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Case studies of the families effect on the school performance of six adolescents.

Stephen E. Mills

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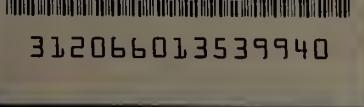
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Case Studies of the Families Effect
on the School Performance of Six Adolescents

A Dissertation Presented

by

Stephen Edward Mills

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
May, 1985
School of Education

Stephen Edward Mills

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on the School Performance of Six Adolescents

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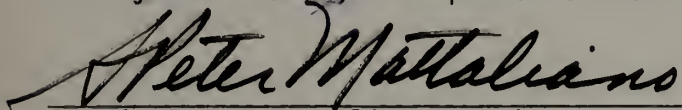
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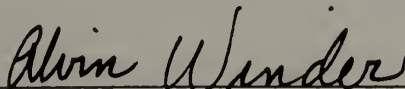
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Dr. Byrd L. Jones, Chairperson of Committee



Dr. A. Peter Mattaliano, Member



Dr. Alvin Winder, Member



Dr. Mario Fantini, Dean

A Dedication:

To the two women in my life,
Joyce and Christina

Acknowledgments

This study was completed due to the encouragement, perserverence and support of many people. The work could not have been undertaken without the six students who came ✓ forrth so that we might learn. A debt of gratitude is owed to these and all the students with whom I've worked in counseling and education. It has been an honor and a great privilege.

Many professors have been helpful through my undergraduate work at the University of Massachusetts, my master's level work at Boston University and my doctoral work again at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I was prepared for these studies by my elementary and secondary teachers in the Worcester Public School System and by my family. I am very grateful. Those that have been most helpful have included Dr. Peter Mataliano and Dr. Alvin Winder. Above all, Dr. Byrd Jones has served as a reference, a source of support and an inspiration. Without his constant help, this contribution to education would have never been attempted.

Also, two very special friends contributed their time and expertise so that the project became manageable. John and Doreen Hodgen's friendship was a desperately needed source of rejuvenation.

ABSTRACT

Case Studies of the Families Effect on the
School Performance of Six Adolescents

February, 1985

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Directed by: Professor Byrd Jones

This dissertation is the specific documentation of the life experiences of six angry high school students from their own perspective. The study arrives at a comprehensive understanding of these young peoples' feelings and attitudes about themselves, their families and their school experiences so as to better understand school failure. The study redefines aberrant school behavior by placing it in the overall context of their lives. It is an analysis of the interaction of the psychodynamic family and school systems.

The major hypothesis is that the family life experience of the six adolescent students has had, and

continues to have, a significant effect on academic and social performance at Shrewsbury High, (Shrewsbury, MA).

The sub-hypotheses and conclusions that supported them, revealed an incompatibility between the home and school settings regarding structure, limits and expectations of behavior. They revealed student's role model coping strategies from parents and related these student's self-esteem and sense of control over their lives. The issue of parental educational expectations was also investigated.

The implications for education discussed the continuous struggle between equity and efficiency in the schools. The problem of boundaries is addressed and an advocacy model presented as a realistic choice in addressing the problem of students who are communicating an entirely different agenda for our comprehensive high schools.

The study describes these students as victims in a world that demands performance from them but has not equipped them to perform. The study argues that the high school is equally victimized in the same manner.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Copyright	ii
Approval Signature Page	iii
Dedication.	iv
Acknowledgements.	v
Abstract.	vi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.	1
Major Hypothesis, Sub-Hypotheses	18
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	19
Family Systems Theory	21
Marital Conflict and Adolescence.	32
Role Modeling	38
Self-Esteem	41
Abuse	46
Adolescent Sexuality.	49
Drug Use.	52
The Stage of Adolescence.	54
III. METHODOLOGY	56
IV. DATA PRESENTATION - CASE STUDIES	
Jack.	62
Bill.	70
Jessica	77
Mike.	84
Lynn.	91
Danielle.	99
V. CONCLUSION.	107
Implications for Education	115
Footnotes.	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	142
APPENDIX.	153

C H A P T E R I

INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is about six angry adolescents from Shrewsbury Massachusetts, their family and school experience and the interrelationship of the three. During the past twenty years, the public has expressed concerns about what they perceive as a national social problem of epidemic proportions. This problem involves a growing number of adolescents and their apparent incompatibility with high school. The problem is vastly complex and too frequently solutions are proposed that address symptoms and blame victims. The goal of this research is to investigate causes, understand relationships and discover all the related variables to develop a comprehensive understanding of why many young people experience failure instead of success in high school. The evidence will be based on interviews with six adolescents, focusing on incompatibilities between the home and school setting.

William Glasser documented the problem in his book Schools Without Failure. He stated:

Many kids believe they have little chance to succeed, little interest in doing anything that might lead to a better future. In a society where many are succeeding, they are failing.

Blaming failure on home life, race or poverty is a dead end because it removes personal responsibility for failure and doesn't recognize that school success is potentially open to all. The major problem of schools is the problem of failure.

Throughout the research, there are a variety of adjectives describing these young people. Labels frequently include: emotionally disturbed, behavior disordered, discipline problem, juvenile delinquent, acting out adolescents or stubborn child. Diagnostic labeling is complicated by the fact that psychoanalytic theory and the other developmental theories include adolescence as a crucial developmental stage at which time various psychopathologic characteristics emerge [1]. Attempts have been made to categorize and measure behavioral characteristics of these young people that include impulse control, classroom conformity, acceptance of authority, sense of self worth, etc. [2]. The value of these judgments is questionable if perceived in a vacuum.

Nathan Ackerman enumerated symptoms of these adolescents which include: impulsiveness, antisocial conduct, defective control and judgment, egocentricity, lack of genuine guilt, inability to empathize with others or show respect for the rights of others. There is an apparent inability to defer one's individual needs for the good of the group. Their primary defensive structure includes acting out to relieve tension and standard

defense mechanisms which include denial, projection and rationalization. Most of these young people are very suspicious and resentful of authority and feel that they are victimized [3]. They are most comfortable demonstrating anger but there is an (occasionally severe) underlying depression which is frequently characterized by apathy, helplessness and hopelessness for the future [4]. Which specific characteristics any one adolescent demonstrates, depends on their unique personality development. A complex and varied constellation of these characteristics exist in a growing number of teenagers.

Consistent with these characteristics of, what will be referred to from here on as angry adolescents, is the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs [5]. Research has been conducted demonstrating relationships between variables such as self-esteem with drug abuse [6]. Authority figures of all types have lectured adolescents insisting that drugs are not the answer to their problems. Apparently millions of young people disagree with that point because the widespread use of drugs is well documented. Chemicals seem to be the only strategy known to many adolescents in their attempts to deal with problems. Finally, another solution for many angry adolescents is suicide [7]. This alternative seems incomprehensible for so many and yet some adolescents

perceive their reality and the choices facing them in such a way that suicide becomes, for them, the alternative of choice.

These characteristics are not in themselves, the problem. A series of forces interact to bring about these resulting behavioral manifestations, including the internal psychological development of an adolescent, family, school, peer relationships, community and the larger society.

There has been much controversy surrounding the issue that disparities in academic achievement were not as much related to the quality of different schools as they were to differences in student's family background and the backgrounds of fellow students. Schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background. Inequalities imposed on children by their home life, neighborhood and peer group are carried along to become the inequalities they experience in school.

These youngsters did not develop by themselves. A growing body of literature during the past thirty years has come to be known as family systems theory [8]. This theory usefully explains adolescent behavior. As it relates to adolescence, the basic theory is that the deviant adolescent behavior is the symptom of a family

problem and that intervention needs to be with the family, not the "Identified Patient". The deviant behavior serves some purpose in the family so that the family can maintain a precarious balance. For instance, an adolescent might be symptomatized or scapegoated by a dysfunctional marital pair. His/her behavior might be a response to his/her relationship with parents or an unconscious attempt to divert attention onto him/herself to keep the pressure off the endangered marriage.

Also, adolescents might simply be role modeling the behavior of a same sexed parent or might perceive a parent in a very negative way and assume that all adults are very similar to that parent. These are simple and common examples of a vast body of literature that illustrates the vital etiological role that families play in the lives of angry adolescents. Bronfenbrenner defines learning as [9]: "The ability to function in successively larger settings." Many adolescents learn a way of functioning adequately in their family system but because of extremely limited development of coping techniques, they are totally unprepared and ill equipped to deal with the minimum behavioral requirements of a high school community. For instance, a particular adolescent might come from a family where verbal and physical violence are not only condoned but encouraged as a viable strategy to solve problems.

Bronfenbrenner has written extensively about the relationship between settings in understanding human development. In his work The Ecology of Human Development, he states:

A child's ability to learn to read in the primary grades may depend no less on how he is taught than on the nature and existence of ties between the school and the home. The capacity of a setting to function effectively as a context for development is seen between settings, including joint participation, communication and the existence of information in each setting about the other. The developmental potential of settings is enhanced if the role demands in the different settings are compatible and if the roles, activities and dyads in which the developing person engages encourage the development of mutual trust, a positive orientation, goal consensus between settings and an evolving balance of power in favor of the developing person. The developmental potential of a setting is increased as a function of the number of supportive links existing between that setting and other settings. The least favorable condition for development is one in which supplementary links are either non-supportive or absent.

Before many adolescents get to the first door of the school, there is a high probability that the interaction between youth and school will not be a successful one. For instance, a particular youth might be walking in the door of the school feeling very badly about him/herself, lacking confidence, resentful of authority, having already smoked marijuana to relieve some anxiety or other form of psychic pain and unable, or at least unfamiliar with,

setting aside his/her own needs for the sake of the organization of the school community. The family's expectations, standards and requirements are incompatible with the school. The school on the other hand not only expects but requires that this particular student will participate in a whole series of behaviors including all these things that he/she cannot do. Examples of this would include going to homeroom, attending classes that have no meaning for him/her that were prepicked by a guidance counselor, and refraining from smoking.

One possible resultant behavior will be that this adolescent will initiate some aberrant behavior to enhance his/her own identity with a peer group of adolescents with similar psychological characteristics. The school will respond to this aberrant behavior and will either deal with the underlying causes (effectively) or make the student even more suspicious, angry and resentful than he/she already is (ineffectively).

The American high school has been the subject of much scrutiny and controversy recently. One reason is that high schools set themselves up to experience problems by assuming whole sets of characteristics that many young people simply don't possess. For instance, high schools assume that students are motivated and accustomed to rigid structure, limits and direction. They assume that all

students subscribe to values and attitudes such as the utility of listening, reading, doing homework and following rules.

Various social organizations have cultures of their own and high schools are no exception. Schools have formal and informal roles, norms, social networks, attitudes, beliefs and goals (stated and unstated). No two schools are precisely the same partially because they reflect the neighborhood community they are serving. Francis Ianni studies the social organization of American high schools which operate according to an observable code of rules [10]. He stated:

This code of rules is, in effect, a controlling mechanism for regulating relationships within the school; it keeps the school functioning as an educating and socializing system, and structures behavior for individuals and groups.

Seymour Sarason's extensive concept of the school culture includes:

1. The relation between teacher and pupil is characteristically one in which the pupil asks very few questions.
2. The relation between teacher and pupil is characteristically one in which teachers ask questions and the pupil gives an answer.
3. It is extremely difficult for a child in school to state that he does not know something without such a statement being received by him and others as stupidity [11].

The culture of any school is vast and pervasive. The only aspect of a school culture that is relevant here is the components involved in student behavior. However, the issue becomes exceedingly complex because of the interdependent relationships among the numerous aspects of school culture. For instance, if instruction is effective and interesting to the students, there will be fewer students involved with the discipline policy. Eleanor Leacock emphasized the social learning that takes place in school and what youngsters learn besides what teachers instruct from their content material [12].

The particular high school involved in this study is the Shrewsbury High School, located in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. This central Massachusetts town is the eastern suburb of Worcester and is approximately thirty five miles west of Boston. The town has a population of approximately 23,000.

The high school is the only public high school in town. There is one middle school and three elementary schools. The high school contains grades eight through twelve and has approximately thirteen hundred students. It is a comprehensive high school that includes excellent facilities in art, music, physical education, home economics, computer science and the industrial arts. These facilities supplement a sound academic program. The

school also has extensive atheletic and extracurricular programs.

Expectations of student behavior are carefully outlined in the student handbook. The school program is very structured and organized. Students are required to arrive at school promptly and attend seven consecutive periods without tardiness. There are four minutes between each period. Every student is assigned one study period per day. During that time, the three upper grades are assigned to the cafeteria where they can study, or are allowed into a contained courtyard where they can smoke. Students in grades eight and nine are not allowed to smoke anywhere at any time. This courtyard is the only area in or around the building where students are allowed to smoke. Students are required to have a signed pass in their possession if they are in the corridor during a period.

There are carefully detailed rules that regulate behavior in the cafeteria. These rules address the purchasing of food, standing in line, dispensing with the disposable refuse and the student's interaction with each other.

All these rules are enforced by the faculty, each of whom use their own discretion. In the event of violations, teachers report students to the two assistant

principles. The most commonly violated rules are tardiness, smoking, cutting class and wandering corridors. The consequences for these violations depend on the situation, but usually will include any variety of after school detentions, Saturday morning detentions or in-school suspensions. Failure to serve these punishments necessitates an out of school suspension. More severe violations of the school code, such as being disrespectful to a teacher, fighting or drug use would also warrant out of school suspensions.

Shrewsbury High School also established an attendance policy whereby students are not eligible to receive credit for course work if they exceed twelve absences per semester. There are ninety school days per semester and a student receives no credit toward graduation if they miss more than twelve classes.

The headmaster has established a review procedure whereby students can apply for excusing some absences. If a student has cut any class, he/she is automatically disqualified from consideration of a waiver. A student could attend seventy classes in each course for an entire semester and not get any credit for all that work.

The effect of this policy that was implemented three years ago has been that the overall attendance in classes has increased. An effect has been that many students are

making an effort to attend more classes so they won't lose credit. However, a reaction has been that some students feel that the policy is unrealistic and these students (including some in this study) fail for one or two semesters and then drop out of school.

High schools across America have constructed discipline policies that usually apply to all the students [13]. A Phi Delta Kappan study states explicit and implicit purpose of these policies are to create organization and regulate student behavior. Crook states [14]:

School administrations require cooperation from their teaching staffs in implementing discipline policies to create a consistent environment for students. These policies usually involve attendance, tardiness, smoking, drugs and generally regulate the way in which students and teachers interact. Most policies are explicitly designed to teach students conformity, respect for authority, punctuality, etc.

The major problem being addressed in this text is the apparent incongruence between angry adolescents and high school's response to them which is usually called a discipline policy. Is the problem that these students aren't able to deal with the school or that the school isn't able to deal with these students? Usually, schools create uniform policies for very different students and

most schools argue that it is unfair to treat individual students individually.

Discipline policies (according to an N.A.S.S.P. article) are frequently their own worst enemies [15]. For instance, an angry student skipping class is punished by being suspended out of school. This particular student may be made to feel humiliated in many classes and feel worse about him/herself than he already does or simply hasn't developed enough frustration tolerance to sit through classes. This student has not learned from his/her family that part of responsibility may mean doing things he/she doesn't want to do. The school's response (suspension) is paradoxical. The policy is supposedly trying to teach this student something (he must do things he doesn't want to do) by requiring that he/she already know it. The question becomes:

- A. How can we punish someone for something she/he hasn't been able to learn?
- B. Is punishing them going to help them to learn it?

