuntary military service were abolished before they completed their college career.

2. The college environment constitutes bases of both social definition and self definition. Lewin (1952) demonstrated that the presence of a group can foster changes in motivation and attitudes. Here, we are suggesting that an aggregate of people with similar goals, interacting together, operate to sustain personal aspirations.

Constricted social space does not necessarily mean that number of friends and acquaintances nor engagement in various activities were not expanded. For most young people, college was an expansive experience. It does mean that friends and activities became increasingly oriented to the college experience. Previous friends could be abruptly lost when one moved away from home to attend college or, more commonly, there was a gradual drifting apart. Old friends who were retained tended to be ones who were also going to college and with whom college experiences could be shared. At the same time new sets of friends were building who, as one young man noted were "more like myself." Through this drawing together, young people gained not only recognition from one another for the role of learner but through more open expression of opinion developed an awareness of themselves as a person. One young man commented:

> With my friends in a sense I have become more aware of whom I am, and so I look for more of myself in friends. My friends have taken over more of the kind of person that can understand how my mind works and I can understand how their mind works, and that's a lot deeper. We see the world in a similar way.

When the friendship circle was narrowed to those with common goals ("We're trying to be professional about learning"), it sustained the focussed route of becoming. On the other hand, when the young person and his friends were mainly involved in just having fun, focussing could be delayed. For instance, the young person may find that a course has to be taken over because of poor grades or that one has not been able to concentrate on forming specific career plans. One consequence of having expectations for personal achievement, however, is that young people, themselves, recognize that sometime

the fun will have to end. As one young man commented, "This year (his first) has to be the year of parties. Life is still fun and games. I don't know when the turning point will come."

Turning points occurred in several ways. One was a subjective realization that the current pattern of "goofing off" was not rewarding. Typically, this resulted in distancing oneself from the present situation, seeking of parental advice, and introspective evaluation. Occasionally, as was learned in the last chapter, parents will negotiate their child's return home from college in order to better control progress toward personal achievement. More commonly, were natural conditions which by consuming time fostered a milieu of constricted social space.

Time pressures developed when students began to realize grades were important.[1] Not only did they have to spend time studying to get a good grade but the amount of time spent in this endeavor could be considerable as many of these students found college harder than they had anticipated. Engagement in college activities and the need to work were also conditions which increased the pressure to find time to study. (It will be recalled that most of these students came from lower-middle class families and, consequently, they often took part-time jobs to at least earn their "running around" money.)

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1. In the early 1970's the emphasis on grades was apparently not as clear-cut as a decade earlier (Becker, et al, 1961). Some members of the campus community were emphasizing relevance and learning experiences and de-emphasizing grades. Students who believed or were coerced to believe grades were not important were later dismayed to discover the importance of grades for getting into graduate school. This served to delay becoming as they had to take time to "mend their fences," so to speak.

As a consequence, time became a commodity to be employed to best advantage. Some attempts to regulate time were reducing the number of activities one was involved in, trying to find a job that was undemanding, reducing the number of trips home to visit the family, and letting the number of friends dwindle to a few close ones. ("My friends kid me that they have to call at least a month in advance if they want to see me.") One consequence was that students began to feel isolated from the world at large. In this respect, one young man noted:

> If you're taking a subject, you just have to keep thinking about that subject--trying to understand it. And, sometimes, you're not as aware of what's going on on the outside, as you would be if you had more time.

Time pressures acted effectively to constrict social space to the college environment and isolated students from other opinion which allowed them to maintain a focussed route to adulthood.[1]

Deferred Gratification. In a sequential pattern of becoming adult, establishing oneself in a career was perceived to precede entering marriage and parenthood. The continuation of such deferred gratification was interrelated with both socialization and constricted social space in that deferred gratification became a group expectation

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1. This is similar to Becker's (1968) notion of involvement as a mechanism of stability, wherein people become so ingrossed in a particular activity that they no longer take into account the responses of numbers of other people with whom they interact. In the present analysis, time pressure can be conceived as a condition for involvement which in turn operates to constrict social space and sustain a focussed route of becoming.

to be maintained.[1] That is, young men and women were dating others with similar goals and both parties had a vested interest in delaying marriage.[2] For instance, one young man who entertained thoughts about marrying his girlfriend explained:

> She's expressed a desire not to get married. She feels she's too young. She wants to finish school and get started in her career first.

For most young people, college was a period of social growth. But at the same time young people developed strategies to meet members of the opposite sex ("I want to move to the coed floor of the dormi-

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1. Deferred gratification is not to be confused with a psychodynamic trait of "delayed gratification" (cf., Brawer, 1973). On an individual dimension, delayed gratification essentially means an ability to exercise control over emotions. On a social dimension, deferred gratification means that young men and women interact together to postpone marriage for the long-term goal of personal achievement. However, Keniston (1968), for one, contends that ambiguities in defining adulthood arise because role acquisitions have no sequential order. That is to say, for example, that college does not necessarily precede marriage but may follow or be congruent with marriage. In 1970, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the married student population was approximately 25 percent. Most studies concerned with college marriages have focussed on the husband as student and the effect of marriage on academic performance (cf., Hepher and Cloyd, 1974). Studies that concentrate on both husband and wife are generally concerned with marital adjustment (cf., Price-Bonham, 1973). In this sample none of the college young men had married and only one young woman, who re-centered from marriage to career, juggled marriage with school. In the latter instance social supports (husband, teachers, psychiatrist) and constricted social space were conditions which allowed centering on career to remain dominant (albeit with some guilt feelings for incomplete fulfillment of the housewife role). Whether juggling marriage with school or career is another route to adulthood or a variant of the focussed route remain researchable questions.

2. Bayer's (1972) research shows that simply asking young people whether they expect to get married in college is the best single predictor of the outcome.

tory because I have trouble getting to know girls"), they also attempted to regulate the depth of the relationship ("I like the girls, but I don't try to get too involved with them. I have to think of myself now"). The data also suggest that social weakening of sanctions against pre-marital sex (at least within the peer group) reduced pressure for marriage and, as a consequence, sustained a focussed route to adulthood.[1] The following are illustrative:

> My attitude is much more liberal--influenced by Women's Lib and my friends. I didn't have sex before. It was a moral decision. Also, overcoming parental values about prohibiting sex before marriage; parental pressure of my girlfriend's mother--she lives at home. I'm happy I made the decision. I discussed it with friends (same age as well as older). They told me not to worry about it.

> She goes to school here. We have a good understanding of each other. We don't expect to get seriously involved, but we enjoy each other (sexually and socially). I mean it won't lead to marriage or a permanent relationship.

While, in a focussed route to adulthood, marriage continued to be deferred, there were time shifts in orientation toward marriage which varied by sex. Among young men, the idea of marriage seemed closer; among both sexes the fact of marriage appeared further away. It will be recalled that as high school seniors, career-oriented boys had given little thought to the idea of marriage--it was just too far

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1. Greater societal permissiveness regarding sexual behavior may be contributing to reducing two of our culture's adolescent conflicts first noted by Mead (1928). First, it reduces guilt by allowing the young person to choose the freer standards of their own generation over the ideals of parents. Second, it reduces the conflict over deferred marriage and allows the young person to focus on career goals.

away and there were too many other things to do first--and generally marriage was viewed with a sense of loss; career-oriented girls tended to be conflicted over priorities of marriage versus career. Generally, focussed young women continued to value the idea of marriage, although deferring it. Conflicts over the extent to which career would be balanced with marriage or even pursued after marriage, however, tended to remain unresolved.[1]

Changes in orientation to the idea of marriage among young men occurred in two main ways. First, the development of closer, if not always more sexually intimate, relationships with young women made the idea of marriage seem more real. It was not only the fun of dating or sexual attraction or the sharing of common interests, but (as one young man commented) the "support and assurance" given each other which made marriage appear more attractive. As a consequence, young men could begin to visualize themselves as settling down. Second, there were recognized changes in the self which were expressed as a process of "mellowing out." Such non-adult traits as being tempermental, impulsive and "goofing-off" were perceived as being replaced by adult traits of seriousness, responsibility and maturity. It was, as one young person noted, a matter of "thinking before you act instead of acting before you think." As a consequence of feeling

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1. There is a slight indication that the more involved the young woman becomes in her career goals and the more she feels capable of taking care of herself, the less allure marriage has. A "wait and see" attitude develops wherein pros and cons are carefully weighed. It may be that the same conditions which move young men toward marriage operate to move young women away from it. Unfortunately, examination of this assumption will have to wait until further follow-up data has been gathered.

more stable, the young men were also beginning to feel they could handle the responsibilities of marriage.

