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PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SCHOOL AND THE HOME.

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A STUDY OF PERCEPTUAL PATTERNS OF

YOUTH-IN-TROUBLE REGARDING PERSONAL

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SCHOOL AND THE HOME

by

Don R Milner

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
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As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read

the dissertation prepared by ___Don R Milner___

entitled ___"A Study of Perceptual Patterns of Youth-in-Trouble Regarding___

___Personal Relationships in the School and the Home"___

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and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement

for the Degree of ___Doctor of Education___ .

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate the following problem:
Among a selected group of secondary school students who are considered to
be youth-in-trouble, what perceptual patterns exist concerning their personal
relationships within the school and the home?

The setting is in a rapidly growing community in the southwestern
United States.

A theoretical framework was selected which emphasized personal
processes. It included the categories of: (1) contact, (2) consult, (3) share,
(4) choose. A search of literature related to the categories of the framework
was conducted.

On the basis of the theoretical framework, a questionnaire was
designed with statements consisting of 16 items reflecting the four categories
of contact, consult, share, and choose and was administered to a sample of
youth who were judged to be youth-in-trouble to probe certain relationships
experienced by youth-in-trouble in the school and in the home.

The data derived from the questionnaire were then organized under
the four categories of the theoretical framework.

According to "The Theory of Personal Processes" used in this
investigation, contact must occur at the outset of any interaction and must

persist throughout the relationship. At a very early point in the interaction, consultation becomes an extension of contact and thereby supplies the means by which the interests of the youths are discovered. These interests constitute the basic ingredient for the interaction.

As the interactive process continues, sharing, a mutual exchange of ideas and interests, is the basis of cooperative effort. Throughout the interactive process, choosing should be at a maximum if there is to be a high degree of freedom and democratic living.

The investigation revealed the following patterns:

1. Contact: The youth-in-trouble reported little effective contact between themselves and their parents.

   The youth-in-trouble reported little effective contact between themselves and their teachers.

2. Consult: The youth-in-trouble reported little effective consultation between themselves and their parents.

   The youth-in-trouble reported little effective consultation between themselves and their teachers.

3. Share: The youth-in-trouble reported little effective sharing between themselves and their parents.

   The youth-in-trouble reported little effective sharing between themselves and their teachers.

4. Choose: The youth-in-trouble reported little effective choosing between themselves and their parents.

   The youth-in-trouble reported little effective choosing between themselves and their teachers.

In light of the above findings, it can be concluded that the youth-in-trouble who were studied in this investigation generally seemed not to perceive themselves as operating in home and school environments of freedom and democratic living.

CHAPTER 1

YOUTH-IN-TROUBLE

Introduction

A continuous and persisting anxiety exists among educators regarding students who seem to have little or no interest in learning that which is expected of them in school (Silberman 1970, pp. 158-199). Such disaffected youths may choose to turn to anti-social behavior which can bring them into difficulty, not only with the school, but with the police and the courts (Katzenbach 1967a, p. 18). In this investigation, such young people were categorized as youth-in trouble.

The investigator, in 1975, conducted a series of interviews with a juvenile judge, several youth counselors, and two probation officers who worked directly with young people herein referred to as youth-in-trouble. These professional youth agents reported that the young persons with whom they worked frequently experienced severely strained personal relationships in the home and in the school. These relationships of youth-in-trouble, as perceived by the professionals, appeared to be negative influences in their lives and tended to thwart them in pursuing many of their fundamental interests and aspirations. This blocking of what could have been vital

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relationships (McIver and Page 1953, pp. 146-147). If, in fact, the webs of personal relationships of youth-in-trouble do not function well for them, it would appear to be a most instructive process to inquire as to how these young people are actually perceiving their situations (Combs 1962, p. 75) and their personal relationships.

Assumptions Underlying the Problem

This study was based upon the following assumptions:

1. The personal relationships of youth-in-trouble have a significant impact on the satisfactory functioning of society and its various institutions.

2. The personal relationships of youth-in-trouble in the home and in the school are frequently, if not always, unsatisfactory to the young people involved.

3. The personal relationships of youth-in-trouble can be perceived and reported by these young people in terms of four categories of personal relationships: contact, consult, share, and choose. These categories constitute a theoretical framework for the investigation.

4. The theoretical framework detailed in number 3 above, can be useful in seeking out, analyzing, and describing the personal relationships of youth-in-trouble.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study was descriptive in nature.

2. The sample was limited to a maximum of 18 selected high school youth who were experiencing some type of difficulty with home, school, police, or other youth serving agency.

3. The study was limited to student perceptions regarding the four categories of the theoretical framework as they related to the actions of the students' parents and teachers.

Definitions of Terms Used

The following definitions applied throughout the investigation:

Perceptions are the reactions of a person to events and environments according to how the person views them at the moment of action (Economic Opportunity Report 1974).

Personal Relationships are a youth's customary interactive experiences in the home and in the school. For purposes of this investigation, this term has been divided into the four categories of the theoretical framework: contact, consult, share, and choose.