The suspension probably makes this particular student feel more rejected (which is a crucial dynamic of the original problem in the first place), more angry, less likely to conform to rules and more suspicious and resentful of authority. In a word, it's counterproductive. Alschuler takes this process a step further and argues that schools

occasionally create policies that are incongruent with the needs of healthy students [16]. He cited the example of children who are prohibited from running in corridors and physically don't have enough time to get from one place to the next without being late.

Schniedeck offers further evidence that the psychological needs of angry adolescents are incongruent with school cultures and rules [17]. Collins and MacKay conducted research with adolescents who use denial as a primary defense [18]. They postulate that many adolescents employ denial to defend against a pervading depression brought on by early loss or rejection. Successful remediation necessarily includes a long period of testing on the part of the adolescent who appears to need to fend off the relationship for which she/he has actually longed, due to the fear of rejection brought on by earlier experiences. The point here is that most discipline policies do not allow for the working through of psychic conflicts and don't tolerate testing without communicating rejection (out of school suspensions).

The discussion to this point has only included the policies of the school and the difficulty many students encounter. Beyond the policies are the teacher-student relationships and interactions. Separate studies assess much of the responsibility for discipline problems with

teachers [19]. Unfortunately, it is still not uncommon for many teachers to belittle, ridicule or purposely embarrass students as they (teachers) are obviously struggling with their own unresolved issues. Schools are dynamic places because of the thousands of two-person relationships. There is no doubt that these very human encounters greatly influence how people behave. Any guidance counselor can elaborate on how she/he attempts to match personalities or teaching styles with learning styles. Tricketts 1978 study contrasts different types of school classrooms [20]. Different angry students experience varying degrees of successful experiences in classrooms depending on what their needs are and how those needs intersect with the teaching style and personality of the teacher. Because of the extraordinary value American society places on intelligence, learning slowly is perceived by most teachers and students as something to hide and be ashamed. Bart's article documents what is logical, obvious and common [21]. Students would much rather be identified as bad (acting out and breaking rules) than stupid (slow learner).

Studies of alternative school teachers and how they work differently with students clearly indicates that a key factor in preventing acting out lies in the relationship with the angry student [22]. Bronfenbrenner

stated that: "Learning and development are facilitated by the participation of developing person in progressively more complex patterns of reciprocal activity with someone with whom that person has developed a strong and enduring emotional attachment and when the balance of power gradually shifts in favor of the developing person." Many students misread non-verbal communication from traditional classroom teachers and feel suspicious and hostile because of the blatant role barriers between teacher and student. The unwritten and unagreed upon contract between angry student and teacher gives all of the decision-making authority to the teacher. These students have a hard enough time dealing with rules that have meaning to them and which they participated in creating. These unwritten classroom rules are dictated, abstract and to them, meaningless. After these students act out and become identified as angry, there becomes the additional problem reported in the literature of labeling students [23].

It would be unfair to assess all the responsibility for angry students acting out on teachers. Teachers are a beleaguered lot in the 1980's and there is more impulsive behavior throughout our society. As time goes on, teachers are less equipped to deal with the changing needs of the students. For instance, teachers are being approached by more and more needy and angry students to

help them cope with emotional problems. McKenry documents teachers feelings of inadequacy when students approach them contemplating suicide [24].

There is public demand for school systems to be more conservative and traditional, return to what the public calls the basics, (reading, writing and arithmetic) and less tolerant of acting out behavior. At the same time, budgets are rising slowly, teachers are feeling more pressure, anxiety and stress than ever before and more students are getting more angry. In Shrewsbury, the passage of proposition 2-1/2 caused the elimination of the off-campus alternative program.

Major Hypothesis

The family life experience of the six adolescent students has had and continues to have significant effect on academic and social performance at Shrewsbury High.

Sub-Hypothesis

1. There will be an incompatibility between the home and school settings regarding structure, limits and expectations of behavior.
2. Students will attempt to cope with problems at school in the same way that they attempt to cope with problems at home.
3. Students will model attitudes and behaviors of their same sexed parent and these behaviors will be inconsistent with school expectations and requirements of behavior.
4. Students self-esteem and locus of control as student will be similar to their self-esteem and locus of control as son/daughter.
- 4A. Students will describe a general sense of being out of control regarding their ability to effect their family and school experience.
5. Parental educational expectations will be similar to the students own expectations of himself and the student will perform to that level.

C H A P T E R II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The hypotheses in this study call for a review of the literature in the areas of the home's effect on school performance, parental educational expectations, role modeling, self-esteem and family systems theory. However, an important aspect of this study is the interrelationships among these concepts. Also, it will be necessary to review other topics because they are so relevant to who these young people are. Leaving out these other topics might render the study meaningless. These topics are alcohol and drug abuse, sexuality, divorce and its effect on adolescence, the psychology of adolescence, and physical and sexual abuse.

The influence of family background on school achievement has been the subject of study for more than twenty years [1]. An article published in 1982 reviewed eighteen previous studies and concluded that ability and achievement are more closely linked to social, psychological environment and intellectual stimulation in the home than they are to socio-economic factors [2]. A more recent article examined the relationship between thirty-six measures of family behavior and characteristics

to student performance on standardized tests. It concluded that differences in what families do rather than differences in their characteristics or incomes is what effects school achievement [3]. Another study had parents rate their knowledge and interest in school activities, supportive aspects of the home environment for academic activities and their belief in the utility of schooling. The results were consistent with previous studies that emphasized that home environment has significant impact on academic achievement [4]. A 1977 study discovered a correlation between characteristics of family environment and cognitive scores [5]. There is a direct relationship among family environment, locus of control, attitudes toward school and cognitive performance.

An article entitled "Social Competence at Home and at School" [6] describes the different ways a child participates and interacts at home and at school and states that these differences are sources of potential misunderstanding between teacher and student. The parents maintaining firm control evidently promote effective socialization [7].

Parental expectations of a child's school performance are also well documented in the literature. A 1983 article in the Merrill-Palmer Quarterly [8] reviewed the literature in this area and stated that parental

expectations appear to be both a cause and effect of the children's academic achievement. Antecedents to expectations are parents' own aspirations, knowledge and feedback from the school. A major factor mediating between expectations and achievement is achievement supporting behaviors. Also, in the literature, there seems to be a very close relationship between parental expectations of school performance and adolescents own expectations of their own performance.

Family Systems Theory

The concept of systems theory, which was previously applied only in the physical sciences, has been used during the past thirty years to develop our understanding of family. Tucker's article in the Journal of Education [10] in 1979 is one of the few to analyze the interaction of family systems theory and a youngsters experience with school. The basic premise of family systems theory is that the family has an identity unto itself. It is different than the sum of the individual psychologies in it. Symptomatic behavior of one member may be the only solution the family can find to the developmental and life problems and stresses that the family is experiencing. The theory suggests that all members of the family are

emotionally interrelated and that tensions in family relationships will be expressed (possibly) in some highly disguised symptomatic form. Symptomatic behavior in school may be cheating, stealing, cutting class, or other impulsive behavior.

Nathan Ackerman [11], one of the original family theorists, observed the family as a unit in itself, has its own psychological and social life which is not static, but which dynamically changes at different times as a result of internal and external pressures. Ackerman defines family functioning as: a) providing for a psychological identity with regard to strivings, expectations and values, b) control of conflict; c) adaptability and complementarity in new role relationships, that is, the ability to grow and learn. The preservation of symptoms in the child is an indication of breakdown in role adaptation and role complementarity in the family unit.

In 1963 Ackerman [12] outlined some observations that describe the nature of child symptomology:

1. The emergence of a psychiatric disorder in a child is regularly preceded by family conflict. There is a demonstratable correlation between the conflict of the family group and the conflict of the child.

2. The development of a specific psychiatric disorder in the child's personality is a functional expression of the emotional conflicts of the entire family. Once a symptom emerges, and the family process stabilizes, the ongoing emotional interaction between child and family affects the whole destiny of the child's illness.
3. Emotional distortions in the marital and parental pair are subtly projected to and divided among the children. The child's pathology is not only a response to the parents' individual personalities, but also to the distortions created by the joined marital and parental pair.
4. If a child is in treatment, no change will be permanent unless it is supported by change in other members of the family.

One must consider the implications of this theory for local school districts. As the Tucker article pointed out, there exists a unique juxtaposition of and interrelationship between the school and the family, in that they both share an influential space in the child's life. They are mutually joined at the point of the child. As the child operates between both systems, he or she transmits experiences from one to the other through observable behavior. It is as a result of this unique

configuration that the school becomes the natural environment for the transferred and displaced symptoms of the child's family life struggles.

In families where youngsters have learned to value themselves, come to believe that they have valuable thoughts and feelings, are curious about their world and confident they can succeed at mastering realistic tasks, the odds are great that school will be a rewarding and satisfying experience. If, on the other hand, the children are scapegoated at home, made to feel they are a burden, convinced that their feelings are useless and that no matter how hard they try, they will never match up to the other children, school is likely to be frightening and overwhelming experience and might well become the forum for the expression of symptomatic or acting out behavior. One very common pattern in high schools is for a student to set himself up to be caught breaking a rule which will necessitate parental involvement at school. Although the child is in trouble, he has alerted the school to the problems at home, brought his parents together and taken the tension off of the parents' marital problems by getting them to focus on him. This whole process is unconscious to the child.

The family acts to achieve a balance in family relationships. All members work to maintain this

equilibrium, overtly and covertly. A family's predictable pattern can reveal this balance. A family equilibrium could be compared to a water balloon. If pressure is applied at one point, the balloon will readjust itself at other points. Frequently, families feel such emotional pressure, a symptom may appear in the behavior of one of the members so as to re-establish this precarious equilibrium. The symptomatic role player is called (in counseling) the identified patient (I.P.).

The marital relationship is the original family relationship and is the axis around which all other family relationships are formed. A pained marital relationship can produce dysfunctional parenting. The I.P. is the family member most affected by the marital relationship. These symptoms are a signal about the imbalance -- a message that he is distorting his own growth to alleviate and absorb the parent's pain. Often, other family members get worse (become symptomatic) if the I.P. gets better and family members sabotage treatment of the I.P. in an attempt to maintain the unhealthy equilibrium. The I.P. can be adept at helping maintain this balance and perpetuate his own role as sick or crazy.

Parents act differently with the normal siblings than they do with the I.P. When parents are emotionally close and more invested in each other than either was in the

patient, the patient improves. However, what frequently brings families to requiring service is that the marital relationship has broken down and one mate invests much more emotional energy in a child. The left out mate may express anger through that child.

Families grow and are unique just as individuals grow and are unique. A marriage is two separate people coming together for different reasons and from different families that fostered their own sets of values, attitudes, beliefs, aspirations, expectations and personal habits. Some people come from families that foster a great sense of anxiety and uncertainty about oneself. This comes from many growing up experiences that never led one to feel that its good to be a person of one sex in relation to another. A person in this quandry has great difficulty separating from parents, that is, arriving at a relationship of equality with them. A person such as this is very dependent and this is the motivation for marriage. They aren't as much in love as they are in need of someone to take care of them.

Dependent and insecure people marry each other and because they were unable to truly communicate their fears to each other, they become overwhelmed when typical environmental stresses require strength, independence and decision making. Their differentness is not seen as an

opportunity for enrichment but a source of disagreement which reminds both that the other is not an extension of self, but is separate. Their differentness, disagreements and mutual dependency develop their inability to trust each other. Areas of difficulty frequently include money, sex, recreation, work, child-rearing, relatives and families of origin.

Couples such as these have many reasons to stay married but the central theme behind all the reasons is the realization that, although they are struggling and unhappy together, they would be worse if they were apart. Their uniqueness is a source of disagreement and they can't fight directly, because it is so threatening to both of them. Therefore, the disagreement process becomes covert and gets communicated in indirect ways -- most commonly, through children.

The child becomes an extension of the parent. Each parent sees the child as an ally against the other mate, a messenger through whom one can communicate with the other. Individual parenting motivation becomes confused with the marital conflict. The sex of the child frequently determines which side the child will be set up on. Often, opposite sex parents see each child as being like the mate and express their marital anger at that child. Also, when this happens, parents lose the respect

of their child and are unable to provide structure and discipline. These displaced marital problems can cause tremendous feelings of confusion, guilt, jealousy, hostility, fear, insecurity, anger and low self-esteem in the child. The child has experienced this family and marital model and is at risk to repeat the cycle in his own life.

Bronfenbrenner pointed out in 1969 that the family is the single most important influence on how well a child does in school. A 1978 University of Rochester study [13] matched control group families with families identified as experiencing various pressures and problems and lacking educational stimulation. Children with family problems were experiencing significantly greater school difficulties. Children from homes lacking educational stimulation had significantly greater learning and acting out problems than controls.

If family is such an important variable in school performance, one important area of investigation would be to find out what characteristics these families demonstrate that make school adjustment such an ominous task for the youngster. A study by Ferguson in 1978 [14] described a relationship between marital satisfaction and child adjustment. A similar study [15] done the same year stated that both sexes in children are keenly aware of and

can accurately predict marital discord. This study also found a significant relationship between marital discord and behavior problems in children. Another study [16] four years later studied the relationship between family climate and the maturity level of adolescent girls. The results were predictable. Adolescent girls who scored well on maturity levels came from families they described as flexible and trusting. Low scoring girls were more likely to be triangled into marital problems and used by the parents as a mechanism to cope with marital issues. The most common patterns of this dynamic were using the adolescent to express tension and anger at the other mate or getting an adolescent to choose one side of the marriage against the other.

A 1979 study in the Spring issue of Adolescence [17] investigated the factors involved in the rebellious feelings of adolescents and a leading causative factor had to do with the way adolescents perceived the way they were being reared by their parents. Twice as many dissatisfied teenagers felt their parents were too authoritarian and four times as many satisfied teenagers reported democratic parents. Teenagers who weren't given any responsibility or control over their own lives had more trouble controlling behavior, had more underlying angry feelings and had less respect for themselves and their parents.

Almost all adolescents wanted their parents to take an active part in their lives.

Two separate studies in 1981 demonstrated that adolescents strive to get what they feel they need most. One study [18] identified students as facilitators and another group as inhibitors. The facilitator group belonged to various extracurricular activities, held leadership positions and had high academic standing. This group was characterized by an internal locus of control and were intellectually curious and had what Maslow would consider higher level needs. The inhibitor group was involved in disciplinary problems and generally wasn't cooperating with the existing school establishment. This group was characterized by an external locus of control and was dealing with needs more involving emotional safety, peer relationships, and self esteem.

Zuk [19] believes that adolescents will insist on getting their needs addressed even if it requires acting out chaotically. Emotional intimacy is the nature of the parent-child relationship and if for one reason or another parents are emotionally detached or unavailable, children will exhibit maladaptive behavior until their unaddressed needs become the focus of attention. Parents and children frequently [20] perceive the meaning and significance of a child's behavior differently and they often assign [21]

causal attributions for the behavior to each other. Parents see their children as completely responsible for their behavior and their own parenting having little or no part in creating symptomatic behavior. Youngsters, on the other hand, justify their behavior as a reaction to angry feelings at one or both parents.

More adolescents are requiring relationships with teachers beyond what's required in teacher contracts. These students are in a very vulnerable position because they will act out and risk failure if they don't feel they like the teacher and (just as importantly) that the teacher likes them. Every high school has a group of students who frequent the front office, guidance office, or nurse's suite. The literature cited above suggests that they are refusing to accept what teachers say they need (academic classes) and in their own way, are demanding what they feel they need -- personal, nurturing relationships with adults in the school. When and if those needs are ever addressed, will determine whether or not they move on to what teachers say they need.