While the idea of marriage became more real, its actual occurrence was still expected to be deferred until education was completed and a career had been established. Planning to continue in graduate or professional education, inability to decide on a career, moving slowly through college, and confronting changes in institutions which necessitated the development of new plans of action,[1] were conditions moving the occurrence of marriage further into the future--often further than expected and with some apprehension as to the effect on continued becoming. As one young woman commented:

> Once I get out of (a professional) school, I want to get married, but if that will be right after school or not, I don't know. I don't want children right after I get married. I'd like to wait a couple of years. By then, I'm going to be really old. Gosh!

A young man who was very serious about his girlfriend also noted:

> All I can really say is getting a job is my goal for the next five years. Then I'll think about marriage, family, etc. I just didn't think it would take that long.

Central, then, to the account of a focussed route to adulthood are aspects of temporality. One condition for sustaining this route to adulthood is a sense of being "on time." That is when people move fairly smoothly and consistently through school and into a career according to expectations, there is no reason to re-center

1. Rightfully or not, a number of young people blamed their inability to get into graduate or professional school or to move directly into a job to result from newly-instituted quota systems.

themselves. Both being behind or having erred on temporal expectations (that is, the present situation is thought of as likely to go on much longer than originally expected) are, however, conditions which are likely to produce changes in a focussed route of becoming adult. Indications of impatience were already beginning to appear within this sample of young adults. Unfortunately, only later interviewing will reveal the relationship of temporal slowness and temporal misjudgments to the focussed route to adulthood.

The Contingency Route to Adulthood

The contingency route to adulthood occurred among those young people who centered on marriage. Centering on marriage has several main properties. One property is that the occurrence of marriage is indeterminate and uncertain. Of course, individuals can influence its occurrence to some degree through control of their own behavior. Placing oneself in a situation to meet more members of the opposite sex is one such strategy. While some youths may feel they can move directly from high school into marriage, the interval between high school and marriage was generally viewed as a period of preparing for and/or finding a job with which to support oneself. In this context, education and work became contingent on the reality of marriage. As a consequence, young people, initially, took the first job offered to them; as the occurrence of marriage came closer, stability and increased income became important. As one young man commented:

> I never thought of being a fireman three years ago. I wasn't married so what did I care. $2.50 an hour was okay. $90 a week was like making a thousand dollars a month.

Another property of centering on marriage was lack of occupational and educational commitment. That is, young people did not plan on (or were uncertain about) rising to the highest levels of education and career ladders. As a consequence, the meaning of further education and work is different in a contingency as compared to a focussed route to adulthood. In a contingency route, education was viewed as a means of learning the skills to obtain a more interesting and better paying job; work was viewed as the means by which one supported or helped to support a future family. While interesting jobs were a desired ideal, movement between jobs generally resulted from wanting better working conditions or more money. Rather than investing heavily of themselves in a planned career, work became mainly a means of financial support. In this respect, one young man observed:

> You should do everything you can for your family, but not kill yourself doing it. I want to work as little as I have to, and yet make the most money I can. Also, I want to keep my (future) wife happy—have a nice house and furniture.

A crucial element in lack of educational and occupational commitment was emergence. That is, what one would eventually be in life would become clear through experimentation. This relates to another property of centering on marriage, or the perceived options as to what one might do after high school. In this respect, some youths felt they could move directly into the labor force, others felt going into the military would be functionally equivalent to a college education, and still others had decided on the community college, trade school, or a subprofessional training program (for example, dental technician training) as a way of increasing marketable skills.

One consequence of perceived options is discrepancy between what one thinks one will do and what one actually does. For instance, the earlier young people moved into an occupation which provided decent working conditions and a decent salary, the less likely college was considered as a viable alternative. Because these young people conceived of college primarily in terms of the utility of the knowledge they were getting, they also did not care about whether they continued or not if they found what they were learning was not useful.[1] One young man explained:

> Well, I went to (the community college) for six months, but I dropped out because, to me, it was kind of over-done stuff. I mean I had already learned what they were teaching. It was like 6th grade stuff to me. Now I have a job.

For young men who continued to center on marriage, work was an economic necessity for fulfilling the role of provider. For young women, however, marriage was an option which allowed them to discontinue either, or both, education and work experiences. For instance, one young woman who became engaged to a man she met at work commented:

> After high school I had intended to work 'till fall and go back to school. Now I'm gonna work and support him while he goes to school one more year. Then we'll both work. I did want to become an airline stewardess, but getting engaged changed that.

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1. Studies cited in Bayer (1973) indicate that for women, continuation in college is related to the priority they give marriage over career and that women are more likely than men to drop out of college. While this is undoubtedly factual (and the present study would also support such findings), the present study also suggests it is the centering processes which are important, <u>not</u> whether the young person happens to be a man or a woman.

One mechanism which sustained centering on marriage was time. That is, marriage (or an engagement) occurred early enough that young people remained educationally and occupationally uncommitted. Prolonged centering on the idea of marriage without its actual occurrence was rare. Some conditions which sustained prolonged centering were personal idiosyncracies (such as shyness), association with others in a work rather than a school environment, and continued anchorage in the family home (with its traditional family ideology).[1] Early romantic involvement was also a condition which transformed centering on personal achievement to centering on marriage (which occurred in this sample only among females). It will be recalled that ambiguities in socialization resulted in conflict for the career-oriented girls. Under the condition that an engagement occurred early enough that no real investment had yet been made in a college career, parents did not pressure the young women to wait. An early engagement also precluded movement into constricted social space (a condition for sustaining a focussed route to adulthood) as attention revolved around the future husband, whether physically present or not. One young woman noted:

> I graduated and went to work for the summer. My fiance visited for a few weeks. Then I went back to school and (my fiance) went back to (his out-of-state school). I fell flat on my face and didn't do well in school because I missed him.

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1. In an examination of differential life experiences three years after high school, these latter two conditions are considered to be institutional self anchorages. For young people who remained institutionally self anchored, value transmissions from high school were minimal and young people remained more conservative (Langman, et al, 1975).

One consequence of changes in centering for these young women was that their educational and career plans became contingent on those of their future husband. That is, the location of the fiance on the educational and financial dimensions determined how long the young women continued in college and whether or not she went to work.

Changes to centering on marriage also occurred among young people who had expected to carve out alternate life-styles for themselves. In these instances, <u>critical incidents</u> rather than time became crucial elements of change. In confronting critical incidents, young people began to ask, "Do I really want to live this way?" For instance, one critical incident was a frightening drug experience; another was a pregnancy. Critical incidents eventuated in a wish to settle down, and a search for security and marriage became the anchoring point. Once this realization was arrived at, parental and social pressure were more easily brought to bear. One young woman who had been living with her boyfriend and others in a communal living situation recalled her experiences:

> We find out that one of the cats (i.e., a young man) is not sane, is not all there, is not responsible. He kept trying to make money off everybody, he was a dealer you know, but he would hook friends, not enemies. He's what do you call it--a sadist. He likes to see things hurt. So I thought, wow! I don't want to live up there, have my kid up there, with all that stuff bringing me down, trying to make it with them and all the stuff we owned belonging to everybody. Forget it! So we moved out. It's a different feeling, especially if you're going to have kids. His mother really wanted me to get married, and I thought I would be happier married because, I don't know...I was tired of being hassled about my name, was I Miss or Mrs. And I really dig him; I really love him.

Another property of centering on marriage (for young women) was <u>either/or views</u> of marriage vs. career. That is, a feeling that marriage and career are incompatible, which relates to a lack of educational and occupational commitment. As far as working after marriage or after having children, it will be recalled that young women expected to defer to their husband's wishes. Within the five years of this study, view of work varied by stage of the family cycle. That is, the woman expected to work until her first child was born, then withdraw from work for child rearing, and eventually return to work after the children were grown. (Komarovsky [1973] views this sequence as a "modified traditionalist" pattern.)

In the initial stages of the family cycle work, as well as the timing of children, was conditioned by economic necessity. As a consequence, work was seldom viewed as having any intrinsic satisfaction but as a way of helping the family get established--putting the husband through school, saving for a home, for example. In this respect, one young woman who perceived her job as a means of getting her husband established commented:

> Basically, he is going to school and then to work and then to school and then to work. It's been hard. And he is tired of me supporting him. I think the best thing that could happen now is to stop working for awhile. After five years, I'd like to stop working.