Youth-in-trouble is a young person who may have been persistently tardy, absent, or become a dropout from school. Further, he may be delinquent, arrested, or in a state of general anomie. Youth-in-trouble will be used as a generic term to describe such persons in this study.

Research Procedures

The investigation proceeded as follows:

1. A pre-investigation survey of selected professional youth agents was conducted to acquire certain background which might give direction to the investigation. Included in this survey were a juvenile judge, three youth counselors, and four probation officers.

2. Following the pre-investigation, selected literature which seemed to relate to the area of interest was surveyed for relevancy to the pre-investigation data.

3. Based on numbers 1 and 2 above, a statement of the problem was developed.

4. A systematic survey of literature bearing on the investigation problem was conducted. On the basis of this survey, a theoretical framework, involving categories judged to relate to personal processes and including the terms contact, consult, share, and choose, was adopted. This theory, then, re-directed the investigator's attention to the literature for additional background material explicating the various categories of the theory.

5. A questionnaire, based on the categories of the theory, was developed and pilot tested on a group of five young people who were not to be in the sample, but who were in the population from which the sample was drawn. The instrument was modified and refined on the basis of this pilot study. (See Appendix A for questionnaire.)

6. The questionnaire was administered to 18 young people, 9 males and 9 females, randomly selected as the sample from the target population. These students had been consulted previously, as had their parents, and all had assented. The students were given oral instructions as to how the questionnaire was to be filled out, the options the students had available to them if they possessed, or developed, reservations about participating in the sample, etc.

7. The data was collated and analyzed on the basis of the theory of personal processes.

8. Patterns of perception of the student-respondents were sought, identified, and reported, utilizing the theory of personal processes.

9. An investigation summary and recommendations were developed, based on the findings.

The Setting

The setting for this investigation was a rapidly growing inland community of approximately 500,000 people in the southwestern United States. From a demographic standpoint, the greater portion of the population had arrived from many other states in rather recent decades, seeking the benefits of the salubrious climate and the spectacular desert views. Mexican-Americans, native Americans, and Blacks provided a rich blend of minorities to the dominant Anglo society.

Industry in the area was increasingly directed to light, highly technical products and had attracted large numbers of professionals and skilled laborers. Mining had been and continued to be a major industry, while agriculture and tourism broadened the economic base of the area. Senior citizens were attracted as retirees to the city and its suburbs. The community was served by an interstate arterial with railroad and airport facilities providing both passenger and freight service. A major Air Force base also contributed importantly to the economy and the society of the community.

Education occupied an important place in the community. A large land grant university with its associated medical school and a comparably large community college quite adequately provided for the higher education needs of the area. There were several unified school districts on the margins of the community, together with one of the largest public school districts in the state serving the central community population. In this investigation, this school district will be referred to as the Central City School District.

The Central City School District had a student population of over 55,000 students, with approximately 3,000 professional employees including teachers, counselors, administrators, etc. The student population included large numbers of minority students and school desegregation mandates had been a major issue which continued during the period of this study. Of the 98 schools in the district, 10 were high schools, 16 were junior high schools, 68 were elementary schools, and 4 were adaptive education schools.

Summary

The problem for this investigation was identified as being the study of the perceptions of certain young people, referred to as youth-in-trouble, regarding their home and school relationships. A theoretical framework was selected which included the categories of contact, consult, share, and choose. This framework of "personal processes" was used to develop the questionnaire, collect and organize the data, and report the study.

In the next chapter, a review of selected literature relating to the categories of the theoretical framework was presented. Additionally, certain literature concerned with the "web of human relationships" within the home and school were presented.

CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE AND PRESENTATION

OF THE THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

The personal qualities involved in democratic relationships have

received considerable attention, e.g., Franzen (1970), Tidwell (1971),

Gefke (1972), Bishop (1972), Coltrin (1974), and Sterman (1976). Democracy,

as Elliot (1928, p. 1) pointed out, is frequently regarded as a political concep-

tion. In the minds of many people, democracy is thought of exclusively in

terms of a chance to vote for their leaders.

Many people believe that we have now reached a time when it is

possible to move toward a more truly democratic form of participation (Elliot

1928, p. 4). Participation, in the democratic sense of the word, can be an

experience providing each person a full sense of involvement in the ongoing

activity. Involvement, in turn, suggests the establishment of working rela-

tionships, that is, personal relationships, with the other persons engaged in

the shared activity. All too frequently, however, as Sterman (1976, p. 17)

suggested, people may perceive their participation within an ongoing activity

as quite lacking in terms of satisfying any productive personal relationships.

In the case of students in the classroom, when they sense that they are not involved and accepted by the teacher, they tend to perceive the teacher as being non-democratic (Sterman 1976, pp. 15-16). The teacher may intend to behave democratically, but as Brewer and Tidwell (1977, p. 6) noted, democratic intent does not necessarily produce democratic behavior. These writers suggested that democratic relationism must, perforce, be concerned not only with purpose, but also with skill and accomplishment in the interactive process.