Students identified as truants or juvenile delinquents have been studied thoroughly and the research points to the home environment as a crucial variable in understanding their behavior. The British Journal of Educational Psychology [22] reported on the work of

researchers who interviewed pupils and families that displayed persistent absenteeism and found that most were living in multiply disadvantaged circumstances compared with regular attendees. A similar study [23] found that aspects of family background such as role expectations and career aspirations greatly contribute to leaving school. Two other studies investigating the causes of juvenile delinquency suggest the crucial role of family and parenting. One stated [24] that the characteristics of parents' marriage played a key role in the delinquency of boys. The other study [25] found that adolescents' perception of parents' behavior and various aspects of parenting such as control, love, hostility and autonomy discriminated widely between offenders and non-offenders. Once again, the point is that acting out behavior in adolescence is best understood by examining the overall context of a situation. These discipline problems that have overwhelmed the schools and courts weren't created in a vacuum. These symptomatic behaviors are a reactive consequence to unmet needs.

Marital Conflict and Adolescence

It has been well established in the literature that children of conflict come from families of conflict. A

study reported in the Psychological Bulletin concluded on this specific point. It stated that a direct relationship exists between marital turmoil and behavior problems in children [26]. Interparental conflict has been associated with behavior problems in children whether or not that conflict occurred in intact or divorced families. Children from broken or intact homes characterized by parental conflict are at greater risk than children from intact or divorced homes that are relatively conflict free. This, and another study [27], emphasize the particular difficulty that boys experience in terms of their behavioral and social adjustment when parental conflict is present.

The various effects of this conflict have also been well documented. A recent study [28] supports the assertion that children from homes characterized by separation, divorce or death are less well adjusted in terms of self-control and socialization than children from intact families. A comprehensive study [29] of 400 adolescents whose parents divorced and the father was absent demonstrated significantly lower self esteem than a control group from intact families. Adolescents who live in intact families participate in less "health risk behavior" according to a study published last year in Adolescence [30]. There were various types of health risk

behavior defined such as drunk driving or drug abuse. Another study by the same author noticed a significant negative relationship between parental divorce and adolescent expectations about the future [31]. This is a key variable in self esteem which, in the past, emphasized a person's history and present. A realization is being made now that how one feels about his or her future is also a crucial ingredient in self esteem.

A couple of studies concluded that children who experience the death of a parent are better adjusted and experience less stress than children whose parents are divorced. Rubin and Price [33] contend that divorce, per se, is not necessarily detrimental for children. The divorce event is not the central factor in determining the outcome for the child, but rather the divorce process. Most youngsters are more damaged by the hostile conflict before one parent moves out and the continuing conflict after that parent is gone.

Even in the most ideal circumstances, a divorce is a traumatic experience. It signifies some major losses for a child. Frequently, a child perceives a divorce as someone leaving him rather than a parent. The loss is far greater than one parent moving out. Often, the custodial parent is unavailable emotionally because he/she has so much to deal with himself. Many times, the custodial

parent must go back to work because of a loss of finances. Many times a move is involved or siblings are living with the other parent. Frequently, the losses involved in divorce are multiple rather than singular.

The roles that people have in a family can radically change following divorce. Adolescents are frequently thrust into parental roles prematurely. Adolescents are not as likely as younger children to blame themselves for the divorce but they express their feelings through peer group interaction. Many adolescents continue to need limits set on them during this period and they won't accept limits from an adult for whom they have lost respect due to the divorce. This behavior exhibits itself in increased social activity, premature sexual activity, antisocial or aggressive behavior, and general precociousness. Many adolescents do feel responsible for the divorce because their parents were always fighting about them. Frequently, they are unable to realize that it was this parental inconsistency and parents fighting with each other through the adolescent that precipitated the symptomatic behavior.

A 1981 study identified various groupings of families as normal, clinical (manifesting interactional problems), mother-only and intact [34]. Among other findings, mother-only normal families demonstrated lower levels of

aggressive behavior more than clinically intact families. This illustrates a definite and clear conclusion in the literature about divorce: healthy single parent families offer much greater opportunity for healthy growth and development than intact families full of conflict.

Children adjust to divorce differently because they all experience it differently. There are numerous complicated variables that effect children's understanding of their parents divorce, their role in it and adaptation to it. Marjorie Pitt [35] found that the most significant factor related to adjustment was a positive relationship with the custodial parent. Female headed families are very likely to have a good adjustment and healthy self esteem [36]. Another study [37] found that positive adjustments and reactions are related to children defining divorce in terms of psychological separation between parents, sharing concern with friends and positive evaluations from both parents. A similar study [38] concluded that the negative effects of divorce were greatly mitigated when positive relationships with both parents were maintained after the divorce. Some researchers believe that children in single parent families are required to mature faster due to increased role responsibilities and dealing with intense feelings [39].

Many families do not stay divorced. Divorced adults find other mates that will fill the emptied role of mate but these remarriages or reconstituted families have a unique set of tasks and characteristics. Many children feel that to develop a relationship and accept a step-parent is to betray and abandon the absent parent. Frequently, these children refuse to recognize the step-parent as any part of the family. Jacobson [40] discusses the emotional issues that confront step-parents and step-children. According to one study [41], children of surrogate fathers revealed significantly more behavioral difficulty than children from intact families. When parents remarry, many children report in their own words that their biological parent is emotionally involved in this new relationship and has little time or energy for them and they are left feeling bitter, angry, sad, and lonely.

It is possible for step families to come together in a healthy way. If a reconstituted family [42] can establish trust, the step family can emerge as a healthy developmental unit. Problems of equity have to be addressed, adults have to focus on children's needs and Ackerman's concepts of dealing with conflict and role adaptability and complementarity have to be resolved.

Divorce and separation [43] can greatly affect

behavior in school. Students may be consumed with what is happening at home and report that they are unable to concentrate on academic work. Also, students frequently don't understand their feelings but are aware of them. In this case, the feelings of anger, betrayal, disappointment, sadness, loneliness, and confusion may be expressed symptomatically by cutting class, drug abuse, verbal altercations with teachers, or general disregard for the organized structure of the school.

Many adolescents endure the divorce of their parents and the custodial parents remarriage while continuing to adjust adequately and experience success in the high school environment. Divorce or remarriage alone do not cause adjustment problems in high school. Usually, the symptomatic behaviors have more to do with the meaning of the upheaval and the nature of the relationships the adolescent has with all of these important people in his/her life.

Role Modeling

Identification with parents or role modeling is one of the primary ways in which a child comes to experience their identity. For instance, young girls receive millions of cues regarding their sexual identity (what it

means to be a woman) from their family. They observe their mother. They observe how their father relates to their mother and how he relates to her differently than to her male siblings. They notice how their male siblings are expected and required to relate to them. Eventually, they place some value judgment on womanhood. Males do the same.

Many studies have documented through scientific research what some old wives' tales have been saying for centuries. Cliches such as: he's a chip off the old block; like father, like son; or the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, are common to all. A study by Rollins [44] observed three different types of family environments and found a significant relationship between mothers and adolescent daughters' attitudes toward marriage, child rearing, and career aspirations in each environment. Another study [45] investigated the parental influence in adolescent sex role socialization and emphasized the importance of same sex role modeling. A similar study [46] concluded that the masculinity-femininity of adolescents is more appropriate when their parents have a good marital adjustment and assume more appropriate models of masculinity-femininity. Fox's [47] study revealed that indirect, nonverbal communication of mothers to adolescent daughters about sexuality has a significant effect on

their sexual behavior.

Sex role socialization and identification is not the only area where the influence of parental role modeling has shaped the identity of children. The influence has been identified regarding educational expectations [48] and aspirations. Another study by Funtane [49] concluded similarly with many other studies that have thoroughly documented the role modeling effect on youthful drinking patterns. Children of alcoholics are at much greater risk for alcoholism than children of non-alcoholics.

A recent study reported in Adolescence [50] concluded that parents influence a child toward aggressive behavior by modeling and encouraging such behavior. The more a child identifies strongly with a parent who models aggression and communicates with a parent who encourages aggression, the greater the influence will be. More than ninety-percent of all young mothers who beat their children were abused children themselves.

The influence of role modeling goes beyond the unconscious identification and imitation of behaviors, ways of coping with stress, relating as a person of one sex to people of the opposite sex, etc. A study by Parish [51] illustrated the similarity in children's evaluations of themselves and their parents. Children from what was defined as happy families evaluated themselves

significantly more favorably than children from unhappy families. Children from intact families evaluate their parents significantly more favorably than those from divorced families. Attitudes and feelings about having control [52] over your own life can also be role modeled from parents to children.

Role modeling and self esteem are two closely interrelated concepts. It might be difficult for a boy to come to value himself as a person and man if his father never did. The self esteem of adolescents relates closely to the [53] parent-child relationship. A boy's self-esteem was closely correlated with the quality of the relationship with the father. This phenomenon also holds true for mothers and daughters.

Self-Esteem

Self-concept [54] refers to how a person perceives himself in terms of ability, value, worth and limitations. It is the sum total of all characteristics a person attributes to himself, both positive and negative. Self esteem refers to one's satisfaction with the self concept or feeling of self worth. It involves an additional evaluative component. A crucial variable of self concept and self esteem has come to be known in the

literature as locus of control. As development takes place in children, they begin to learn that they can influence outcomes. They learn that there is a connection between one's own behavior and the outcome of events. Because of their life experience, some children believe that the locus of control within their lives is inside them. Other children never grow to feel this way because their life experience has convinced them that they have no control over events or that their thoughts, feelings and behavior are irrelevant. This internalized locus of control has been positively correlated with school achievement [55]. Gordon's study [56] in 1977 also concluded that internal locus of control was significantly related to academic achievement and high self esteem. This internal locus of control was more closely related to grade point average and less to achievement test scores. A relationship has also been found [57] between a student's self concept and his/her participation in school activities. Students who are more confident in themselves and their abilities are more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities. Students with a higher self esteem are not only more likely to have an internal locus of control, but have more mature career [58] aspirations and expectations. A student's sense of self concept and esteem relates not only to his/her own history and

feelings about the present, it also involves a sense of hopefulness about the future.

Peck's 1981 study [59] traces emotional learning disabilities to parental traumatization of adolescence, including rejection, distrust and insecurity. An emotional learning disability is defined as a discrepancy between achievement potential and achievement level. This study found a high incidence of reading disability when family psychopathology was high. The symptom of reading disability may be a clue to a personality disorder in an individual child but the causal factor is likely to be family psychopathology. A student's self esteem may have to suffer to play a role assigned in the family.

There is further evidence of a definitive link between an adolescent's self-esteem and the family's functioning. Cooper's 1983 study [60] indicated that family cohesion, when measured through the child's perception of family relationships, has an important influence on the development of self-esteem in children. Where children perceive conflict between parents or themselves, lower self-esteem can be expected. Family structure also does not have a damaging effect on self-esteem in children. The parent-child relationship was the dominating variable with the lowest self-esteem children in this study.

An earlier study [61] came to the same conclusion that

family structure (intact, single parent, reconstituted) makes no significant difference in a child's self concept. Children who perceive greater conflict in their families will have significantly lower self concept. Age, sex, race and number of siblings was not related to self concept.

Children need to feel that they are accepted for who they are by their parents. A study [62] investigating this facet of adolescent self esteem found that an internal locus of control increased significantly with children's perceptions of increased parental acceptance. Rosenberg's research [63] explored adolescents feelings regarding, whether or not or, to what extent they mattered to their parents. Parental mattering was directly related to self-esteem. Feeling that they did not matter was related to depression, anxiety and a negative affective status. Males who felt they did not matter were much more likely to be delinquent.

One of the problems with adolescent self esteem is that children and adolescents tend to generalize their self concept in all areas of their life rather than viewing it as a multiple concept. Griffin's study in 1981 [64] documented this point by testing one hundred adolescents and found that self concept is better conceptualized as multiple and differentiated than as

unitary and global.

This issue of self esteem has great ramifications for local school districts. Adolescents with low self esteem have been directly linked to truancy. Students displaying problems with attendance exhibit lower self esteem than control groups. Another study [66] examined the effects of low self esteem and locus of control and found that internal locus of control adolescents are much more effective at coping with failure than external locus of control adolescents.

Another area where low self esteem students are at risk to experience failure in high schools is communication. A study by McCroskey [67] demonstrated how self esteem and communication apprehension are negatively related. Students with poor self esteem experience much more anxiety communicating verbally than do their higher self esteem counterparts. Most high school courses require, as part of the evaluation process, the ability and willingness to participate verbally in class.

Little has been done to research how best to work with adolescents having poor self esteem in schools. A 1980 study [68] found that adolescents with internal locus of control performed significantly better in the low structure reinforcement environment. The opposite was also concluded: that external locus of control

adolescents perform better in a high structure reinforcement environment. Different students perform better in different types of environments with different types of teachers. The problem is whether or not we identify students in these terms and make educational planning decisions based on these kinds of factors (self-esteem). The whole issue of expectations [69] has a lot to do with student's self-esteem. Expectations can be an antecedent to a high self-esteem in a student. Students struggling with self-esteem particularly need teachers who have realistic and high expectations of their students.

Abuse

The effects of physical and emotional abuse of children and adolescents has been well documented for years. Dean [70] defined emotional abuse as a chronic attitude or act on the part of the parent that is detrimental to or prevents the development of a positive self image in the child. Three recent studies [71] have all investigated the effects of abuse on self esteem. Abused adolescents reflect the negative effect of their disruptive environment. They have incorporated negative self images and have particular difficulty with emotional

instability and family relationships. There is more psychopathology, poorer coping skills and impulse control, and more difficulty setting future goals than non-abused adolescents. Abused adolescents experience more problems with locus of control, role comprehension, perspective taking skills and social sensitivity. In short, abused adolescents experience more problems in all areas than non-abused adolescents.

An Ohio study [72] found that a significant percent of adolescents arrested for violent crimes had been victims of severe child abuse. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare studied 1,230 identified juvenile delinquents and concluded that human relations variables such as family relationships and abuse were more potent predictors of delinquency than perceived educational and occupational access variables [73].

It has been documented that different types of abuse such as physical, emotional, neglect, sexual, and abandonment are related to different antecedent variables [74]. Neglect is frequently associated with financial problems and abandonment usually results when a mother herself has been abandoned by her mate and she is overwhelmed with adult responsibilities. The antecedents of physical abuse have more to do with family interaction. These families experience excessive stress

particularly when some members are not biologically related. Parents of physically abused children have even more psychological problems than other child maltreatment families [75]. Some families foster attitudes, norms and values that legitimate violence as a strategy to effectively cope with problems [76].

While reviewing the literature on self-esteem, it was noted how children frequently assign themselves a similar evaluation to the one they assign parents. The literature on the effects of abuse concludes that there is a wide variation between abused and non-abused children's preceptions of parents [77].

Another form of child abuse previously unaddressed is sexual abuse. The subject of incest has gained wide public exposure during the past few years. The psychological repercussions of incest are well documented [78]. VanderMay's review [79] of the research in this area consistently reported findings that include:

1. a majority of incest victims are girls less than 17 years old.
2. perpetrator is most often biological father (although step-fathers may be a proportionally higher risk)
3. adult-child incest is usually a protracted involvement starting before the child reaches

puberty

4. first born daughters are more often at risk
5. alcoholism, extreme father dominance, indifferent or intimidated mothers, wives rejecting a sexual relationship with husbands, social isolation of the family and role disorganization in the family are all factors contributing to the risk of incest.