One condition which changed an either/or view of marriage vs. career (or at least reinforced a hope that an interesting career could be balanced with marriage) was involvement in a "self-help" group which promoted self-awareness and economic, emotional, and psychological independence for women. As a consequence, future plans for adulthood began to vary from the traditional. One young

woman explained her new feelings as:

> I plan to continue working probably at least another ten years. I don't want any children. At least for awhile. I guess I feel very strongly that half the problem lies in the population boom and you have to start somewhere. And, we've planned things around the two of us. It may be selfish, but we're not ready to stay home now. And I don't think I have the attributes for motherhood.

Regardless, however, the young woman's career remained interdependent with that of her husband.[1] For instance, another young woman who wanted her own personally fulfilling career commented:

> The reason I am working is so my husband can get established. Then it will be my turn. We sort of take turns with each other. We're not putting each other through college, but it's the same sort of thing.

Generally, working women still planned to retire to raise children and, perhaps, to resume work after basic child rearing responsibilities were over. Pregnancy tended to change attitudes toward future work with most young women wanting to settle down and raise their families and viewing future work reluctantly as a possible, but unfortunate, economic necessity. Once the responsibilities of being a housewife and mother began to set in, however, work once again began to be perceived as important, but in terms of personal fulfillment rather than economic necessity. One young woman explained:

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1. Similar conclusions have been reached by Rossi (1969). Arnott (1972) also found (in a purposive sample involving both husbands and wives) that the husband's attitude played a major part in determining whether and to what extent their wife pursued employment. The husband's attitude, however, was generally congruent with the wife's own self concept of role involvement. But when conflicts arose, so did the influence of the husband.

> I don't think girls think about--unless they get a higher education--just how much you settle down and have responsibilities when you have kids. I kind of hope I'll do something outside of just being home all day. A career of some kind. Something good for life other than 'big mama.' Something that's going to be good for everybody. I want to satisfy myself completely. I don't want to be old and miserable. But I don't know what to do.

In centering on marriage, becoming adult is viewed as fulfilling appropriate sex roles. Thus, young men spoke of becoming a responsible person and being able to make their wives happy through being able to supply them with more than just the barest necessities of life. There was a sense of settling in and discarding the freedom of youth, albeit it did not always come quickly. As one young man commented:

> I used to work when we were first married from 4:30 to midnight and then go out with the guys and sometimes not get home until 3:00 a.m.

Settling in resulted when non-work activities were reduced to mainly being with their wives and their respective families.

Young women were concerned about fulfilling their roles as housewives and mothers, particularly when jobs or children became demanding of time. At the same time they expected their husbands to help relieve them of some of their burden, they also felt guilt in relinquishing part of the traditional female role. Typical comments were:

> I found that being married and having a job was a very difficult adjustment. Learning to live with someone is very hard. There was lots of pressure on me. I had trouble coping with work and marriage. I've learned there's a lot of give and take in marriage and I can't do everything! I feel that I have to keep up on the housework because, well, my husband is extremely

> well trained by his mother to enjoy a well-ordered house. It really bothers me when things are not as clean as he wants them. It's an emotional thing. I guess I see him as being dissatisfied with me if things aren't as he likes them.
>
> His attitude is chauvinistic. I started laying some stuff on him. He says, 'What are you? A woman's libber?' I feel guilty if I complain too much. I think we should share everything a little more--the pressures of things that have to be done. I like to hit him with comfortable vibes. I don't like to nag.

One consequence of the contingency route to adulthood was that the identity of the young woman was shaped by the interdependence of her personal career with that of her husband. A second consequence, for both sexes, was that both education and lasting job commitments were deferred ("someday," I'll return to school; "someday," I'll find the perfect job). Perceptions of future adulthood continued to contain an essential element of emergence as it did when high school seniors. As one young woman commented:

> Mainly we don't look that far ahead. Right now we just try to take it one day at a time.

<u>Alternative Routes to Adulthood</u>

Alternative routes to adulthood in which young people renounced plans for an ordinary adult career were uncommon. Within this sample, alternative routes to adulthood occurred in two ways: (1) a continuance of centering on freedom by remaining in the hippie subculture (some elements of freedom in this context were: educational and occupational disinterest, non-establishment of a permanent residence, the use of drugs to "free" the mind, expression of personal interests such as in art or music, and the avoidance of "confining" personal

relationships but the development of liaisons) and (2) a change in centering from personal achievement to centering on an esoteric religion or philosophy.[1] One condition which prompted the latter re-evaluation was threats to aspects of the self. Flunking out of school, for example, signifies that you are not the kind of person you thought you were. As we shall see later, identity predicaments are also a property of the transient route to adulthood. Resolvement of identity predicaments through an alternate route was more fortuitous. That is, the recruitment to the religious group took place at an opportune time.

There are indications that two conditions operated to sustain alternate routes to adulthood. One was insulation from the outside world wherein the young person seldom associated with anyone except those who had life-styles and values similar to their own. When centering revolved around religion, insulation tended to be institutionally imposed.[2] When centering revolved around freedom, insulation

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1. Some other young people changed centering from an economic to a religious career but these religious careers were not only within the confines of conventional, institutionalized U.S. religions but also were congruent with earlier interests. Rather than an alternate route to becoming adult, these young people remained focussed while switching career paths. For more on switching careers, see Becker and Strauss (1956).

2. Religious conversion is the historical prototype of alternation, or the switching of social worlds. Such alternation requires an intense concentration of all significant interaction within the group doing the re-socializing which can be best carried out by segregating the individual from other and, particularly, former social worlds (Berger and Luckman, 1966).

was self-imposed.[1] As one young man explained his relationship with his girlfriend:

> I used to go through a lot of old ladies. I really get bored with a lot of chicks. I really like my freedom! I think I really like her because she doesn't want to settle down. She gives me freedom if I really want it.

A second condition which operated to sustain an alternate route to adulthood was a sense of parental indulgence (as opposed to parental pressure). For instance, one hip young man could always work temporarily for his father in order to earn money, and brief conversations with parents indicated they felt their children were just going through a phase before settling down. Young people identified themselves as "seekers," if not for freedom, then for spiritual completeness and maturity. As a consequence, they felt they were still in the process of growing up. Based on the usual social status dimensions signifying adulthood, parents felt that, at least for the time being, an alternative route did not indicate adulthood. However, the alternate route really involves a very different conceptualization of what adulthood means and, therefore, we cannot force these young people, nor did they want to be forced, into the same categories which signified adulthood for others.

The Transient Route to Adulthood

The transient route to adulthood occurred when becoming centered or remaining centered became problematic. As one young man commented:

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1. This is consistent with cognitive dissonance theory wherein one mechanism for maintaining a new definition of reality is the systematic avoidance of people and ideas that are discrepant with the new definition (Festinger, 1957).

"Things haven't been turning out the way I wanted them to." As a consequence, the individual was forced into viewing the self in new and different ways. One property, then, of a transient route to adulthood is an identity predicament[1] which led to a second property of unstable participation in the social statuses signifying adulthood.

Identity Predicaments. Several conditions accounted for identity predicaments. One was discrepancies in initial expectations and actual experience in the real world. For instance one young man found his idealism turning to cynicism and consequently began to question what he was doing in school when college did not provide the forum for political activities that he had expected. It will also be recalled that young people who decided to go to college because they had to "do something" also expected college to provide an environment for discovering what they wanted to do in life. When such discoveries did not materialize and if marriage did not intervene to end the process of discovering an occupational direction, the remaining ambivalence produced conflict in that the individual did not know what to want. As one young woman explained:

> It's like I am lost. The problem is I haven't committed myself. I don't know what I want to do in life.

Another condition for identity predicaments was perceived lack of fit with the world. This occurred when there was discrepancy

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1. For a discussion of the relationship between "identity predicaments and Erikson's (1963) concept of "identity confusion," see Chapter Six.

between how one saw oneself and the self others expected. One young man commented about his fellow employees:

> I try not to be overcome to see what they think when they look at me. I tried talking to the older people and they said, 'I don't mind long hair, but why don't you get your hair cut.' That's double talk. I'm not bitter towards all, but those who look at you and pre-judge you. The ones that look at you and turn their noses away. I passed a man in the hall and heard him mutter, 'disgusting.' I have a feeling I won't be there too long.

A consequence was a sense of alienation.

A third condition for identity predicaments was breakdowns in either self or social anchorages. One example of a breakdown in self anchorage was a young man who discovered he was bisexual.

> It's changed my life in that it's one more thing I have to deal with. It's very frustrating and I don't like it one bit.