Many teenage girls are severely traumatized because of the unthinkable violation of trust. Many are convinced that it is normal and appropriate behavior and are afraid to say "no" to their father. Sometimes, the psychological conflict becomes overwhelming and they make a suicidal gesture to communicate the pain. If the father is ever exposed, they feel guilty, responsible, violated, angry and determined never to trust anyone again. Because they perceive themselves as used, incest frequently leads to sexual promiscuity in adolescence.

Adolescent Sexuality

The social prohibitions regarding adolescent sexuality have radically changed and generally decreased during the past twenty years. Effective oral contraception and modern-day economy that necessitates protected courting

relationships force adolescents to deal with questions that were left for adulthood fifty years ago. Despite the changes in technological society, the family has struggled with the adjustment. Two recent articles studying the acquisition of sexual information by teenagers found that fathers are almost completely absent as sources of sex education and that peers and the mass media are the overriding agents of acquiring sex education [80]. Also, despite the efforts of the feminism movement in America, a double standard still exists regarding expectations of sexual behavior for the different sexes.

Many factors influence the development of adolescent sexuality [81]. These factors are biological, social, psychological, and familial. This study focus on the sexuality of adolescents experiencing emotional problems. Two importantly interrelated variables are adolescent sexuality and adolescent self-esteem and locus of control. A study of 155 women age 15-25 found that contraceptive effectiveness was significantly and positively related to a means-end problem solving ability and a belief in internal control, and significantly and negatively related to a belief in external control [82].

A similar comprehensive study of 500 adolescent girls concluded that the high self esteem girls were more effective and consistent contraceptive users [83]. There

has been a proliferation of sex education courses throughout American high schools during the past 10-15 years. However, many girls are still getting pregnant and opt usually to abort or keep their baby. (Recently, more are choosing to keep and rear their child.) However, the question becomes a matter of why so many high school girls are getting pregnant when they have had access to valid, school sponsored sex education? The answer lies in this issue of self-esteem and locus of control. There are no problems with the dissemination of sexual information by the schools. The problem is that the girls' needs are emotional and psychological, not intellectual. One study [89] found that pregnant adolescents score significantly lower on an ego identity scale while another [85] emphasized the indirect forms of sex socialization in the family. Same sex role modeling, particularly for girls and mothers, seems to have a significant effect on sexual behavior in adolescence. Sexual promiscuity during adolescence can have a variety of origins and meanings. One of the most common origins is that many adolescents employ sexual behavior as a strategy to deal with feelings of loneliness, isolation, depression and a further confirmation of worthlessness.

Drug Use

Sexual acting out may be the second most common mechanism used to deal with chronic, painful feelings during adolescence. Drug and alcohol abuse among teenagers has reached epidemic proportions and the population most at risk are these same teenagers who exhibit low self esteem and come from troubled or struggling families. A study conducted in 1982 involving chemically dependent adolescents found that the treatment group had a higher percentage of students living in single parent families [86]. The same treatment group had lower school grades, more irregular attendance and lower self concept than the control group that was not drug involved. The treatment group reported several factors influencing their drug use. They pointed to poor family interactions, peer pressure to use drugs, low self concept, inadequacy in relating to others and an inability to cope with problems. A 1978 study analyzed the relationship between locus of control and alcohol abuse among teenagers and found that a significantly higher proportion of teenagers with alcohol problems had an external locus of control [87].

What function drug usage and abuse has for teenagers has also been documented [88]. These identified functions

include defiance and provocation, self destructiveness, anger, grandiosity and escape from conflicts. This inquiry into the functions of drug abuse concluded that heavy use by teens is rooted in the psychodynamics of their families. Another study [89] concluded that adolescent substance abusers see life as a struggle, see themselves as outsiders, feel powerless, and use drugs to cope with anxiety. Thompson's 1982 study [90] found that peer relationships with drug users was the most significant predictor of drug involvement.

Alcohol is the most abused drug in the world and adolescents are no exception. The vast majority of what is being consumed by adolescents is alcohol and marijuana. Cocaine is financially prohibitive or this would enjoy much broader usage. Students seem less interested in hallucinogens and more ready to use mood altering chemicals such as qualudes or valium. In 1979, 29 million children and adolescents had one (or more) alcoholic parents [91]. These parents frequently provide an unstable environment and various psychological consequences result, including a greater risk for alcoholism themselves.

The Stage of Adolescence

An important point that needs to be made at this point in this review involves the interrelationships of all these aspects of an adolescent's life. None of these singular variables such as alcoholism definitively causes poor school adjustment. Many youngsters experience divorce during high school and it is never reflected in their school performance. Each student in this study has experienced a unique constellation and interaction of these various issues and responded to these depending on both their own psychological profile and the meaning their unique constellation has for them.

One area previously not addressed in this review which has great effect on all teenagers is the fact that they are all progressing through an identified developmental stage called adolescence on their way to maturity. The problems of many adults are attributable largely to identity formation problems during adolescence [92]. Wilkerson recently studied the relationship between ego identity and alienation in adolescents [93]. As scores on Ego Identity Scale increase, there is a decrease in alienation. Young people who have successfully resolved Erickson's crises and conflicts will feel a sense of mastery over their environments and control of their

destiny. The degree of resolution of crisis and conflicts that the child encounters in the different stages of ego identity has been shown to be related to the feeling of being able to actively master the environment and assume control over one's life.

Many studies have identified the difficulty certain adolescents experience in the development of empathy and moral character [94]. These studies point to this psychological trait in the etiology of antisocial behavior.

C H A P T E R I I I

Methodology

The method of inquiry in this research is in-depth case studies of angry adolescents at Shrewsbury High. Their description as angry has been defined and described in Chapter One. Also, they are part of the much larger pool of potential candidates that came from two counseling groups created to facilitate the school adjustment of young people who were experiencing adjustment problems.

There has been a great deal of literature regarding acting out or emotionally disturbed adolescents. However, after reviewing the literature, most studies attempted to isolate and cross reference very specific variables and characteristics of these young people. For instance, a study might suggest a causal link or correlation between locus of control and physical abuse or neglect. There can be the dangerous implication that one is the exclusive causative variable of the other. In an attempt to come to a more meaningful understanding of these students family and school experiences, and place this understanding in the proper context, it was necessary to take a broader (but not less intense or vigorous) perspective. Bronfenbrenner addressed this issue in his work The Ecology of Human Development and stated:

Research cannot be limited to a single setting but must take into account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject. In research, seldom is attention paid to a person's behavior in more than one setting or to the way in which relations between settings can effect what happens within them. In ecological research, the properties of the person and of the environment, the structure of environmental settings, and the processes taking place within and between them must be viewed as interdependent and analyzed in systems terms.

The case study method utilized in this study, although limited in some ways, is a unique way of gathering crucial data that is extremely relevant to the nature of the study. The case study method allows access to certain types of personal information that may not be collected using other methods.

The study will document the life experiences of six angry adolescents in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts from their own unique perspectives. Through this method, the study will make clear the reasons and motivations for potential suicide, drug abuse and attempt to relate poor school adjustment with family experience.

The method of data collection involved weekly interviews of forty-five minute duration with each of the adolescents and an occasional meeting with one or both parents. Each student and a legal guardian signed a

consent form for human subjects research. (Abstract and Consent Form are in the Appendix.) The research also included a review of psychological test reports and school records. The data collection continued throughout the duration of the 1983-84 school year. All subjects participated in approximately twenty five meetings.

The selection of these particular students was a voluntary process on their part. There are two counseling groups that meet daily at Shrewsbury High. There are approximately fifteen students in each group. Students are referred by their parents, guidance or administrative personnel, themselves or friends. All students come to the group because they are experiencing adjustment problems with various manifestations and etiologies. Attendance and participation are voluntary. The study was described to both groups and they were asked to volunteer if they so chose.

Included in each case study, is a biographical description of the students own perception of his/her family and educational history. The biography also includes a descriptive profile and relevant information from testing. After this biographical profile is completed, the case study includes excerpts from some of the individual and family counseling sessions. These entries frequently reflect current family or school

problems and how the student perceives situations and attempts to cope with them. Voluminous quantities of data was collected from all of their meetings and not all of it was presented in the study. Most of the data that was submitted referred directly to the hypothesis. Some other data was presented to give the reader a more thorough description of the student. Also, some entries were included to present the healthy components of these students. These statements indicate the students accessibility to counseling and illustrate their ability to potentially benefit from it.

A by-product of this research was the delivery of psychotherapeutic counseling services to each of the students. During the process of counseling, the student controls the experience and discusses what he/she feels is relevant at a particular time. Whenever a student happened to make a statement relevant to the research, the researcher immediately quoted the student. Sometimes, three or four sessions would pass without the student discussing an issue relevant to the research. Through the process of developing a supportive, trusting relationship with each of the subjects, the researcher gained access to personal, relevant information. Counseling, by definition, is a very special relationship in which one person is not intending for another to think, feel, or

say anything. A counselor has no preconceived goals or expectations of what a person might say or do. Rather, it is an attempt to allow a developing person the opportunity to express thoughts and feelings in a safe environment. The researcher had no previous relationship with any of the subjects. The research data was drawn from all the verbal material presented in the counseling that related to the hypothesis.

All of the students in the study are generally progressing toward a high school diploma but all are experiencing severe adjustment problems and continuously teeter on the edge of school failure. Some of the characteristics that effect some or all of the students include violence in the home, alcohol or drug abuse by themselves and/or members of their family, suicide attempts, incest, running away, marital separations and remarriages, imprisonment of members of families, unemployment, family financial problems, sexual acting out, unhealthy peer relationships and families moving many times during their growing years.

A final word about confidentiality. All of the standard efforts were made to assure privacy including the changing of names and the signing of consent forms by all subjects. Also, specific details (besides names) were also changed in the final draft so that it would be

impossible to identify actual personalities. These changes were made after the dissertation committee reviewed the original data. The changes were made in such a way as to preserve the fictional identities so that the reader can still understand relationships between the family and school environments of the subject.

C H A P T E R I V

DATA PRESENTATION: CASE STUDIES

Jack

Jack is a 6'2", very physically imposing fifteen year old sophomore. He is very physically aggressive and enjoys wrestling or shadow boxing with anyone who will tolerate it. He is a loud, boisterous boy who deals with his world by constantly laughing, joking and making light of everything. Jack is the youngest of six children. His four older sisters and brother went through Shrewsbury High and most presented their own adjustment problems. According to Jack's description, two of his sisters are housewives, another got into a serious auto accident five years ago and is paralyzed and lives in a nursing home. The other sister is a "druggie, prostitute in Dudley" and the family has ostracized her.

Jack's next older sibling is his brother who graduated from high school and is in the Marines. Jack idolizes his brother and intends on following in his footsteps. Serving in the military is a value expressed by both parents. Jack's father is a refrigerator repairman who has been on workman's compensation for five years because of a bad back but does jobs on the side. His mother does

clerical work in a local electronics firm. All members of the family are heavily alcohol involved but Jack insists none are alcoholics. The primary strategy employed by this family to maintain any order or organization is to verbally threaten violence frequently and occasionally act on it.

After two years of high school, Jack has accumulated thirty-one credits (most students in his class have 50-60). His entire school history is one of intense struggle. He is substantially below grade level in all areas. Like his father and brother, he does well and feels good about himself in the industrial arts. His full scale I.Q. is in the low average range. He is assigned to daily tutorial classes but usually skips them because "I hate the teacher and it's a class for dummies." In an effort to protect his fragile self image, he skips the learning lab class and creates a discipline problem for himself with the assistant principal. Jack's primary method of dealing with this conflict, created because of the discrepancies between family and school expectations of behavior, is to severely abuse alcohol and marijuana. His discipline record is full of suspensions and detentions for tardiness, being where he isn't supposed to be, misbehavior, etc. Although both parents insist that they expect high school graduation, Jack has not learned

any coping strategies or attitudes in his family that would enable him to complete high school.

Jack has very little insight into his problems but is experiencing strong feelings of self doubt and anger at a world that requires something of him but has not satisfactorily equipped him to fulfill the requirements.

Excerpts from Sessions:

First Session: "I never liked school. I've been skipping school since the first grade. I like the woods. That's where I can get away. I used to hide in the doghouse with Princess. I got D's and F's in grade school. I always used to get in fights with other kids. They hated me. I couldn't learn my times tables. The other kids always did better than me. Everybody calls me stupid. Even my father."

Second Session: "I haven't had a joint or a drink in three weeks. Honest. It's driving me crazy. If I don't get passed into the eleventh grade, I'm just going to quit. I haven't seen my father in weeks because I'm never around the house. I hate it there. This guy is going to give me 500 bucks to get a mohawk (haircut). So you have to look ugly for a few weeks."

"My girlfriend got these two kids after me to beat me up because I cheated on her. I was loaded and I kicked both their asses. I broke a kids jaw and busted up his

teeth. Now his parents are going to take me to court. If my father finds out, he'll kill me."

Third Session: "I came home Saturday night and I was stiff. My father was wicked bombed and he was beating the crap out of my mother. I broke it up and my father told me that if I tell my brother, he'll kill me. If my brother ever finds out that I didn't tell him, he'll kill me. (Directly torn between father and brother. He fears and respects both of them.)

Fourth session: "With my father, if he does a favor for you, you have to do one for him. I'm never at home so he usually doesn't bother me. He doesn't give a crap about how I do in school but he'd beat the crap out of me if he knew I got arrested or if I got a girl pregnant. I've been arrested half a dozen times but my brother always acts as my guardian. Sometimes, I feel guilty for getting in so much trouble. (Neither of Jack's parents exhibit any school supportive behavior. One might easily question the value they place on the utility of schooling. However, if Jack contemplates quitting, his father threatens violence.)

Fifth Session: This meeting included Jack and his girl friend because they are both very ambivalent about continuing the relationship and are sending each other very mixed messages. Jack states that he doesn't have any

feelings, that he doesn't care and is not sad or angry. Throughout the meeting, he punches the walls and the door to the office. He is completely out of touch with his own feelings and doesn't understand them. At some level, he realizes and feels tremendous emotional pain due to his relationships with father and brother and his only strategy to deal with that pain is to douse it in alcohol.

Sixth Session: "My parents had a fight because my father was cocked and kept yelling my mothers a liar, which she isn't. I was protecting my mother. I hate being in that position. My father said: "all of you frustrate me" and I said, "who cares" (laughing). "A lot of people say I'm sicker than my brother, but I'm not. My father's not an alcoholic, he just likes to drink all the time. With me there, they have to drink. On Saturdays, I drink at least two six packs."

Seventh Session: "When I'm not in school, I'm calm, mellow, quiet. School puts pressure on me. They make me do stuff I hate to do. It's like a prison. They yell at me, make me be to class on time. Every weekend, I've got to get stiff just to deal with school. Everything has to be perfect in school. At home, I can come and go as I please. My parents don't give me rules to follow. I can smoke and drink at home. At home, everybody does whatever they want to. At school, they make me do all kinds of

things I don't want to. My parents don't push me to be cooperative with teachers or anybody."

"Both my parents have at least four or five drinks a day. I love and respect both my parents, especially my father. I don't respect myself. Me and my father are a lot alike. I'm going to go down to North Carolina and visit my brother and get a tattoo on my arm just like his. Tattoos are mint."

Jack feels a great sense of pride in his father and brother. He seems to be beginning to develop the confidence to make it like his brother did and get into the military.

Eighth Session: "My father's getting me wicked pissed off. He was stiff last night and got in another wicked fight with my mother. It's a good thing I'm there or they'd kill each other. Sometimes, I think I'll just kill myself." (Jack's dilemma is a classic double bind. To win his father's and brother's respect, he must join the Marines which requires high school graduation. However, they don't provide any of the support Jack needs to get through high school. Graduation seems a more ominous and unrealistic goal for Jack but the threat of losing father's and brother's respect is unbearable.)

Ninth Session: "I finally managed to get the right teachers. None of them keep rigid control of me. I can

do what I want. What do you think, ha? I'm pretty good at fixing this place to be the way I want it to be.

Pretty good, huh?" (Feeling proud about mastering his school environment, Jack has created a similar environment for himself in school as he has at home.) "My parents definitely expect me to graduate high school and go in the Marines. If I don't graduate in the right year, my father will kill me. I don't know why, but when I walk in the front door of the school every morning, I'm instantly pissed off."

Tenth Session: "I think I'm a pretty good son. I don't borrow too much money. I hope I'm a good son so I can do something right in my life. I could be a good student. I get along with most of my teachers these days. Sometimes, the work is too hard. The reason I do lousy in school is because it's the teachers fault. If my friends want to go out in the parking lot and get stoned, I go with them. Sometimes, teachers expect me to do stuff I can't do. I stayed back in the second grade because I couldn't read or write. All the kids my age are two grades ahead of me. I still don't know how to read. It's helpful to have you to talk to but I don't know why. Sometimes, kids want to talk to me about their problems and I help them. I guess I can be like you if I want to."

Eleventh session: Meeting with parents. Mother: "Jackie

is just like his father, stubborn, angry, does as he pleases. I don't have any control over him. The only reason Jackie stays in school is because Billy (brother) will kill him if he quits. A lot of the time, it's the school's fault. I've had a lot of go-rounds with this school over the years with my four older daughters."

Father: "I know Jack drinks a lot so I buy him the beer so he won't get in trouble. Don't be afraid to be heavy footed with him if you want. (Instructing counselor how to work with son.) If he ever gets through high school, he's going in the Marines like his brother. Jack's problem is that he screws around too much, doesn't know anything about responsibility."

Bill

Bill is a 17 year old student whose class is entering its senior year. Bill has only attained thirty credits at this time. His life has continuously been interrupted by severe emotional trauma including incest, divorce and his father's imprisonment for rape. Bill's parents divorced five years ago but it seems that most of the difficulty Bill continues to experience emanates from this history of violence and terror. He is the middle child of five offspring. His older brother is "just like my father" (referring to constant problems with the law).

His mother is remarried to a man whose first wife had recently died. He has three children. There are eight adolescents living in this one reconstituted family. This family experienced typical issues of reconstituted families including loyalty, jockeying for position, authority, decision-making, role definitions, testing, etc.

Psychological testing revealed a young man who seeks desperately to have basic needs for maintenance and approval met, but who finds these needs frustrated. He gives the impression of searching for support and love but constantly fearing and expecting rejection. Uncertainties and expectations generated by past failures cause him to test out interpersonal relationships for unconditional

acceptance, making rejection likely if not inevitable. His need to protect himself from the pain of rejection and his unacceptance of the rather infantile needs within himself cause him to adopt a hyper-masculine bravado and defensively rejecting attitude toward others. In sum, what he needs and wants most (love, reassurance, acceptance, support), he pushes away in fear of what he has previously experienced in relationships (distrust, rejection, suspicion etc.).

His teachers report that he is constantly a discipline problem because he incessantly provokes other students or teachers by disrupting, insulting (projecting his feelings about himself) or name-calling. He exceeded the allowable number of absences in all his classes. His school experience during the 83-84 year was a failure because he is simply unable to satisfy the minimum psychological requirements of a public high school.

Bill's sense of the school is that everyone is constantly picking on him, that little, if anything is ever his fault. He feels victimized and helpless. He abuses drugs regularly. He has no concept of reciprocity in relationships and manipulates to get his own primary needs addressed.

Excerpts from Sessions

Session One: "I always use to get beat up as a kid. I

used to get B's and C's until the fourth grade. Then, it was all down hill. I used to give my teachers a lot of crap. I never did my homework. My parents were always fighting. My father had a gun and he said he was going to blow my mother's head off if she divorced him. My mother had wicked long hair and he took a scissors out and cut it all off. For a long time, he was having an affair with my older sister. Everybody knew about it except my mother. Then one day, he stole everything in the house and took off because the police were after him."

Session Two: "This kid is picking a fight with me. He poured coffee on my gloves in the cafeteria. He said I was a chicken and had no friends. All my friends were there but no one defended me. Deep down, I think he's right. I am a chicken and don't have any friends."

Session Three: "I don't have any control over my life. Everytime I turn around, I'm in trouble. We broke into this house the other night and the other kids got away. Not me. I got caught. Now the cops want me to rat on my friends."

Session Four: "That kid is still picking on me. Someday, I'm going to get him. I'm gonna give him a taste of his own medicine. Sweet revenge. All the kids think I'm a loser. I'm starting to believe them." One way Bill expresses his anger is by stealing from people he hates.

Session Five: "There are more whores in Shrewsbury than non-whores. I've had sex with ten or fifteen girls and they're all sluts. Too many kids think their tough. I beat the crap out of this girl this weekend. We were both drunk. She said I was a queer and a loser, and I snapped. I grabbed her by the throat and punched her face" (laughing). "I made eighty bucks shoveling and spent it all on beer, weed (marijuana) and acid (L.S.D.). I hate girls. All girls. All they do is use you. I was tripping my brains out last weekend. I'd rather be a loner than social. The only person I want to be like is Satan."

Bill was subsequently arrested for assault and battery by the aforementioned girls parents. Bill's basic style of relating to girls is to dominate and intimidate them, and his concept of a sexual relationship with a girl legally constitutes rape.

Session Six: "I'm a wicked good con artist. I'm going out with this girl now. She loves me and she's afraid of me. I wanted to go to D.Y.S. to get away from this stinking place." (Asking for limits and control.) "The Judge suspended my sentence. I'm pretty strange, huh? I use people. I don't have a single friend but I have thousands. I like to be the center of attention. I can make people laugh. I spend all my time with my girlfriend

of two weeks." Bill has no sense of reciprocity at all. He is so needy, he immediately engulfs and overwhelms girls, thereby setting himself up for eminent rejection.

"I think I'm a jerk. Some people just don't know me well enough. If they did, they wouldn't like me."

Session Seven: "I don't care what people think. Next week, I'll be alone in the woods, lighting a fire and smoking dope. Everybody told my girlfriend that I would be nice to her for awhile and then I'd rape her." (His girlfriend broke up with him and he's blaming others and feeling victimized and helpless.) "I can get cocaine for free where I work. I just reach into this plastic bag and take as much as I want. I do two grams a day."

Session Eight: "I went up on the roof (of the school) and smoked a bowl. I got B's and C's on my report card because my teachers are afraid of me. I'm starting to go crazy. I don't think what happened years ago effects me now. I gotta go to court tomorrow for assault and battery on that girl. I'm screwed and I don't even care that I'm in trouble."

Session Nine: "I've been in court for unarmed robbery, stolen cars, theft, assault and battery twice, possession of cocaine and I'm on a suspended sentence from D.Y.S. I did all those things for the hell of it. You tell me why. You're the shrink."

"I'm getting set up by that girl (projecting blame). I didn't beat her up." (Contradicting what he told researcher shortly after incident.) "I just slapped her once. She had one of her girlfriends give her a black eye to make it look good. I'll get those shits. If she is going to accuse me of beating her up, I'll beat her up. There's no place for me in this world. At first, I was hoping the Judge would send me away to Roslindale. He should. I deserve it. But now, I might just get out of here tonight" (running away or suicidal ideation).

Session Ten: "I don't get sad or mad, I get even. I punched a kid in the stomach because he's a fag. I beat up anybody I don't like."

Session Eleven: Bill enters researchers office after an incident in a classroom. Adjustment counselor was called to the class because Bill was picking a fight with another student. The entire class, including the teacher was yelling at Bill because everyone was disgusted with him. Bill was yelling at the entire group, calling them all "faggots". His perception of the incident is that everyone is picking on him. In the office he states, "I love to go into downtown Worcester and find the fags and beat the crap out of them and steal their money."

At this point, Bill is heavily drug involved, has been thrown out of most of his classes because of discipline

problems and is violent and impulsive. He spends essentially all of his time either manipulating people for drugs or provoking rejection.

Session Twelve: (with Bill's mother and step-father)

Mother: "He's the same way at home as he is at school. He's a little conner and manipulator. He has an excuse for everything. Nothing is ever his fault. I don't know what's going to become of him."

The general attitude of both parents is resignation and despair about Bill. They feel that there is very little that they or anybody else can do for him. They certainly don't have any significant educational expectations for him. Both said they will be surprised if he finishes high school.

Bill has enjoyed the individual attention this research entailed. Generally, he was very punctual about his weekly meeting but never has had any intention of changing because he believes that most of his troubles aren't caused by him. He repeatedly stated that he participated in the study to help the researcher but never had any intention of utilizing the counseling aspect of the study.

Jessica

Jessica is a 18 year old girl entering her senior year in September, 1984. She has one brother who is four years older and her mother and father who are 37 and 40 respectively. Jessica was born in Worcester and lived there until the age of six. At that time, her parents moved to their current address in Shrewsbury.

Jessica was referred to the Adjustment Counselor during her sophomore year by the assistant principal. She was regularly experiencing behavioral problems in school such as cutting class, smoking and discourteous behavior toward teachers. A rapid decline in her academic performance occurred at the same time her mother began a full time job.

Jessica had always been overindulged as a child. She was constantly given whatever she wanted. Her father is a real estate contractor and is an alcoholic. When her mother went back to work, Jessica felt abandoned and burdened with a lot of house work that she felt was her mother's responsibility. Her brother has always received preferential treatment. "He's the good one and I'm the bad one." This is an important issue that has angered Jessica for years.

Jessica and her brother are both alcoholic and Jessica

was abused sexually by her brother and cousin at the age of eleven. This family secret precipitated a lot of sexual acting out during her early adolescence. Jessica is an extremely depressed, angry girl with a very poor self-esteem who experiences considerable difficulty controlling impulses and deferring gratification. Testing reveals a low-average intelligence range that could be greatly effected by her emotional state. Despite her school adjustment difficulties, she has maintained basic parity with her class academically and is slated for graduation with her class in June, 1985. During her junior year, Jessica was assigned seven out of school suspensions, ten in school suspensions and numerous detentions. This represented a marked decrease from her sophomore year.

Her moods fluctuate dramatically between cooperative, bouyont and optimistic to vengeful, hopeless and dispairing. A severe underlying depression is pervasive beneath a surface of hostility, suspicion and resentment. She has some awareness of her struggle but usually accesses external sources. Usually, Jessica is so busy dealing with her symptomatic pain, by trating it chemically or acting out, that she is unaccessable to investigating underlying causes.

Excerpts from Individual and Family Meetings

Session One: "When I was little, I was a wicked spoiled brat. My parents would send me to school and I'd flip out. Once I bit the bus driver. I used to make believe I was sick all the time. I would always win the fights with my parents. My teachers passed me on because they didn't want me again. I always did bad in school. Teachers would make me stay in for recess. If I didn't get my own way, I'd go nuts.

I used to party with my brother and his friends. I've been drinking and smoking pot since the fifth grade. I'm so sick of my brother always being the favorite. He never gets caught but he does the same things I do."

Session Two: "I hate my father and he hates me. We had a wicked fight the other night. I went out and got wicked stiff on coffee brandy and amoretto. I don't think I've had a conversation with my father in my whole life. He comes home from work and drinks vodka and beer. If life doesn't get better, I'll kill myself. I mean it."

Session Three: "I'm flipping out. I think the joint I smoked was laced. I feel like my body's moving but it's not. Everything is catching up with me real fast. I can't take my parents anymore. All they do is tell me to do stuff my mother should be doing. I was driving with my father the other night and I knew he was stiff because he was all over the road. I'm sick of his violence. I hate

his guts when he's drunk."

Session Four: "If I was my boyfriend, I'd break up with me. I'm a wicked bitch. Before, I used to go with a different guy every night for no reason at all. I used to be real slutty. You couldn't even count the mistakes I've made."

Session Five: Jessica just had a fight with a particular teacher who she insists is always picking on her and is out to get her. The teacher told her he just reported her to the office for repeatedly cutting study hall. At that point, Jessica became extremely vulgar and out of control and got into more trouble. As she enters the office, she is extremely angry and vulgar, feeling victimized and promising retaliation. "I hate that son of a bitch. I don't take that shit from anyone at home, I'm sure as hell not going to take it from anyone here." Jessica was suspended out of school for three days.

Session Six: Jessica has another similar incident with another teacher and she threatens to beat the female teacher. "I grew up with it (violence). When you get pissed, you hit. Ask questions later. It's the only way I know how to solve problems. My mother told me I hang around with sluts. I told her that she does too. I'm sick of cooking supper every night for my father because my mother's working. My parents always put me in the

middle of their fights. They are separated, living in the same house. After supper, we all watch TV in separate rooms. I do all the cooking and cleaning. They treat me like a slave. I swear if I had a gun, I'd shoot myself" (crying).

Session Seven: "I know I'm the one doing everything wrong. I've got a very short temper, just like my mother. I never get punished at home, just yelled at and insulted. My father thinks I'm a wise ass. He found out I have sex with my boyfriend and now he doesn't even say "hi" to me. He thinks I'm going to screw up my life by getting pregnant. I carved my boyfriend's name in my arm because I wanted to feel pain."

Session Eight: Jessica doesn't believe that she has any influence over her family and certainly can't make it better. "Nobody talks to each other in my family." However, she does believe that she significantly contributed to its current state. Her relationship with her boyfriend is based primarily on mutual dependence. "I always get whatever I want from him. If I bitch long enough he gives in to me every time."

Session Nine: Jessica is extremely upset, vulgar, angry, crying. "I think I lost credit in history. I don't need this shit. I know that teachers are going to flunk me. I hate it here. As the year goes on, coming to school is

more painful and meaningless." Jessica is facing her life situation and not using drugs as much. "I'm so fed up with the whole world. I'm a total bitch and I don't even know why."

Session Ten: "I deserve to get hit when my father hits me. I hate my mother and I'm just like her. My father works his butt off for us."

"I think I'm pregnant. My fathers gonna kill me and he should. My mother was yelling at me last night and I was stoned and I said shut up, bitch or I'll slap your face. I'm going to feel guilty for saying all those things to my parents after they die. I think I do a hell of a lot more for them than they do for me. My mother is so spoiled, it makes me sick. She demands a brand new car every year. I can't wait to be out on my own. Away from all this crap in my family and school. If it wasn't for those two things, I'd be alright."

Session Eleven: Jessica's mother reports that Jessica is just like her. "She's very demanding, stubborn and doesn't have any patience, just like me. Jessica is basically a taker in her relationships with guys. I guess I'm that way too. Sometimes, we're both pretty vulgar. I know that's a bad habit. We both really like clothes a lot."

Jessica's father graduated high school and her mother

dropped out. Jessica is struggling to get through. Both mother and daughter were involved in serious relationships with men during their mid teen years. Jessica's mother had her brother at the age of seventeen.

Session Twelve: "My parents don't expect me to go to college. They think it's great if I get C's and D's. My brother gets bitched out if he gets below a B. My mother says it's more important for men to get an education anyway because woman will eventually get married and have babies. I've always hated school and always done horrible in it. My brother's a little angel. He's been put in jail repeatedly. He used me sexually, but they think he's an angel. They think I'm the one who's all screwed up."

Session Thirteen: "I know I want a high school diploma but I don't know if I want to work for it. I used to get everything handed to me but nobody gives me crap anymore. I just want a diploma handed to me. I've never had to work for anything in my life." (The classic struggle of transforming from childhood to adulthood.)