Breakdowns in social anchorages occurred in several ways--a divorce, an emotional breakup with a girlfriend or boyfriend, dropping out of college, or bitter and brutal experiences in Vietnam with resulting estrangement from society in general--to name a few. If through a breakdown in self or social anchorages young people also failed to meet parental expectations, it provoked conflict with them which exacerbated these emotionally unsettling experiences. Consequences were depression and confusion in one's self image. One young woman who fled the state after an argument with parents commented:

> I was very lonely with no familiar beings to relate to. I was so confused. What I was going through was trying desperately to find where it was at for me, what was my thing. I was scared to look at myself.

Unstable Participation. A consequence of confronting and trying to meet internal conflicts and self doubts was the development of an in-and-out pattern of life experiences: in and out of romances (and, consequently, sometimes in and out of abortions), in and out of school, and in and out of jobs. This in-and-out pattern took two primary forms. In one, there was an awareness of an attempt to respond to generalized cultural expectations. As a consequence there was constant experimentation to find a niche in life. As one young woman commented:

> Essentially going in and out of school stemmed from part of me saying that I should be in school and part of me saying that this is not what I am about.

In other instances, the in-and-out pattern took the form of drift. For instance, one young man drifted into living off and on with his girlfriend as he tried to sort out for himself the way he related to women. In other instances jobs were taken for no purpose but survival which allowed concentration on the internal things. In this respect, young people may review past mistakes and make comparisons as to how they handled and reacted to mistakes then as compared to the present. Such review became a criterion for measuring movement.

The two properties of identity predicament and unstable participation had consequences for perceiving oneself and being perceived by others as not yet adult. One young man commented: "I lack ambition--according to my parents." (And his mother told the interviewer she worried about his "immaturity.") "I guess I've grown up a bit. But not as much as I would like."

Implications for Temporal Aspects of Growing Up in America

This chapter has been concerned with patterns of transitions in role acquisitions in the process of defining oneself and being defined by others as adult. The scheduling of role acquisitions has typically been associated with difficulties in growing up in contemporary America. Arguments concerning difficulties in making the transition from adolescence to adult statuses have tended to take four forms, based on the emergence of industrialization and an expanding economy: (1) that the period of youth has moved later into the life course, (2) that the transition to adulthood has become prolonged, (3) that the sequence of movement into adulthood has lost its clarity, and (4) that young people have lost meaningful contact with the adult world (Coleman, 1961; Flacks, 1971; Keniston, 1968; Presidents' Science Advisory Committee, 1973). Such arguments also emphasize higher education as the essential feature of maturation and neglect such issues as departure from home and entrance into marriage.

Taking note of the latter oversights, one study examined historical change in the timing of several transitions to adulthood by considering the typical points at which status passages occurred (Modell, Furstenberg and Hershberg, 1975). Comparing census data, these researchers found that while age of departure from school has risen since the 19th century, age at leaving home, getting married, and establishing a family has lowered. It was concluded that compared to a century ago, the process of growing up, rather than becoming prolonged, has become more concentrated.

Other writers have suggested that these disparate views of the transition to adulthood can be reconciled by recognizing that there are different paths, different life experiences in the transition to adulthood. In this respect, the timing of adulthood is said to be associated with such characteristics as to whether one is a man or a woman, rich or poor, or black or white (Knox, 1977; Neugarten, Moore and Lowe, 1965). However, despite their professed interest in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, sociologists have shown little interest for studying the processes and patterns of the transition, particularly as it concerns empirical investigation (Modell, Furstenberg and Hershberg, 1975).

This chapter has addressed the problem of movement into the social statuses signifying adulthood through a process of centering. Examination of this process has shown there is no single route to adulthood, but several. Each of these routes has implications for understanding the relation of time to the transition to adulthood. Centering on personal achievement was accounted for by a structure which was focussed. The focussed route to adulthood is congruent with prolongation theories of the transition to adulthood essentially because college and establishment in a career were and continued to be taken for granted. But, while the transition to marriage and parenthood were deferred, the evidence suggests an <u>early</u> concern with what Becker (1960) calls making lasting occupational "commitments."

Conversely, centering on marriage was maintained by a contingency route to adulthood which moved young people into the status of marriage and parenthood earlier than the focussed route but in this instance, it was work role gratifications which were deferred.

Variations in the timing of movement into the various statuses associated with adulthood may, then, be explained by the process of centering.

The greatest delays in becoming adult may occur within a transient route to adulthood. Temporal aspects in this respect are somewhat more complex in that they depend on which dimension of centering is the referent. For instance, the young person who begins a transient route to adulthood and re-centers on marriage moves into adulthood later than those persons who consistently followed a contingency route, but may move into adulthood earlier than persons who followed a focussed route.

These routes to adulthood show the variations of young adult experiences, each with its own meaning of where one is in relation to full adulthood. They also indicate that perhaps the length of the passage to adulthood is less important as a subject for sociological investigation than the processes by which individuals develop a sense of themselves as adult.

CHAPTER SIX

CENTERING: SOME CONCLUSIONS

In Chapter One some of the ambiguities surrounding the transition from adolescence to adulthood were noted. These included problems in defining adolescence, young adulthood and adulthood, and growing discrepancy between what is "supposed" to happen during this period of life and actual life experiences. It was suggested that these discrepancies are generally attributed to the prolongation of youth within an industrial (and, perhaps now, a post-industrial) society. The concept of prolongation poses distinct problems for stage theories of development which assume human personality develops in predetermined steps and that there is a clear demarcation from one step to the next. The usual solution to this problem has been to suggest that the stage of youth should be subdivided into two or more periods while still retaining the concept of an adolescent identity crisis for the entire stage. We suggested that these ambiguities might be overcome if the passage to adulthood was examined from a processual rather than a stage point of view. As a consequence, a substantive theory of "centering" was inductively derived to explain varying life experiences and growing awareness of the self as an adult. In this chapter, centering processes as an explanation of the passage to adulthood will be compared with a prominant development theory (Erikson, 1963, 1968) and then we shall conclude with a summary of the relationship of centering processes with other properties of status passage.

Centering Processes and Epigenetic Stages. Most standard works on the psychology or social psychology of life change are based on a developmental perspective which, while acknowledging the influence of the social environment, focuses on the individual level in becoming adult. From this perspective, growing up is perceived as the gradual development of a firm and stable ego-identity. Erik Erikson's theory of epigenetic stages (1963, 1968) is probably the most prominent of these developmental theories insofar as they concern the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Not only have a number of researchers directly or marginally tested portions of his theory in their studies of young people, but Erikson (1968), himself, notes that his concept of "identity crisis" has become so widespread that young people not only know they are supposed to have such a crisis but they flamboyantly display it.

This study was not designed to evaluate theories such as those of Erikson. In fact, Gubrium and Buckholdt (1977) note that a social phenomenological focus on the dynamic social processes by which change or lack of it is defined, evaluated, and shared by people is basically incompatible with a developmental perspective. Epistemological biases aside, we feel it would be fruitful to compare his theory of the young adult period, derived from clinical research and impressions of daily life, to centering processes, based on the actual experience of young people making the passage to adulthood.

In Erikson's theory of epigenetic stages there are two concepts which bear directly on the transition from child to adult. One is that each psychosocial stage is characterized by a developmental crisis which has to be essentially resolved before the individual

can proceed to the next stage; second, for the stage of youth in particular, there is a period of moratoria. Both of these concepts illustrate the dangers for the theorist of first developing a theory and then trying to fit the data to it, rather than vice-versa.

If we consider that there is a distinct period between adolescence and adulthood then Erikson's Stage VI (young adulthood) wherein the task of the individual is to establish intimacy over isolation would correspond to this period. This means individuals have not yet reached Stage VII (adulthood) and its crisis of generativity vs. stagnation, but have resolved the crisis of identity vs. role confusion in Stage V (puberty and adolescence). Since it is in the latter stage that the "identity crisis" takes place, we can begin to sense problems in conceptualization, primarily because the stages are not congruent with prolongation theories (which we have seen are linked to the educational system). Presumably, the concept of "moratorium" which Erikson barely touched upon in an early discussion of epigenetic stages (1950, 1963) but which he later elaborated (1968) was designed to explain stage discrepancy with prolongation theory. That is, because of rapid technological changes, young people require a psychosocial moratorium wherein they may experiment freely with various roles and take the time needed for the integration of the identity elements from the childhood stage. As a consequence, young adulthood was re-evaluated into a subdivision of younger and older adults and the normative identity crisis was ascribed to the age of young adulthood as well as adolescence. While Erikson alludes to individual and subcultural variation, he does not elaborate on these

points.[1] In terms of women, however, he does attempt to have it both ways by insisting that both an epigenetic stage and a moratorium have a term and a conclusion, but also noting that women have to leave part of their identity open in that their moratorium cannot end nor their identities fuse until after marriage and motherhood.