Mike

Mike is a 17 year old adolescent male who is presently two grades behind his class. He entered high school one year behind his class and has missed most credits during his freshman and sophomore years. He continually presents himself as a disheveled, apathetic teenager who wears a dungaree jacket and pants. Mike usually wears some variety of t-shirt emblazoned with a rock group, tinted glasses and untied sneakers. He always smells of marijuana and readily admits to its severe abuse. Counseling sessions usually include numerous stories of drunkenness and drug abuse. Mike is always under the influence of marijuana in school and alcohol after school and during weekends. Mike denies that he has any problem regulating his drug usage. Alcohol and marijuana serve as a self prescribed antidepressant for him.

Mike describes both home and school to be unpleasant environments which he avoids as often as possible. He generally acknowledges the value of a high school diploma but isn't able to exhibit positive school related behaviors on any consistent basis. He describes his home environment similarly. He states that his parents "would kill him" if he left high school, but don't support, encourage, require, or expect any school related behaviors

on a regular basis. Although his parents might occasionally refer to the utility of schooling, Mike sees his father as a man who left school in the seventh grade and has created a satisfying, successful life for himself as a skilled construction worker. His life at home is completely unstructured and has no direction. A high school's minimum standards and expectations involving structured schedules and punctual attendance are strange and unrealistic for him.

Mike is the fifth of six children, all boys except the oldest. His parents and sister never completed high school and his two older brothers just barely satisfied the minimum requirements for graduation. His father works in construction seasonally and his brothers work various unskilled jobs on an irregular basis. Mike's mother attributes his school difficulties to his friends and it has been her forceful influence that has kept him enrolled in school. Mike states that his depression and anger originate with his mother's constant goading or nagging him to do things he either can't or won't do. Mike's father seems detached and uninvolved emotionally and his mother deals with this by investing much of her emotional energy into Mike. This leaves Mike feeling overinvolved, entitled, responsible, dependent, angry and guilty. He has stated repeatedly that he feels that he has no control

over what happens in his family and little control over what happens to him in school. He does worry about his own future, but the only effective strategy he has learned to deal with these feelings is to abuse drugs.

Psychological testing revealed significant deficits in verbal ability and a lack in confidence that he can participate successfully in school. He tends to withhold effort rather than risk being judged negatively by himself or others.

Excerpts from Sessions

Session One: "Junior high is where all the problems started. Suspensions from school, mouthing off to the assistant principal, giving him the finger. They weren't teaching nothing. I got kicked out of English everyday. Some days, I just wouldn't go because I didn't feel like it. They did stuff that made me mad."

Session Two: "Last year, I skipped almost every day. Teachers don't explain what they're doing. They teach all kinds of stuff you don't need. Stuff you'll never be asked in the future. I don't know why they do that." (A lucid illustration of the school imposing the value that knowledge for its own sake is valuable. Mike hasn't learned this at home and feels that schools should only teach what is relevant, practical and prepares one for adult life.) "I stay here to get it over with and make my

parents happy. Everybody else graduated so I have to. It's important to get an education. I can't get myself to do stuff that I don't want to do." (Classic personal description of the dilemma involving parental expectations and learned personal habits and attitudes. Self discipline is required to fulfill expectations but it has never been taught to or learned by Mike.)

Session Three: "The first time I ever smoked dope, I was six years old. A kid said 'Take a hit, it's good for you.' Every summer since then, that's all I do everyday. I smoke dope and go fishing. It takes my mind off my problems."

"My mother is always yelling at me. She does stuff to aggravate me. She always says, 'Let me smell your breath' and 'Let me see your eyes.' I smoke about half an ounce a week. I got fired from my job yesterday because they said I wasn't reliable. I'm suspended from school tomorrow because I skipped English."

Session Four: "I've been drinking White Russians and Narragansett all week. My brother's cool. My parents used to get mad when I'd get suspended but they never did anything. I'm just like my brother. He just barely made it out of here. Every day I go home after school, eat and go out hanging around the neighborhood and get stoned." Mike identifies with a brother who did, in fact, graduate.

Session Five: "My brother's a little jerk. He tells my mother everything I do and then I kill him. Then my father kills me."

"I'd go crazy if there wasn't any more dope in the world. I'd crack up. I feel bored, depressed and anxious if I'm straight. Besides, I play the drums a lot better when I'm stoned. It makes the school day easier."

Session Six: "Did you ever see the movie First Blood? It was great. This guy was a drifter and he got in fights with cops. They hunted him down like a dog. He got cut bad so he sewed up his own arm. He killed all the cops for revenge cause they gave him a bad time. I'm gonna go see it ten times. He ends up shooting the whole town."

"I go hunting every day and shoot rabbits with my bow. I don't eat them, I just like to kill them. I feel good being out in the woods. It's peaceful out there." Although Mike states that his only relief from stress is chemicals, he seems to find solice in his drums and walking in the woods -- two reasonably healthy strategies.

Session Seven: "My father never went to high school and he's doing ok. He gets home at six and yells at me to stop playing my drums. Then he drinks a lot of beer and watches TV. My mother snoops around my room which reeks of dope. It really makes me angry that she does that."

Session Eight: "My parents don't make me do anything if I

don't want to. I just say I'm not in the mood. I'm always in fights with my mother. It's always about smoking dope. I yell and scream and swear but she always has to have the last word. We don't fight when my father's around because he has to have his peace and quiet. So I just leave."

Session Nine: "I hate school something awful. They're always trying to get me to do stuff I don't want to and be someone I'm not."

"Usually, when we talk about stuff, it gets me to think about it and it helps a lot. I never miss Mondays, fifth period (counseling period). I used to be in in-school suspension all the time last year, but only twice this year." (Mike is searching for much needed support for his improved school adjustment.)

Session Ten: "I couldn't go to English today because it was too nice out. My friends made me skip class. If I'm going to be a sophomore again, I'm definitely quitting. Saturday and Sunday, I partied and fished all day. I'm different outside than I am inside. I hate school. It stinks. It ruins your whole day."

Session Eleven: "I'm working at two different gas stations. I'm going to save all my money and buy a pick-up truck." (Beginning to control impulses and defer gratification.) "I'm going to get one with massive

tires. It's going to be different from all the other trucks." (Evidence of emerging pride, self respect.)

Session Twelve: "I don't know what my parents think. I don't know whether or not I even matter to my parents. I don't think I'm a very good son. I don't do what my parents say and I'm never home. My mother is always yelling at me but she starts it."

"I'm definitely not a good student and I don't care. I hate learning what they teach in school. My father dropped out in the sixth grade. He's taught me everything I know. I can fix cars. I can make stuff. I can play the drums."

"I told the assistant principal that I'm not taking any of his crap any more and he threw me out of school for two days. That's OK. I needed the rest. Sometimes school isn't so bad. Some of the teachers are OK I guess."

Session Thirteen: (Meeting with mother) "Mike's problem is his friends. He just won't listen to me. He's just like his father. He can fix anything in the world -- cars, small engines. But, just like his father, he can be incredibly stubborn and he'll do what he wants, when he wants to do it. That boy will graduate from this school if it's the last thing I do. His father will positively kill him if he quits. I know he's smoking that marijuana but there's nothing I can do about it."

Lynn

Lynn is a fifteen year old student who just completed the minimum number of credits required to be passed into her junior year. She has a complicated psychological profile with certain characteristics that make school adjustment difficult. Lynn is an open, spontaneous girl who readily establishes eye contact but is unguarded in her conversation. Her emotional expression is labile. She is an extremely sensitive, vulnerable, fragile girl. Lynn will readily express anger in a variety of directions, all of them external to herself. Being tested in any way is a very threatening experience for Lynn and it provokes powerful feelings of fear, anger, suspicion and distrust. She is generally unable to cope with any form of internal or external stress. Lynn also experiences serious problems in the modulation and regulation of affect and impulses. At times, she may be open, buoyant and happy, and at other times, withdrawn and depressed. She constantly degrades herself, calling herself dumb and ugly. In fact, she has average intelligence and is an extremely attractive girl. She seemed to enjoy the support and encouragement that counseling provided. Any time she experiences any success, she minimizes its value, saying something such as

"anybody could do it."

Lynn seems unable to defend herself from stress and avoids any situations that might create feelings with which she is unable to cope effectively. A great deal of her psychic energy is consumed in controlling impulses. She completely lacks confidence and doesn't value herself at all.

Lynn's parents were divorced when she was one year old and her father took custody of her. Lynn lived with her father until the fifth grade. At that time, she moved to Florida to be with her mother. The court took her away from her father because of physical abuse. Her mother moved back to the central Mass. area when Lynn was in junior high and moved to Shrewsbury when Lynn was in the ninth grade.

Lynn sees her father every other weekend because "He lets me party and do whatever I want." Lynn's mother's psychological profile is similar to her own. The mother is extremely involved in a religious sect and requires Lynn to read the Bible every night. The mother is extremely punitive with Lynn which Lynn misinterprets as dislike and rejection. Lynn is an extremely sensitive, empathetic girl who is very popular with her peer group. She is kind and generous. She is able to interact much more satisfactorily with her peer group than with adults.

Excerpts from Sessions

Session One: "My father's a liar. He said my mother sleeps around. But she doesn't. She has one boyfriend. That's it. I have always been a failure in school. My second grade teacher told my friend to tell me that she didn't want me in her class because she knew I was a troublemaker. That bothered me because I liked her and I wanted her to like me. I gave her my favorite china doll but she still hated me so I stole it back at the end of the year."

Session Two: "When I was in junior high, I was suspended every day for fighting or swearing at teachers. I pray every night. I wish God would forgive me for lying and stealing and being such a bad kid. I did it because that was the way I grew up."

Session Three: "My mother's a jerk. She tells me to talk to her when I'm upset, but when I do, she kills me. She doesn't trust me or love me anymore. She gives 150 dollars a month to that stupid religious group but she won't give me 40 dollars for a dress for the dance. I don't want to live there. I don't love her either. My father lets me drink, smoke dope, do whatever I want."

(Lynn is torn between the impulsive behavior of her father and the rigid religiosity of her rejecting mother.)

Session Four: "I can't stand my mother. She punishes me

by not letting me see my boyfriends. She humiliates me by making me apologize at the end of every fight, even when I know I'm right. She punishes me just for telling her how I feel about things. Like the 150 dollars she's always spending on the religion crap." (Very sad, angry, confused.) "I spent my whole paycheck on dope and coke (cocaine). It's the only thing that makes me feel happy. My mother's such a jerk."

Session Five: "When I first moved here, no one liked me. I hate it when people stare at me. I hate my boyfriend. I hate the way he dresses, drives and looks. When we're together, I pick out all these little things about him I hate. I don't even talk to him. All this God crap with my mother comes in the way with my boyfriend. All these things about him that I hate is the devil trying to get into me." (The influence of the mother's religiosity is confusing Lynn. She was very active sexually, but now she thinks she must stay with this one boyfriend because of their sexual behavior. Otherwise, her self image would be even lower than it is.)

Session Six: "If my mother ever knew what I've done with guys, she'd go nuts. I have to buy all my own clothes and if I get in any more trouble at school, my mother's going to make me quit my job." (Both mother and Lynn place a very high value on clothes. The mother punishes her by

taking away the opportunity to look nice in school.)

Session Seven: "I got stoned this morning. I was suspended for skipping study. I have about ten absences in all my classes. Some days, I just don't feel like coming to school. I like to get stoned in the parking lot. It happens very suddenly. Things will be going real good and the next thing I know, I'm in the parking lot smoking dope. I'm going to skip in-school suspension so I can see this guy in the corridor."

Session Eight: "My math teacher is a jerk because he failed me. I'm angry at you because you're not going to run the summer program this year. My father's a jerk. All my teachers hate me.. Next year, if I don't have all new teachers, I'm not coming back." Lynn's demonstration of appropriately expressing anger at researcher was a major milestone for her. It represents the first time that she separated anger from rejection or violence. Previously, she confused these concepts and was also afraid of the volatility of her anger.

"I think I'm a lousy daughter. I never do anything with my mother. I lie to her." (Conflicted between lying and being punished.) "There has only been one year since the first grade that I was a good student. The rest of the time, I've been a horrible student."

"My mother made me quit my job and clean the house

every day because of that last suspension. Now, I've got no money to buy clothes. The only reason my father ever punishes me is to get his own anger off his chest. He hates me."

Session Nine: "My mother didn't get home until 2 a.m. this morning. She says she had to work late but I don't believe her. From now on, I'm not going to tell her where I'm going or when I'll be in." (A demand for equality in her relationship with mother which she won't get. Lynn demands the same equality at school but doesn't feel that she gets it there either -- except in the counseling office.) "I'd probably hate anybody that ever would love me because I don't deserve it."

"My parents don't talk to each other. My father knows I do drugs, but he won't tell my mother. My mother hates my father. They both say I'm going to be like the other one. I get real mad at my mother because she says she's going to do something but then she doesn't do it. Last week, she took off on a business trip for four days and left me with four dollars. She doesn't care what time I come in or what I do." (Lynn's mother is extremely inconsistent, vacillating between a strict punitive approach and not setting any limits at all.)

Session Ten: Lynn demands control of the counseling sessions. Whenever a subject becomes too painful, she

will literally yell, "Change the subject." Despite her obvious difficulties in interpersonal relationships, the counseling experience has been very helpful to her because she has been able to expose her vulnerability and fear to another person and hasn't been rejected. She has to address these needs with her teachers in her own way. Usually, teachers have an entirely different agenda that involves only academics.

"My English teacher is a jerk. I hate that guy. I skip his class every time there is a test because he tries to trick me into failing. He said he likes to watch kids suffer when he fails them." (In fact, the teacher was being facetious, but Lynn took him literally because of who she is and what her life experience has been.)

Session Eleven: "My mother never graduated high school and I have no idea how far my father went. My mother would throw me out of the house if I dropped out."

"I went to the Yes concert last night (school night) at the Centrum. I got stiff and stoned. I came in about 2 a.m. I'm lucky I got to school for fifth period."

Session Twelve: "I've lost five pounds but I have to lose ten more. I'm wicked overweight." (In fact, she has a slender body already and misperceives her own body image.)

"I hate my mother. How can I tell her off in a nice way? She thinks nothing of spending 50 dollars on herself

for clothes but if I ask for ten, she goes crazy."

(Inequality; mother perceives herself more important than Lynn which has serious ramifications on Lynn's self-esteem.) "My mother cares more about herself than she does about me. I hate my parents and I hate myself. Sometimes, when I'm dressed really nice, I like myself, but only for a short while."

"My father always calls me a little tramp." (Lynn has internalized her father's perception of her.) "Every word that comes out of me and my mother's mouth is vulgar. We had this huge fight. I told her she was a crappy mother and she said I was a little liar. She accused me of stealing her bottle of Kahlua and she demanded money back for the bottle. She's the one who made me quit my job and now she says I'm lazy, just laying around the house. There's no way I can ever win" (crying).

Danielle

Danielle is a 16 year old high school student who has suffered academic failure since the implementation of the school attendance policy. She is a very likable young woman who is simply unable or unwilling to conform to the twelve absence limit. Other factors in her life impede regular school attendance.

Both her parents were eighteen when they had her, the oldest of three children. Her parents divorced when she was eleven. Previous to that time, Danielle was a witness to extensive physical and emotional violence between her parents (as the sessions will illustrate). Her mother retained custody of all three children and had a succession of brief relationships with various men who temporarily lived with the family. This period concluded with her mother marrying her step-father four years ago. Danielle dates her school related difficulties to the actual marital separation and subsequent instability in the family.

Danielle describes her father as a man with severe psychological problems involving impulse control and substance abuse. She states that her step-father has repeatedly made his position clear that the children are not his and considers them (particularly Danielle) a

burden. Both mother and step-father are extremely adolescent.

Danielle is well liked by peers and teachers. She has never been a discipline problem. Her life circumstance has dictated that she address more pressing concerns than school. She tested in the low-average range of intelligence. Counseling focused primarily around insight and making sound judgments (both difficult areas for her). This focus changed dramatically with the discovery of her pregnancy. Her step-father was directly applying pressure on her to leave the home and this was one way of leaving. Currently, she is in the process of transferring from one hostile dependent relationship (mother and step-father) to another (boyfriend). School has never been more than a meaningless distraction for her. Ever since her parents separated, there has been a major disparity between her agenda and the schools. Essentially, she is overwhelmed with life, doesn't have any sense of who she is or where she is going, and just reacts to one crisis after another in her life. She is convinced that she has no effect or control over where her life takes her. This attitude was vividly documented in her statement about her pregnancy following years of sexual behavior and no attempt at birth control: "I didn't think that would happen to me."

Excerpts from Sessions

Session One: "My mother never told me she was going to marry my step-father. I found out one day because I saw the wedding cards on the TV set. When I was a little kid, my father used to drink too much and have nervous breakdowns. I came home one day from the third grade and my father was sitting behind the car saying he was going to die. He got up, had this wicked fight with my mother and put his fist through the window in the kitchen. Me and my brother and sister were crying. My mother was having an affair with this guy and that's when my parents separated. I haven't seen my father in a long time."

Session Two: "My step-father is always home. He doesn't work. My mother works all day and goes out to pubs with her girlfriends every night."

"I always did good in school up to the 7th grade (date of parents' separation). Then I started getting high every day. I hated my new step-father so my boyfriend and I ran away to Florida (14 years old at that time). We were in Florida for four months. We stole a car and ditched it in South Carolina. My boyfriend's brother picked us up. One night in Florida, my friends sent me over to this guy's house. He was 24. I was wicked drunk and scared. That was the first time I ever had sex. Since then, I've been with five guys but three of them

didn't matter to me."

Session Three: "I think I might be pregnant. I don't know if I should have an abortion if I am. I keep thinking about the hot summer, being pregnant. I get wicked hostile if I'm hot. I'm just gonna move in with my boyfriend if I'm pregnant. My step-father keeps threatening me anyway to get out of the house. He cuts out the apartment rentals in the paper and puts them in my room. I'm really scared."

Session Four: "I am pregnant and I'm going to keep my baby. I'm going to move in with my boyfriend on my seventeenth birthday at the end of the month. I'm not going to tell my mother I'm pregnant until after I leave." (Similar to the way her mother told Danielle about her remarriage.) "My mother is never here. She goes out partying every night."

"I've got to get on welfare, medicaid, food stamps and all that stuff. I don't know where to begin." Danielle is beginning to verbalize some concern and control of her future, the realization that decisions and actions on her part might in fact precipitate a little better life condition in the future. This is the first evidence that she is beginning to understand cause and effect relationships.

Session Five: "I'm worried about telling my mother. What

is she going to think? She doesn't like my boyfriend because he's 23. I'm scared of the future. Things just happen to me and I don't have any control over it. I'm going to move in with my boyfriend next week. I won't be too big a burden. All I need money for is cigarettes."

Session Six: "My step-father threw me out last night. I told my mother it was all right. I had to leave anyway because I was pregnant. She wanted to know if I knew who the father is. I moved all my stuff out. There's no way I can keep living there when my real father finds out I'm pregnant; he'll kill my boyfriend. I've had a hard time sleeping lately."

Session Seven: "I only knew my boyfriend two months when I got pregnant. I never thought it would ever happen to me. I started working at McDonald's two nights a week. I'm gonna buy some new clothes with my money. I got my medicaid card. My boyfriend doesn't want me to work. He likes it when I need him."

Session Eight: "My boyfriend gave me a diamond. He wants me to marry him before I turn eighteen because he's afraid I'll change my mind. He's wicked jealous. I guess as long as I'm on welfare, I'll be all right. I can feel the baby kicking. My boyfriend is too overprotective."

"I quit my job because I hate it. I'm dealing firecrackers to make some money. I've been smoking too

much dope lately."

Session Nine: "I don't think my mother ever really cared about much in her whole life. She was never there when I was home. She parties all the time with her girlfriends. My step-father's always home and he's a jerk. He likes to go outside and look in the bathroom window when I'm taking a shower. He does it a couple of times a week. It's a good thing I moved out. That wierdo was giving me the creeps. I told my mother but she wouldn't believe me (crying). Imagine that -- not believing your own daughter when that's happening."

Session Ten: "My step-father found out I'm pregnant. Now he wants to kill my boyfriend. I don't know why. He never cared about me before. Why doesn't he go beat up all my mother's boyfriends?"

"I have no idea what my parents ever expected of me. They never said what they wanted me to be. I don't think they care how I do in school. Maybe they do. Maybe, I'll win the megabucks. I've never been proud of or respected my parents."

Session Eleven: "I'm very tired today because I don't sleep well. My legs hurt. My boyfriend's working nights so I have to sleep by myself in that apartment. It's real hard getting him up to go to work. I hate to go to the laundermat and I hate grocery shopping. My boyfriend has

to know where I am every second because he thinks I'm going to cheat on him."

Session Twelve: "I'm like my mother a lot. We both like to party and we both say whatever is on our minds. We can't hold anything back. She doesn't care if I finish school or not."

"My boyfriend got fired because he went in late and because he got caught smoking dope. He was in jail when he was younger, but I don't know why. He blamed me because I didn't get him up on time."

Session Thirteen: "When my parents divorced, I stopped playing the flute and doing good in school. I got a lot more freedom and some bad stuff happened. My father was screwed up with drugs. He used to come around threatening to kill everyone, saying he was going to shoot my mother's boyfriend. He bashed in the front windows of my step-father's truck. My boyfriend is like my father when he gets angry."

"My boyfriend made me wicked angry this morning. He wouldn't get up to take me to school. I have to go to the doctors today. I feel lousy all the time. My stomach is killing me and I'm always tired. My boyfriend knows it's uncomfortable for me to have sex, but sometimes he wants to do it anyway."

"I visited a girlfriend of mine who is my age and had

a baby three weeks ago. I couldn't believe it. All the baby did was cry."

C H A P T E R V

CONCLUSION

Statement of Major Hypothesis: The family life experience of the six adolescent students has had and continues to have a significant effect on their academic and social performance at Shrewsbury High School.

Sub-hypotheses #1: There will be an incompatibility between the home and school settings regarding structure, limits and expectations of behavior.

Conclusion: Five of the six students stated clearly that there are wide discrepancies between structure and expectations at home and at school. Jack verbalized how his parents do not encourage him to cooperate with teachers and that at home he does mostly as he pleases. To an extent, he successfully recreated a lack of structure at school by arranging a schedule that included teachers who were more tolerant of his behavior. Jessica pointed out how the two settings respond to her impulsive behavior differently. At home, it is simply ignored while it is directly confronted at school. Mike and Danielle also describe relatively unstructured home settings compared to what they experience as unrealistically rigid structure at school. Lynn's difficulty between the two settings involves the consistency she experiences in the school setting. Her

mother is extremely inconsistent regarding rules, structure and expectations. The central theme with all of these students is similar. They are required by their parents to graduate high school but have not incorporated any of the daily living habits or attitudes that graduation requires. Although all of them have graduation as a goal, they all struggle with basic coping habits or attitudes such as:

- A. Daily, punctual attendance.
- B. Accepting that they must do things they do not want to do.
- C. Deferring their own needs for the good of the group.
- D. Deferring immediate desires for distant goals.
- E. Knowledge, in and of itself, is valuable.
- F. Being able to comprehend issues beyond their own personal, subjective experience.
- G. Being able to articulate, in an adequate way, their thoughts and feelings.
- H. Being able to appropriately express anger and realize the qualitative differences between anger, rejection, violence and vulgarity.
- I. Having an accurate sense of their own abilities and a sense of confidence that they can successfully complete a task.

Although their parents expect graduation, there seems to be little, if any, preparation of these students to adjust to high school. The communication or supportive links between home and school are minimal and the expectations of daily behavior are very different. Only the larger goal (graduation) between the two settings is agreed upon. There is no consensus or even communication about all the steps before that ominous goal. Not only is there a lack of agreement on what those steps are, there isn't even any discussion about which setting is responsible for which step. The result is angry adolescents experiencing failure in their school setting because the school has set up numerous standards, expectations and attitudes with which they are not familiar and with which they are unable to cope or conform. There is (for them) an overwhelming disparity in the values, attitudes, structure, rules, requirements and expectations between the home and the school setting.

Sub-hypothesis #2: Students will attempt to cope with problems at school in the same way that they attempt to cope with problems at home.

Conclusion: All of the six students describe similar patterns for coping with problems in both settings. Drug abuse, particularly alcohol and marijuana, are a common strategy to address problems in both settings. Some of

the students employ this method more than others, but all use it occasionally in both settings. All of the subjects state that a primary motive for their drug use is to alleviate stress and anxiety. All of them deny any problem regarding their use of chemicals. Jack, Bill, Mike and Jessica resort to this strategy on a daily basis. Bill's parents indicate that he behaves at home as he does at school. His way of dealing with problems in both settings involves projecting blame, creating excuses and being flagrantly dishonest. He feels victimized in both settings particularly by male authority figures. Jessica states, "It's the only way (vulgarity and violence) I know how to deal with problems." She repeatedly employs this method on her mother and teachers. The response from the two settings is very different. Her parents generally ignore her behavior while the school directly confronts it. While discussing the setting of limits in the two settings, she states, "I don't take this crap from anyone at home, I'm sure as hell not going to take it from anyone here." Mike attempts to avoid both settings as much as possible. He is not required to demonstrate any self discipline at home, but school expectations differed. Lynn demonstrates angry outbursts in both settings and misinterpreted intentions of adults at school because she is suspect of her mother's motives at home.

Sub-hypothesis #3: Students will model attitudes and behaviors of their same sexed parent and these behaviors will be inconsistent with school expectations and requirements of behavior.

Conclusion: Six students describe a great deal of similarity between themselves and their same sexed parent but its effect on school performance is unclear. Many similarities described involve relating to members of the opposite sex. For instance, Bill's father is currently imprisoned for rape and Bill describe a manner of relating to women in a similar style. He brutalizes and intimidates them. He states he hated girls and loved it when his girlfriend feared him. Danielle describes a similar way of relating to men as her mother does. Both immerse themselves in hostile, dependent, temporary relationships with men and set themselves up to be vulnerable and needy. Danielle states, "We both like to party and we always say what's on our minds." Both Mike's and Jack's mothers described their sons similar to their husbands. Neither husbands finished high school. Jack's mother states "He's just like his father, stubborn, angry and does as he pleases." (A manner of coping not conducive to optimal high school adjustment.) Mike's mother says, "He's just like his father. He can fix anything. But just like his father, he'll do what he

wants to, when he wants to."

Jessica documents similarities between herself and her mother. They both got whatever they want according to Jessica. "My mother and I both hang around with sluts." she states, "I've got a short temper just like her. I hate my mother and I'm just like her." (Overlap of role modeling and self esteem.) Jessica's mother dropped out of high school because she was pregnant with her older brother.

Lynn enumerates the similarities between her mother and herself. They are both impulsive and vulgar. (Traits that can cause problems in a high school.) They both value clothes and present a fragile psychological profile.

Sub-hypothesis #4, 4A: Students' self esteem and locus of control as student will be similar to their self esteem and locus of control as son/daughter. Students will describe a general sense of being out of control regarding their ability to effect their family and school experience.

Conclusion: With the exception of Jack, all the students describe themselves negatively in both roles. (Student and son/daughter.) Jack feels that he has been a good son. There were numerous examples of each of the students describing themselves in negative terms. All of them describe little or no influence or control over their family life and they generally carry this feeling

to school with them. Examples included, "My math teacher failed me," "It's the teacher's fault," "Things just happen to me and I don't have any control over them."

There seems to be a qualitative difference between the standards used in measuring one's worth as a son/daughter and as a student. When evaluating themselves as a son/daughter, the crucial variable seems to be obedience to parents. Even when they feel justified in expressing legitimate anger at parents or expressed anger through non-compliance or disobedience, they still internalize their parent's negative evaluations of themselves. Their esteem as son/daughter seems to be exclusively at the mercy of their parents. The idea that they might have their own independent self evaluation regarding their performance as son/daughter is difficult or impossible to integrate into their personalities. This internalization of others perceptions of them is a characteristic they bring to school with them from home. For whatever reasons, their parents have been suspicious of their childrens' abilities and potential. Apparently, most of the parents lack confidence in their child's potential. This lack of believing in their children has been internalized by them and these students don't seem to believe in or have any confidence in themselves.

The crucial variable involved in their self esteem as student is academic performance. All of them describe themselves presently in negative terms as students. Some of them date this negative evaluation back to early elementary experiences. Lynn describes two elementary grade levels when she liked the teacher and felt good about herself as a student. Danielle liked school and was a good student until the seventh grade when "My parents divorced and I got too much freedom." Their self evaluation as students is greatly dependent on a reaction to teachers evaluation statements about them. They also feel that they are labeled now and teachers expect aberrant behavior from them. Their school experience has not been a rewarding one and has reinforced their already poor self evaluation. The issue is not whether in fact they have control over their school experience, rather whether they believe they have control.

Sub-hypotheses #5: Parental education expectations will be similar to the students own expectations of him/herself and the student will perform to that level.

Conclusion: Three of the students' (Jessica, Mike and Lynn) parents clearly articulated that they expect their son/daughter to graduate high school. According to the students, their parents don't expect them to do well academically, just enough to get by to graduate. Jessica

states "They think it's great if I get C's or D's. Women are going to get married and have babies anyway." Mike states "Everybody else (siblings) graduated, so I have to."

Jack and Danielle had no knowledge of parental expectations. Jack states, "He (father) doesn't give a crap how I do in school." Danielle particularly emphasizes the lack of parental expectations in her life. She states, "I don't think my mother ever cared about much in my whole life. She was never there when I was home. I have no idea what my parents ever expected of me. They never said what they wanted me to be. They never cared how I did in school."

Bill's parents do not expect him to finish high school because his severe emotional problems prevent him from earning credits and thought he would eventually get discouraged and drop out. They both verbalize concern and fear of what his future holds for him.

The three students whose parents clearly expect graduation progress toward that goal in a more consistent method than the three whose parents are either pessimistic or express no expectations at all.

Implications for Education

What the implications are for education is not the question as much as what is education willing to do, or what is education's responsibility in this area. Earlier

in this study, students' lives were described as chaotic and disorganized. They suffer emotional trauma within disrupted families. Their life circumstances dictate that emotional issues take precedence over academic development. School systems point accusatory fingers and judgementally describe these families. Although their descriptions are frequently accurate, what educators generally fail to recognize is that their descriptions are also irrelevant. However, schools have become as victimized by society as these students. There is an unrealistic demand being placed on schools and thoroughly inadequate resources to address those demands. Once again, schools are facing the same paradox as the students in this study. They are being required to do something that they are not equipped to do. Facing this impossibility, they are being accused of failure.