In our examination of centering processes, it was suggested that the focussed route (which was only one of several) to becoming adult was most congruent with current prolongation theories of adulthood. In Erikson's view, this route could be said to be an institutionally imposed moratorium. We have learned, however, that there were certain mechanisms--socialization factors, constricted social space, and a group definition of deferred gratification--of interacting with others which maintained a focussed route to becoming adult. Highly committed to goals of personal achievement, there was little evidence among young people who followed a focussed route of "experimentation" which the concept of moratorium embodies. Moreover, like some students in the studies by Block, Haan, and Smith (1969), Freedman (1969), Katz (1968), and Marcia (1966), there was no evidence among these students that they had experienced an identity crisis.[2]

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1. The idea that a moratorium does not have to be consciously experienced or that deep, but transitory, commitments can be made while in a moratorium are so incompatible with an interactionist point of view that no attempt to critique these ideas is made here.

2. Despite growing evidence to the contrary, social researchers continue to hold attitudes that young people should have time for experimentation with roles and to establish an identity. Thus, the students in Marcia's (1966) study who followed what we have called a focussed route to becoming adult were imputed with premature foreclosure. Friedenberg (1959) laments what

Similarly, among those young people who followed a contingency route to adulthood, there was, like the youths who did not complete college in a study by Trent and Medsker (1968), little in the way of a trial period. Some experimentation with work and/or college did take place but it was more passive experimentation than active seeking and there was a crucial element of emergence. The alternate route to becoming could be viewed as a moratorium, but we suggest this view was expressed more by parents (who tended to hope it was only a phase their children were going through) than by the young people themselves. The alternate route to becoming did contain an element of staying in place rather than movement which gives a sense of a self-imposed moratorium. These young people, however, had very definite conceptualizations as to who they were as individuals set apart from the mainstream. One consequence of the very different conceptualizations of what adulthood means was the development of insulation

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he feels is the "vanishing adolescent" because institutions impose quasi-adulthood on young people before they have had time to form a stable ego-identity. Becker (1964) views becoming an adult as a process of gradually acquiring commitments which constrain individuals to follow a consistent pattern of behavior. He also believes, however, that the time for making lasting commitments may be inching up and that youth is a time for making mistakes that do not count. In centering processes, becoming adult is oriented toward some meaningful aspect of life and young people, consequently, commit themselves to one situated definition of self rather than another. In some routes to adulthood, these commitments may begin very early. In another study, the researchers were surprised to find that many students (52 percent men; 34 percent women) had a fairly clear idea what they wanted to be when they entered college and did not change their plans. The researchers concluded these young people had found their life's work early (Knox, 1968). There is no evidence that <u>all</u> young people believe that they have to experiment, that mistakes do not count, nor that early commitment results in maladaptation.

strategies for remaining centered on their alternate route and, thereby, avoiding any identity crisis.

Erikson's concepts of identity crisis and moratorium are more congruent with the transient route to adulthood where centering and remaining centered became problematic.[1] The two properties of a transient route--identity predicaments and an in-and-out pattern of experience--are similar to Erikson's concepts without any imputation of normativeness or universality. It is also of interest that many young people who developed a transient pattern also sought help with their problems. It is, then, these young people who the psychiatrist is most apt to see in a clinical setting--the kind of setting from which Erikson essentially derived his theory of epigenetic stages.

Centering also took place on a dimension of freedom. In terms of self concept, young people who integrated detaching with the social status dimension of becoming adult tended to recognize changes in themselves retrospectively as they assimilated their experiences of

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1. Interestingly enough, Erikson described identity diffusion as a "loss of center" (1968, p. 212). Erikson changed the term identity diffusion to identity "confusion" because of the former term's spatial meaning in the field of anthropology while at the same time suggesting "confusion" may be too radical a word. In the discussion of the transient route to becoming adult, I used the term "identity predicament" for a property of this passage. I will stick with this term as the transient young person may not be confused as to who he is but <u>others</u> may not agree with this concept and press for change--therefore, there is a predicament. An in-and-out pattern may then develop where the young person tries to find a niche where others will agree with his own conception of self. In the process, however, he may find his own conception changing. It is of interest to note that in order to develop social psychology into a "science" in the sense used by other sciences how much effort is put into trying to precisely define terms.

living away from home. Other young people, however, began to view themselves in different ways while still living at home and it was these changes in self concept which propelled them to center on the idea of detaching. In neither instance was there evidence of the need for a moratorium for the integration of a separate identity from that of their parents. What was noted, however, in the section on returning home was the fragility of the detaching process and the varying consequences this had for concept of self.

Centering processes make life stages problematic. They show that life is not linear and continuous nor are certain "tasks" normative or universal. While the mechanisms through which centering were sustained (as in the focussed route of becoming, for example) may impress one with regularity and perseverance, they were con-texually bound dynamics within which young people generated their own sense of reality and concept of self.

Centering Processes and Other Properties of Status Passage. After this substantive analysis was completed, the author read Glaser and Strauss' (1971) formal theory of status passage. In their theory, "centrality" was suggested as a property of a status passage, but they did not formally consider it as a major property and discussed it as part of the property of "desirability" of a passage. Other properties they considered especially relevant were: reversibility, temporality, shape, and multiplicity. Of these, temporality has been woven into the analysis of centering. The other properties were not consciously integrated with the analysis but we believe they are implicitly there. In a brief summary of centering,

then, we will highlight the integration of centering with other properties of status passage.

The multiplicity property of passages means that people go through more than one status passage at one time which inevitably sets problems of priority. Priority is, of course, what centering is all about.

On the freedom dimension, a main consideration in setting priorities was readiness to detach. In our society detaching from parents is generally considered an inevitable process (which is a condition of irreversibility) in becoming adult. As a consequence of the condition of inevitability, detaching may not be given any special priority, but become integrated with other status passages--attending college away from home or getting married, for example. Thus, two passages may support each other. However, a passage in one dimension may also become competitive with a passage in the other. As a consequence, one passage becomes central which produces a halt in the other. For instance, the young person centered on personal achievement who also wanted to detach, could reorder the priority to detaching by dropping out of school to earn the money to detach; other young people might reduce the priority of detaching and reluctantly continue to live at home while they continued to center on personal achievement. In this study, detaching became a central issue when the child felt ready to detach but also felt the parents were not ready to let go. One consequence was a contest over control as to whom was going to shape the passage. Young people who were not yet ready to detach also tried to shape their passage.

One strategy, for example, was deliberately taking fewer classes in college and thereby delaying graduating while continuing to live at home. While the cultural ideal is that detaching is inevitable, it is not irreversible. Young people may return home for varying lengths of time and may have to juggle all over again their various priorities. In many respects, detaching is a very fragile process.

On the social status dimension priorities determined the various pathways young people took, or were taking, to adulthood. For instance, a priority of personal achievement was sustained by a structure which was focussed which temporarily blotted out the priority claims of other passages. In terms of shape, this passage is fairly clearly defined in that its direction and schedule is prescribed. The educational organization's management of the phasing and rate of passage are mechanisms for preventing reversibility. However, if young people found they were not moving forward on schedule, they could become vulnerable to conditions which reversed centering on personal achievement. Some young people in this sample, for instance, were beginning to show signs of impatience in moving into other status passages.

Centering on marriage was an unclearly defined passage and issues regarding certainty became problematic. The question was not one of controlling the shape of the passage, but what to do until marriage emerged. One consequence of centering on marriage was that it allowed only intermittant devotion to other passages such as college education and occupation which became contingent to marriage. When centering on marriage, young people were in a kind of "wait and see" passage and because of its unknown timing, the

passage was a temporal vacuum. The temporality of this passage was created when the certainty of marriage emerged (setting a date, for example). Other passages such as education, occupation, or parenthood were paced around this temporality and schedules were developed. Thus, the young couple may decide to work for several years and save money before having children, the woman may decide to work only until her child is born and then retire, and so forth. These were only broad schedules, however, because of temporal unknowns in other passages (for example, the woman may have to work longer than planned because of economic necessity or the young couple may become parents sooner than expected). Within this sample, young people who centered on marriage did not reorder this priority, but the passage was more one of juggling of phases which continued to contain an element of emergence.

Control of a passage became crucial in an alternate route to adulthood for this route was not normative and the people involved were trying to develop life-styles for themselves in which the meaning of adulthood was very different. Based on assumptions of what is a normal status passage, parents (at least within the five years of this study) tended to view alternate passages as reversals--but temporary reversals. As a consequence of parental and social pressures, management of awareness contexts was crucial for non-reversibility. One strategy was to generate pockets of mutual passagees for carving out guidelines for controlling the passage. Thus emergent communes or chartered religious sects are created.

The transient route to adulthood was an undesirable passage resulting from becoming uncentered (similar to what Glaser and Strauss

call reversals) or problems in becoming centered (that is, finding a desirable passage). Individuals involved in a transient pattern were in a better position to reshape their passage as they recognized it was out of shape. In contrast, for example, the personal achievement passage could become so central to individuals that they missed cues that they might not make it, at least in the way desired. As a consequence of becoming uncentered, young people searched for the proper control agent (e.g., psychiatrist) to help put the passage back in shape. But the transient pattern highlighted the relativity of reversals in that the resulting redefinitions could either be temporary (and result in an in-and-out pattern of experience) or permanent.

Since people's interests as well as identities change, they could question the desirability of remaining centered on any particular passage. One consequence of questioning the desirability of a passage was that it helped to give control to other agents. For instance, the "hip" young person who found a mate and began to question whether he or she continued to believe in free sex and communal living could also find parents pressuring for a marriage ceremony to signify closure. One condition which affected women in this sample was the conflict over marriage and career. Since marriage is the normative pattern for women, it appeared that it was easier for them to center on marriage or recenter from personal achievement to marriage than vice-versa. A major condition (for both sexes) which operated to change the order of priorities was an awareness of being off schedule. But, perhaps, the major contribution

of viewing the transition to adulthood in terms of centering is that the passage can only be considered long or short or problematic in relation to the passagee's context and to their other passages.

APPENDIX

NOTES ON SAMPLE, DATA, AUDIENCE AND ANALYSIS

Sample

The young adults whose viewpoints form the basis of this report represent one cohort of men and women who took part in a study by the Human Development Research Program of persons confronting four common transitional stages of life (Lowenthal, Thurnher and Chiriboga, 1975).[1] This cohort consisted of 52 young people who were randomly selected from the universe of an urban high school senior class graduating in 1969. The sample was almost equally divided by sex (25 males and 27 females). Interviews were conducted by staff of the Human Development Program at three points in time: (1) as high school seniors when they were 16-18 years old (average age was 17 for both sexes), (2) 18 months later, and (3) five years later when they were 21-23 years old.[2] Therefore, this cohort approximated the age group perceived by adult respondents in the studies cited in Chapter One as "young adults." Of the original 52 respondents all but one, who was serving in the military in Vietnam, were reinterviewed at the 18-month follow-up and 47 were reinterviewed at the five-year follow-up. Forty-six of the cohort, again roughly stratified by sex, were interviewed at all three points in time.

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1. This research was made possible through grants to the Human Development Program from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (HD03051 and HD05941) and from the National Institute on Aging (AG00002).

2. The author participated as an interviewer at the five-year follow-up.

The Human Development Program wanted their samples to be homogeneous and, as much as possible, to be representative of the lower-middle and middle class.[1] Therefore, the samples were drawn within the geographic boundaries of a high school district which appeared to meet these criteria.

Various analyses have shown that social class background differentially influences a person's orientation to life (Feldman and Newcomb, 1973). I was not satisfied with the Human Development Program's original measure of socio-economic status, particularly in regard to high school seniors' knowledge of family income. Since occupational ratings are considered to be the best measure of socio-economic status (Robinson, Athansiou, Hend, 1969), I therefore used prestige scores based on the National Data Program for the Social Sciences as the measure of social class (Davis, 1974; Siegal, 1971). Prestige scores were assigned to the occupations of the principal supporting parent[2] of this high school senior sample. The mode for both sexes was the decile 40-49 which tends to correspond with skilled (or lower-middle class) occupations.[3] Half of their mothers had ended

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1. A major reason for choosing these class levels was that theoretical constructs on developmental processes have largely been drawn from either the upper-middle class or especially talented and privileged individuals and the Human Development Program wanted to see if these theories were also applicable to the more general population.

2. Principal supporting parent may include working, widowed or divorced mothers or step-fathers.

3. Prestige scores for the principal supporting parent of high school girls ranged from 12 to 71, with a mean of 40.1 and a standard deviation of 15.09; for the boys, the range of supporting parent prestige scores was 20 to 82, with a mean of 50.88 and a standard deviation of 15.47.

their education with high school and half of their fathers had had some education beyond high school. Twenty-eight percent of fathers and 12 percent of mothers were college graduates or better.

The ethnic composition of the cohort was predominantly Caucasian (nonwhites included one Black, one Japanese-American, one Mexican-American, two Filipino-Americans, and two Chinese-Americans). Religious identification tended to be either Roman Catholic or Protestant (33 and 31 percent, respectively).

The young people tended to come from small, intact families. Three-quarters lived with both parents but this was more true for the boys than for the girls (88 vs. 63 percent, respectively). Around three-quarters also had siblings (generally one or two) in the home; ten percent were only children. Six percent were foreign born (all girls) and of those who were native born, 71 percent had been born in the city in which they attended school. Of the total sample, 86 percent had lived in the same city and 55 percent in the same neighborhood, for ten years or more. Typically, then, their environment was characterized by stability.

It should be noted that the urban area in which the respondents lived contained one high school (not the one from which these young graduated) which was predominantly directed toward the academic preparation of the university-bound student. While some of our students met the criteria for admission to the more academic-oriented high school, they chose not to attend it because of the pressure they felt they would experience. In the latter part of the 1960's, all the high schools in the city were undergoing characteristic changes as the school administration instituted desegregation plans.

Typically, however, these students attended their neighborhood high school and while some could be considered better students than others, they can be considered as "average" high school students.

Two students (a girl and a boy) dropped out of school before they graduated. Eighteen months later, nearly half (48 percent) of the young people were in the local community college. Another six percent were taking business or vocational training, 10 percent were in a state college or university (four young men and one young woman), and 36 percent had either not gone to college or dropped out of the community college. Most of the young people in college also were working at least part time. Two young men were in the military, four of the young men and six of the young women were working full-time jobs, and four young women were mainly having a "good time." One young man and three young women had married (and one of the latter was in the process of divorce).

At the time of the second follow-up five years later, another two young men were married (and one had also divorced) and another nine young women were married (average age at marriage for both sexes was age 20). Very few of the young men (N=3), then, had married while half (12 of 25) of the young women for whom information was available had. Thirty-five percent of the young men (and one young woman) had completed or nearly completed requirements for the Bachelor's degree and all planned on more education. Thirteen percent of both sexes were still in college (that is, they were moving through more slowly) and another nine percent of the boys and 17 percent of the girls had entered or re-entered a community

college. Forty-three percent of the young men had either never gone to college or had dropped out by this second follow-up. Most of these had entered the full-time labor force. Sixty-seven percent of the young women were not in college at the second follow-up and whether married or not had also entered the full-time labor force. An exception was that no young woman who had a child was working at this time.

These characteristics, however, can merely suggest the various life experiences of these young people within the five years after high school. As a consequence, the approach to the data utilized in this report is that of symbolic interaction, incorporating concepts of a phenomenological perspective within the context of interaction theory. In this respect, we attempt to understand what went on from the perspective of the persons involved. Since, however, it is rather uncommon for a humanistic sociologist like myself to have had extensive quantitative research experience as well as to undertake research in a field that has been long dominated by developmental psychology, I have been asked to give a rather personal account of the present experience.

Data

The present report is an analysis of 150 interviews obtained from the previously described young people by an interdisciplinary and longitudinal study in human development. Methodologically, the use of these interviews was legitimate in terms of my qualitative research training. The sociology program with which I am affiliated does not insist that the only valid data are those which the researcher

her/himself gathers. Secondary sources can be utilized if they lead to the discovery and facilitate understanding of generalizable social and structural processes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Schatzman and Strauss, 1973). In this respect, however, there is a question as to whether the current analysis is really a secondary one. Secondary analysis has been defined in two ways: data gathered for one purpose, for quite another problem; data used for an analysis not anticipated by the original design (Goode and Hatt, 1952). Neither of these definitions are strictly applicable to the current analysis. Since I also participated directly in the second follow-up, the current analysis could probably be viewed, for lack of a better term, as "quasi-secondary." Let me explain.