Traditionally, teachers have felt that their contractual and ethical responsibility ended with teaching math or english and did not include surrogate parenting, counseling or directly addressing the emotional needs of students. Schools must provide all students who attend with a reasonable chance for success. Previously, when schools made this statement, they were referring to the academic characteristics and potential. Little has been considered regarding emotional needs.

One long range implication for education is to reevaluate the philosophy and objectives of the teacher training programs on the university level. Additional required courses might be useful in the area of educational philosophy so that teachers more thoroughly analyze the efficiency vs equity struggle. A better understanding of adolescent psychology and a review of the literature on alternative schools (and what ingredients determine success) is also needed.

In-service programs for teachers currently in the profession are another source of change. Frequently, in-service programs are a futile attempt to address overwhelming problems.

Besides these formal mechanisms to create change in teacher's philosophy and objectives, there are many informal mechanisms that can be more effective. Teachers, counselors and administrators frequently supervise each other and offer constructive criticism on how to better work with particular students. If teachers are able to offer adequate support to each other, they become better able to address the needs of students.

One of the problems that reoccurs in this area of staff interaction and supervision is the conflict about the role boundaries of teachers. Even those teachers that acknowledge that they need to do more than report

knowledge are not sure of what they should do. Formal and informal staff development in this area needs to focus on the learning of survival skills for teachers and students both in school and outside. By suggesting to teachers that they work with students on survival skills, the dilemma over role boundaries will begin to resolve itself.

Teachers have been recently burdened with enormous stress brought on by the conflict between the way they were trained and conditioned to think as ever increasing demands placed on them by students, parents and school boards. Society has changed the rules for them too, and in an ironic way, many are as ill equipped to deal with their role expectations as the students in this study. As Michael Lipsky stated in Street Level Bureaucracy:

Teachers operate in an environment that conditions the way they perceive problems and frame solutions to them.

Education has the overwhelming task of helping create a generation of young people who are more comfortable with change than they are with rigidity so that they can effectively cope with a society that is changing at an exponential rate. Part of the problem is that many teachers aren't comfortable with change and can't teach or role model something they don't know.

The continuous struggle between equity and efficiency

usually comes down on the side of efficiency due to local political power. Many local school boards feel that they are compromising their standards if they address these non-academic needs. Private elementary schools through the most prestigious universities measure their excellence based on how many students they fail or reject. If schools prepare our youngsters for the academic rigors of Harvard, one might reasonably think a school system could be humanistic enough to help another student learn to value and believe in himself, that he/she has some control over his destiny, that he/she has the power to make his/her future better than his/her past.

But to create this change requires an analysis of the decision-making process and structure of power in the system. It would be naive to speculate that every decision or even the majority of decisions are based exclusively on the consideration of students' needs. Decisions are made based on political considerations, money, teacher morale and parent pressure. Policies are created that serve the needs of the system, not the client. As in many other types of systems, the client population in a school system (students, or more specifically in this study, students with adjustment problems) is politically powerless. Frequently for teachers, excellence in their profession is rewarded by

getting the most difficult students.

Alschuler talked about power and change in his concept of speaking true words in his book School Discipline, A Socially Literate Solution. Among other characteristics of true words, they are spoken, they change reality, have existential meaning, name the problem, are heard, are embedded in dialogue and there is an element of commitment. Frequently, words are wasted and change does not occur because these characteristics are not all present. Certain types of behavior are effective at instigating change. For instance, an adjustment counselor might repeatedly plead for five or ten thousand dollars to implement a preventive program that addresses the emotional needs of a politically powerless group of disadvantaged students but these requests are never granted by the school board because of a lack of funds. However, if one of these students attempts to set the school on fire, 40,000 dollars is quickly allocated to send that student to a residential school.

The literature in this area all reflects a common theme. Holt, Alschuler, Rogers, Silberman and Glasser in their work on school discipline all pose the problem similarly and propose solutions with equal similarity. Although their styles and words are different, they all propose that we humanize schools and explicitly address

the needs and concerns of students. Glasser states that students who feel good, who solve problems, who are involved with teachers in cooperative efforts do not create disturbances in school.

Alschuler, Glasser and Rogers propose various types of meetings to facilitate communication and break down conflicting role barriers. Their ideas are a radical proposal for change in a culture that is suspicious and frightened of change and is set up to maintain the status quo. Models are in place that demonstrate the effectiveness of addressing more than intellectual needs. Neill's Summerhill in England and Dennison's First Street School in New York are two such examples.

The issue is not whether we are able to create educational environments responsive to youngsters with unresolved emotional issues, the issue is a philosophical problem involving boundaries. Most local school districts simply do not believe it's the schools responsibility to address these needs. The Law (Chapter 766 and 94-142) maintains that it is an educational responsibility and school systems, usually for financial reasons, implement these laws only when absolutely required and for their own purposes. There is a significant discrepancy between stated, formulated government policy and its actual, practical implementation on the local level.

The local implementation of special education programs needs to reflect the individualized educational plans of these students. The programs addressing emotional needs are usually called alternative programs. There has been a proliferation of these alternative schools throughout the country during the past ten years. The central theme in these programs is the acknowledgement and responsiveness to the emotional needs of students. Many secondary alternative programs have experienced varying degrees of success. The Shrewsbury school district has developed a common three level delivery system model whereby students enter at whatever level the need. The different levels correspond to more restrictive prototypes of General Law 766. The first level is for students who are able to cope adequately with an ordinary high school environment but need weekly or daily support for one period from a counselor or psychologist. These students would be placed on a prototype 502.2 educational plan indicating that they are almost completely mainstreamed. Level II is somewhat more restrictive because the students spend some percent of their school day in specialized services such as group counseling or alternative classes at the high school taught by trained alternative teachers. Level III students have continuously experienced failure and severe adjustment problems at the high school and they attend an

off-campus alternative school in the same town for all or part of the school day. This alternative school is part of the high school but has a certain degree of autonomy. It is not a residential school in some distant location. Students live with their families and maintain their peer relationships.

Placement in these various levels of the alternative program is a mutually agreed upon consensus model involving an administrator, psychologist, counselor, teacher, parent and student. If none of the levels respond to the students needs, the educational plan is drawn up so the student receives whatever combination of levels he/she needs. For instance, a student could spend half the day at the Level III off-campus site, and the other half at the high school in Level II. When the students are at the high school, they are subject to all the same rules as the other students.

Gold and Mann recently completed a study of effective alternative schools and published their findings in Expelled to a Friendlier Place. Their conclusions reaffirmed some previous findings and refuted some commonly held beliefs. For instance, they concluded that alternative schools are not a panacea for all emotionally disturbed adolescents. Certain types of adolescents whose depression is not so severe and have established peer

relationships seem to benefit from alternative programs much more than isolated, clinically depressed students who do not.

There was not any significant change in the self-esteem of students after experiencing the program for six months to a year. A conclusion was drawn that the disruptive behavior was not as much an indicator of self-esteem as it was set up by a social institution such as a conventional high school. Effective alternative schools do not set up disruptive responses by their students. These programs seem to have little, if any effect on outside behavior.

The crucial variable and most significant conclusion of the study and ingredient for effective alternative schools is flexibility. Students who enter and participate in these schools perceive them as concerned with and responsive to their needs and interested in what they have to say and what they want to learn. These programs are flexible in that they are willing to share and develop the agenda with the students while conventional schools prescribe agendas. Students slowly gain confidence in their role as student and begin to believe that they can experience success. They also begin to believe in the usefulness of schooling.

Mike and Jack both verbalized their anger about

Shrewsbury High School establishing its own learning agenda unilaterally. All six students in the study could benefit from an effective off-campus placement that is more flexible. The only student who might be appropriate for a less restrictive prototype is Lynn. Despite all her difficulties and an occasional in-school suspension, she maintains an adequate adjustment to the regular school environment. She needs the reinforcement of individual counseling weekly and group counseling daily. This would be a Level II involvement in the alternative program.

Danielle believed that her pregnancy necessitated her dropping out of school. She knew that it was completely unrealistic for her to adhere to the attendance policy and to attempt to stay in school would be futile. During one of her final meetings, she summarized her dilemma with public education. She simply stated, "There is nothing for me here." An alternative program that developed a modified and flexible attendance policy whereby students could receive credit for the smaller increments of work they do at one time would be more appropriate to her needs.

Jessica and Bill both need an off-campus alternative school placement. Their difficulty with controlling their own angry impulses combined with a conventional high school that sets up disruptive behavior with their

expectations and requirements of behavior. Shrewsbury High School requires a respect for authority (teachers) that is in direct conflict with the psychological profile of Bill and Jessica. They have frequently been suspended out of school for what Shrewsbury calls "rude and discourteous behavior".

An effective alternative school would be an appropriate placement for each of these students for different reasons. Some because of its flexibility in establishing agendas and others for its ability to deal with others for social rather than emotional reasons such as Danielle. All she really needs is a modified attendance policy and an educational plan that would take six years to complete. Throughout her longer stay in high school, she would need counseling support.

One paradoxical problem is that even when effective programs are implemented, many needy students reject the opportunity. Their emotional problems prohibit them from getting what they need. Many severely disturbed students need a twenty-four hour residential program but would never cooperate with their own placement. They gain some temporary relief from their psychic pain by acting out impulsive behavior or abusing drugs. They perceive help such as counseling or placement in a residential school as a threat to strip away the only strategies they have ever

learned to deal with their pain.

Lipsky's concept of street level bureaucrats holds a practical key to the resolution of this dilemma. Public service employees of all types, including teachers, create the real policy that is implemented because they deliver service in the midst of unrealistic job requirements, ambiguous objectives and conflicting goals. After schools define their formally stated policies, teachers have enormous discretion regarding who will be suspended and who will stay, who is teachable and who is not, who is expected to achieve and who is not. Teachers might like to respond to the needs of the individual child but in practice, they are forced to deal with adolescents as a class. Overcrowded classrooms mean little or no personal attention that good teaching requires and teachers spend much of their time maintaining order. Teachers avoid explaining this to administrators for fear of a negative evaluation. If teachers, in some way, communicate that they are a resource to address problems other than academic, the demands placed upon them by students are limited only to a teacher's ability to supply the service.

The resource dilemma seems unresolvable. The more responsive any school system is, the more the demand will be identified. For example, the town of Shrewsbury in 1979 identified forty-five youngsters who needed a

"substantially separate environment" because it had created an outstanding alternative program staffed by eight professionals. Proposition 2 1/2 became reality, the staff shrunk to two and the defined need shrunk to twelve. The other students and their families lacked political clout and most quietly dropped out of school.

One optimistic proposal (by Lipsky) in this system set up to fail regarding this issue of students with emotional problems, is the concept of advocacy. One must realize the existence of multiply disadvantaged students in high school and validate the legitimacy of their struggle. So that various agencies (including schools) can deny blame and occasionally accept credit, they selectively define who their clientele is and what their responsibility is regarding them. Any of the families in the case studies included any combination of characteristics such as drug abuse, reconstituted families, unemployment, school failure, incest, imprisonment or welfare. Many of the agencies that respond to specific characteristics shirk responsibility arguing that although they should service a particular client, responsibility for a client's case really belongs somewhere else.

If a teacher, counselor, nurse or administrator understand their role as a street level bureaucrat, they can employ their considerable discretion to include in

their own definition of their job, that of student advocate. Amidst all the chaos in school, one might consciously accept the responsibility of coordinating the services of and advocating for a particular student. For instance, in the case of Danielle, an advocate could make sure she set up and follow through on appointments with the Welfare Department and Department of Social Services. An advocate needs to support her and help secure medicaid, food stamps and prenatal care. She needs someone to articulate an educational plan that is realistic and sensitive to her pregnancy and housing crisis. Bill needs an advocate that can go to court with him and propose alternatives to the judge that hold more promise than incarceration. Another need would be to make sure that he gets the quality psychotherapeutic intervention he so desperately needs. In this case, advocacy will probably include persuading a cautious school board to spend 40,000 dollars a year for Bill to attend a residential school. The school board is only going to do this as a last resort. At some point in this cyclical system, a committment needs to be made with the realization that, for many of these students, educators' attempt to help them achieve their potential is a last chance before a lifetime involvement between the welfare system and the penal system.

Endnotes

Chapter I

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APPENDIX

Consent Form

Dear _____,

My name is Stephen Mills and I am a doctoral student at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. One of my final requirements to complete the program is a major independent study project called a dissertation. As you know, I have selected a study that involves your voluntary participation and that of your family. The project is called "Case Studies of Angry Adolescents in High School". The general purpose of the study is to come to a comprehensive understanding of these young peoples' feelings, thoughts and attitudes about themselves, their families and their school experiences so as to come to a better understanding of school problems and failure.

The selection of these particular six students was a voluntary process on their part. Each of them originally came from the general case load of the researcher. The term "angry" refers to problems with relationships with people at home and/or a difficulty in their adjustment to Shrewsbury High School.

The method of gathering information is called case studies and this involves a weekly meeting of forty-five

minutes duration for the rest of this school year. Also, it will involve a monthly family meeting to be arranged at our mutual convenience. The only possible discomforts or risks would be the expression of sad or angry feelings about relationships at home or at school. The possible benefits include an opportunity to know oneself better and resolve personal and family problems.

The purpose of this form is to insure your rights as people and that your consent to participate in my study is an informed decision which you make voluntarily and without any pressure. Throughout the study, you have the right to have any questions answered and you have the right to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the research. There is no physical risk involved in the study.

As I have told you previously, all names will be changed so as to protect your privacy. No one will have access to any of the information I collect throughout the duration of the study. This includes all school administration, counseling or teaching personnel. The final product will be reviewed by my dissertation committee at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst which is composed of three professors. After I defend my research orally, the study may be published partially or in total in various professional journals or

publications. The reason for this is so others may learn from this research and possibly continue it in some other form.

For ethical reasons, I would appreciate the written consent not only of the legal guardian (parent), but also of the minor who is the real subject of this research. If you have read this form completely, understand it so that all your questions have been satisfactorily answered and feel informed as to your rights, please signify your willingness and consent to be a participating subject in this research by signing your name on the appropriate line below.

_____, Legal Guardian

_____, Adolescent Subject

I, Stephen Mills, am the researcher and am available to you at Shrewsbury High School, 45 Oak Street, Shrewsbury, MA, 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. My university address is:

School of Education
 Division of Instructional Leadership
 Furcolo Hall
 University of Massachusetts
 Amherst, MA 01003

Abstract Describing Use of Human Participants

The basic focus of this proposal is the specific documentation of the life experiences of six angry high school students from their own perspective. The general goal is to come to a comprehensive understanding of these young peoples' feelings and attitudes about themselves, their families and their school experiences so as to better understand school failure. The study will seek to define their aberrant (according to the school) behavior by placing it in the overall context of their lives. The inquiry will be an analysis of the psychodynamic, family and school systems.

The method of inquiry proposed for this study is in-depth case studies of these young people. The case study method, although limited in some ways, is a unique method of gathering crucial information that is extremely relevant to the nature of the study. The method of data collection will involve weekly interviews of forty-five minute duration with each of the adolescents and an occasional meeting with their families. The data collection will continue throughout the duration of the 1983-84 school year.

The enclosed written consent form will be reviewed conjointly by the doctoral student, adolescent and legal guardian. The data collection will not continue unless

they willingly sign the consent form. These families have already verbally agreed to participation in the study. The issue of privacy will be addressed by changing all names in the study.

Through this method, the study will seek to make explicitly clear the reasons and motivations for potential suicide, drug abuse, sexual acting out, the relationship between family experience and school performance and the school's response to these students.

While reviewing the proposed consent form, note that the doctoral student already knows and has an established professional counseling relationship with each of the subjects and their families.