The Human Development Program's longitudinal data were uniquely suited to the present analysis. They were interested in continuity and change (particularly as it concerned adaptive processes) at four transitional stages of life.[1] I was interested in continuity and change in the passage from adolescence to adulthood. The purposes, then, were essentially similar and, consequently, do not fit one definition of secondary analysis. As far as anticipated analyses, however, they expected to test out hypotheses, both their own and those of others, and consequently to conduct a unit analysis. I expected to conduct a process analysis. For instance, in regard to respondents' plans for the future, they might construct a typology

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1. The fact that they made *a priori* decisions as to whom might be going through a transitional stage is not an issue here. They had the age group needed for the purpose of my own analysis.

of goals which could be compared statistically to other constructed data, while I would examine the same data for the properties which distinguished how and why certain decisions were made and the consequences these had for the passage to adulthood. That both kinds of analyses could be served by the same data lies essentially in the nature of the interview schedule.

Their interview schedule was <u>not</u> the social survey type. The interview was designed to serve the individual and combined purposes of an interdisciplinary group--social psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists--who would examine the data in different ways. Consequently, the interview was largely of an exploratory nature rather than being designed to test out specific hypotheses or theories unique to a particular discipline. Also, while much of the developmental literature assumes an outside "objective" view of a person's life course, an orientation of this Program placed more emphasis on the conscious perception of one's own life. This resulted in the interview being largely composed of open-ended questions intended to elicit the person's own frame of reference and subjective perspectives, based on a focussed interview (Merton, Fiske, and Kendall, 1948, 1956). Because of the intensive and open-ended nature of the interviews, they provided a rich source of data for a process analysis.

The interview schedule was composed of eight sections. Three of these were structured--demographic and sociocultural data; health history; psychological instruments and tests. The main body of the interview consisted of four sections of open-ended questions: (1) patterning, problems, satisfactions, and meaning of social activities;

(2) past, present and future goals, perceived supports, hindrances and implementation; (3) relationships with family members and friends, dating experiences, perceptions of current social issues; and (4) the timing, nature, and evaluation of past and current life events. The interviewers were also asked to write a narrative account of the interview, which included any interaction with family members or friends.[1] The first and second follow-up interviews were essentially similar but some material was shortened (for example, respondents were simply asked to indicate whether they had gained or lost friends and the nature of change in relationships rather than to give a detailed description of each friend), and questions on life changes and perceived changes in the self were added.

By the time of the second round of interviewing, the Human Development Program had agreed to allow me to use their material for my dissertation research. They allowed me to insert four future oriented questions as to expectations concerning future education, work career, marriage, and parenthood. (I had discovered from reading previous interviews that one area tended to be elaborated upon over others.) The Program also agreed to include the subject "Who Am I" (Kuhn and McPartland, 1954) which I initially had assumed would be useful for assessing self identity. The latter instrument was not used in the present research for two reasons. First, I witnessed a graduate student and a staff member (independently) laboriously codify the instrument with little result for the effort expended;

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1. For a more complete description of the interview, see Lowenthal, Thurnher and Chiriboga, 1976.

secondly, and more importantly, situated concepts of self were emerging in the data which were more appropriate for a process analysis. Providing at least some input for the interviewing instrument is, however, one reason I would view this research more "quasi-secondary" than secondary. Another is that I was hired as an interviewer at this second round of interviewing and, consequently, was given permission to ask my own questions after completing their interview schedule, and if the respondent agreed to such questioning.[1] I had a number of interesting conversations with young people but my impression was that I was obtaining as much information on the passage to adulthood by simply probing answers to questions which were already in the interview schedule. Ideally, development of a substantive theory calls for data collection, coding and analysis to be a joint operation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). That is, these operations are not stage-specific but are guided by the emerging conceptualizations. In this report, only coding and analysis were a joint operation. As I interviewed, I turned the material in for clerical processing and did not see it again (or any of the other interviews as well) for many months. Due to pressures on my own time structuring, I also had not begun to analyze earlier interviews. This might have become a major problem in concept development if the interviews had not been designed so that the respondents could talk about what was

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1. I interviewed respondents in all four transitional stages, including 11 high school seniors. I was not allowed to interview the entire high school senior sample because of possible interviewer bias.

important to them (as opposed to what the researchers thought would be important). What happened was that the late start in analyzing the data occasionally limited densification of the analysis. For instance, once analysis began, leaving home emerged early as a dimension of the passage to adulthood, but no specific questions regarding this process had been asked. Obviously, enough young people mentioned various aspects of this process that the concept of "detaching" could be developed. But, if the interviewers had been alerted to the importance of this dimension earlier, their probes could have densified the analysis.

The Audience

As might already be suspected, this report is primarily directed to two audiences, based on my own commitments. First, although I have had extensive experience in quantitative research, I had made a commitment prior to completing the Master's degree to humanistic sociology. As a consequence, I was also committed from the very beginning of the present undertaking to a process analysis. (But as will be described in the next section, there was some back sliding and the analysis evolved slowly.) In this respect, the research was addressed in part to those on my faculty committee who represented particular substantive and methodological interests in humanistic sociology. Second, however, I was committed to reporting my findings to the Human Development Program. They not only provided me with data, but had sponsored me for a Traineeship and, after the Traineeship had expired, provided employment as a research assistant for various staff members. This resulted in a commitment to make

a contribution to the field of adult development, but from an interactionist sociological perspective.

The few references to numbers within this report are directed toward that portion of the audience who feel numbers are important. It is process, however, that is emphasized. While my analysis was based on a different perspective than a developmental one, the staff of the Human Development Program were very familiar with the data from their own respective viewpoints. Credibility for a process analysis was established when they not only recognized their own experiences and understandings in the analysis but discovered it helped them to understand the data in a new way. A main problem in adolescent developmental psychology has been that development has been viewed as linear and uni-dimensional. Centering process shows that there are not only multiple lines of becoming adult, but that there is progression and regression. Because the process was grounded in actual experience, I believe that, among both audiences, "centering" made sense.

Analysis

Evaluation of quantitative research has usually been based on how well it fits some model of scientific inquiry. As a consequence, emphasis has been placed more on verifying the methodology than on the tested theory (Zetterberg, 1954). The assumption appears to be that if the methodology is correct, then it logically follows that the conclusions are correct. Emphasis on verification in sociology has had consequences for qualitative research in that this research, too, is most often evaluated on its ability to meet a model of

scientific inquiry. Another important property for evaluating qualitative research, however, is the fit of the data to the empirical world. In qualitative studies, synthesized interviews or excerpts from interviews usually constitute the main body of "proof." Although consistency between a theory and a life history may not establish proof of the theory, inconsistency shows that the theory is inadequate (Becker, 1964). One problem in evaluation is that qualitative studies are often mainly descriptive. As a consequence, qualitative researchers are often criticized for "rich" but unsystematic data. A main question for evaluation, then, is how systematically the researcher arrived at conclusions.

Raising an analysis above description is no easy task and, consequently, the question has often been raised as to just how qualitative analysis is accomplished. Lofland (1974) notes that the literature on procedures for qualitative research have generally emphasized either the social relations aspects (entry problems for example) or how to apply quantitative techniques to qualitative data (cf., Adams and Preiss, 1960). Recently, researchers who assume a more phenomenological or interactionist position rather than using a hypothesis-testing model insofar as method is concerned have begun to suggest or describe their own inductive analytic techniques (Cavan, 1974; Davis, 1974; Denzin, 1970; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lofland, 1971; Roth, 1974; Schatzman and Strauss, 1973; Wiseman, 1974). It is also clear from these reports that the first issue confronting the researcher is to ask, "What is the story?" "What are these people talking about?" As a consequence, the researcher has to become completely immersed in the data.

In the present analysis, the data were not coded to fit any <u>a priori</u> scheme. The analysis was based on a substantive model of qualitative research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This model calls for discovering significant categories, the properties which distinguish these categories, and the process(es) which link these categories into a substantive theory. In this respect, the interviews were read and re-read for theoretical sensitivity and the developing concepts were grounded in the experience of the respondents. That, at least, is what finally happened. Reaching that point was a slow and often agonizing process.

Like most researchers I was confronted with a mass of data I had to make sense of. (But if I had started my analysis earlier with previous interviews, I would have reduced this mass by at least a third and would have had conceptualizations around which to organize later interviews.) While I wanted to follow a substantive model for qualitative research, this did not mean that the model provided a formula, or a set of standard procedures to follow, for analyzing the data. Since the data were longitudinal, it seemed sensible at first to begin by writing a summary of each case in order to get an overview of what was going on over the passage of time. From these summaries, it was obvious that the rate of passage varied, that young people were making different plans as to what to do after high school and were later either following through or changing these plans, that they were at various levels of involvement with their families, and so forth. So I began to plan and write memos on these themes. Unfortunately, in writing the memos I regressed to a quantitative model of research and began counting.

That is, I was noting, for instance, how many were planning on community college, how many on a four-year college, how many wanted no college instead of looking for the properties and conditions which distinguished the deciding process. Committed to a process analysis, I am not exactly sure why I regressed. Perhaps my early quantitative training was just more comfortable to work with when confronted with such a mass of data. Perhaps it was because it was summer and my faculty committee was not easy to reach for guidance (one was out of the country). Or, and perhaps more importantly, it was because I had just finished a research assistantship where I had been converting qualitative data to quantitative, learning to use the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences, and analyzing factor analyses. Since I was performing these operations for someone who claimed to be trained in a symbolic interactionist orientation, perhaps my ideas of how an interactionist sociologist conducted research became blurred. At any rate, the memos were mainly descriptive, based on how many people did one thing vs. how many did another. Later, this made my dissertation Chairman very unhappy and he pointedly reminded me that I was not exactly a novice in using a substantive theory model since I had used it in my Master's Thesis. While I was later able to use some material in these memos for generating properties of categories, I essentially had spent months of wasted effort.

Fortunately, about this time several student colleagues were also either involved in the analysis of their data or making plans for their field research and we organized an informal seminar for the interchange of ideas. (It was in this informal seminar that a

colleague first labelled one concept in my data as "detaching.") In presenting my data to this group, the general consensus seemed to be that since I was working with a general process to begin with--the passage to adulthood--perhaps the best way to begin the analysis was with an ethnographic plot.[1] That is, to look at becoming adult as a natural history with a beginning, middle, and end.

With this perspective in mind, I began writing key words which defined a situation under study in the margins of the interviews and found that I was able to sort them rather quickly into groupings of analytic categories. That becoming adult was viewed as occurring on two dimensions--independence and social status--also more clearly emerged during this process. I labelled file folders with the category name (e.g., "Taking College for Granted"), collated information on the categories and placed them in the folder. At the same time I was writing notes on explanatory and integrating ideas and filing them and also was including notes on any related research that I had happened to come across. (I was not doing any direct bibliographic search at that time.) The material in the folders formed the basis for chapters. In the course of organizing and writing up this material questions or new analytic issues would arise which meant going back to the interviews for information. But, while the dissertation was finally progressing, I felt increasingly dissatisfied. I

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1. I only presented my data to this group once, but the monthly association with colleagues with similar views of the world helped me to remain "centered" on the kind of research I wanted to do.

realized that I had an "analytic description" suggested by the data of the general passage to adulthood, but the key linkage(s), or basic process(es), which tied the data together into a substantive theory were missing.[1]

While struggling with this problem, I happened to meet one of my professors who kindly asked me how things were going and I told him of my frustrations. He remarked that whenever he had a similar problem he conjured up an audience and reasoned out his problem with them. I had a ready-made audience in the student group already mentioned, but because of pressures in time for completing the dissertation, I decided to try conjuring up an analysis class and presenting my problem to them. In organizing a description, I began to tell them that for some young people gaining independence was so important that other issues were relegated to the background until the independence issue was resolved, that young people's future plans on the social status dimension could be differentially distinguished by a process of centering, and how in the forthcoming chapter it was already evident that some young people were continuing to center on their original orientations while others were not. I was suddenly elated because I realized that centering was the linkage I had been looking for. I was just as suddenly dejected, however, because I wondered how I could have been so stupid not to realize and organize my material around this concept earlier. It should be stressed,

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1. For a comparison of straight description, analytic description, and substantive theory, see Schatzman and Strauss, 1973.

however, that while I had sudden insight that centering was the key linkage, the development of the concept was not simply fortuitous. The idea of centering had been grounded in the data, had emerged, and been developed to some extent in <u>every</u> chapter I had already written. The slow recognition of centering as the linkage which tied the data together resulted mainly from the failure to conduct a constantly comparative analysis among concepts in various chapters (cf., Glaser and Strauss, 1967). That is, if a concept emerges which explains one segment of analysis, one should ask oneself how it relates or does not relate to other segments of the analysis.

The remaining chapters were written by always keeping centering process in the forefront during coding and analysis. While the concept of centering had already been incorporated into the other chapters, the chapters had not revolved around this organizing theme. Because of my own halts andreversals, my University's time limit for completing the dissertation was rapidly approaching. The previous chapters were, therefore, investigated for any loose ends regarding the centering process, and paragraphs were re-written to integrate the chapters. At this point I had to force myself to let go. As a consequence, the analysis has not resulted in final closure. This book is closed, but the enthusiasm for re-working some of the ideas more clearly within a context of centering lingers on.

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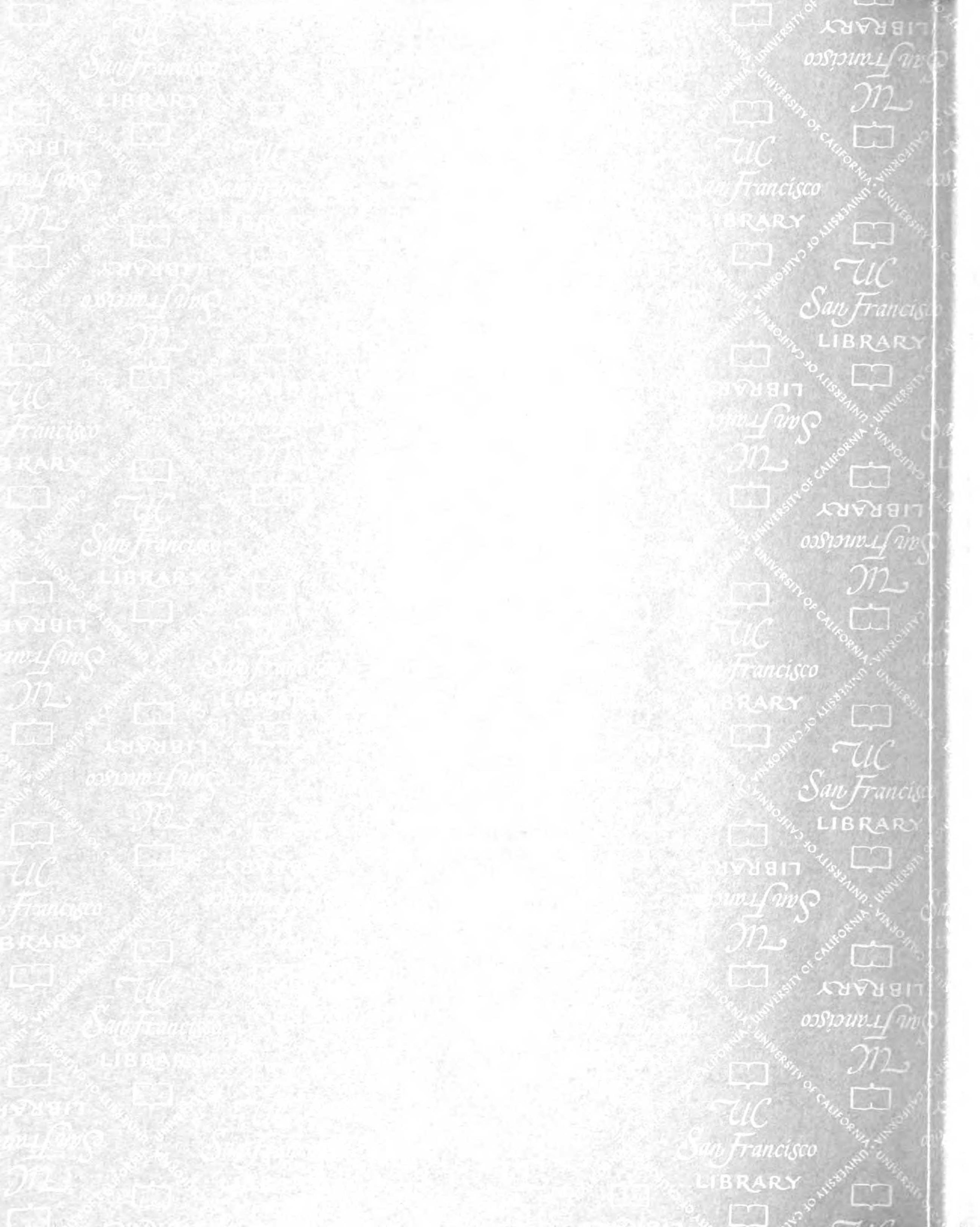

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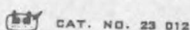

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