The difficulty in achieving democracy has been that more attention is paid to defending it as a philosophy than to developing it as a fully functioning action system in the lives of people (Elliot 1928, p. 1). Democratic methodology, Brewer and Tidwell (1977, p. 16) asserted, is a personal-interpersonal process. The personal relationships that could emerge from such a process have the potential for creating and supporting a democratic milieu.

The problem of being in an authoritarian system, on the other hand, is that most of the members therein find themselves in various degrees of dependency in their personal relationships (Rokeach 1960). This dependency tends to reduce the participants' feelings of personal involvement and can produce symptoms of alienation. Alienation in this entrained reaction, according to Fromm (1955, p. 130), can result in a significant diminution of a person's sense of dignity.

The person who is alienated tends to feel isolated and apart from others. Moustakas and Perry (1973, pp. 34-35) documented the social notion that a person can be lonely even when there are many people around. The classroom often tends to be a place where people fail to notice each other, fail to discuss matters with each other, and fail to share with each other. Such behavior can produce feelings of loneliness, sadness, isolation, self-deflation, etc. In contrast, Sterman (1976, p. 2) asserted that democratic relationships in the classroom tend to create an ambience in which those involved can relate in non-threatening, responsive, and trusting ways. Being democratic, according to Brewer and Tidwell (1977), fosters a feeling in the participants of self-orientation as well as others-orientation.

The personal feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of students in classrooms are frequently neglected (Sterman 1976, p. 19). This is particularly so in the case of the alienated or "turned off" youth. The schools often tend to be full participants in alienating youth and thus moving them in paths leading to trouble. Reich (1971, pp. 143-44) contended that the school is a brutal machine for the destruction of the self.

In 1974, the United States Congress passed a heavily funded juvenile delinquency prevention bill (Katzenbach 1967b, p. 69). Congresswoman Shirley Chisom, during the hearings of that bill, commented that the schools utilize disciplinary techniques which often remove the problem student from the jurisdiction of the school, but this effort seldom corrects the problem. Stoughton (1978, p. 2), in a report for the North Central Association, found

that out of 1,000 students entering as freshmen in Arizona high schools, 367 would not graduate three or four years later.

Attrition within a class of Arizona high school students, according to Stoughton (1978), occurred at each grade level. A multiplex of reasons were advanced for the more than one-third loss of students during the three- to four-year period reported. It is a reasonable assumption, however, that a large number of these dropouts were disaffected youth, many of whom found their way onto the street and into difficulties of one sort or another. Despite the tremendous increase of juvenile delinquency and juvenile-related crimes, stated Newman (1968, p. 69), the schools still seem reticent to take positive action in developing programs and classrooms which are attractive enough to hold these youths.

Perceptions of Youth-in-Trouble

Once a youth is apprehended by the police and referred to the juvenile courts, the community has already failed. Subsequent rehabilitation of the young person has not been especially successful, Newman (1968, p.139) explained. Consistently, across the country, when youths are detained by law enforcement agencies, they are confined in detention centers in which programs for self-development tend to be quite limited and unchallenging. Some exceptions should be noted. In Massachusetts, for example, the shift has been away from confinement toward community-based programs (Katzenbach 1967a). Under one superior court judge in Arizona, community-based

programs were developed (Collins 1975). Even in these community-based
programs, however, it was soon found that formal school training or educa-
tion were almost immediately requested by the youths involved. The typical
response of secondary schools to the dropout problem, and the seeming need
of many youths to have a different type of education, has been to continue
traditional approaches (Abel 1970, p. 81).

The alienation, separation, and general "turned off" lives of youth-
in-trouble leave them with very little or no opportunity to become involved in
planning their own educations. In this regard, Perry and Perry (1976, p. 484)
commented:

> Students, at the bottom of the [school] hierarchy, are the largest
> group in the school . . . structure. . . . They have little choice
> about being in school. . . . Decisions are made for the welfare of
> students. . . . Students have little or no impact on decisions.
> Adults define what is good for students. . . . Students are coerced
> by adults and do as they are told.

As Newman (1968, p. 140) pointed out, educators for years have talked about
delinquency, dropouts, and the "turned off" or alienated youth, but no concer-
ted effort has been made to correct the problem.

The neglect and rejection of the alienated students often give them
unusual perceptions of schools and the people who operate them. Sterman
(1976, p. 14) suggested that the perceptions of each individual have meaning
for that person only. This means, he continued, that no other person will see
a particular situation in the same way. Combs (1962, p. 68-69) explained:

If behavior is a function of personal meaning, then perceptions must become the rest of the teaching-learning situation. If perceptions are the stuff of growth, the basis of intelligent behavior, then personal meanings become the stuff of learning, the material with which we must work. Perceptions must take their place as a vital part of the curriculum, if knowing is to be effective in the lives of students.

If young people are angry with their home situations, and if they distrust their teachers and reject their schools because of their special perceptions, it follows that they will tend to refrain from meaningful participation in these institutions. Hamachek (1971, pp. 32-33), in speaking of the powerful influence which perception has on behavior, stated:

Behavior is not only influenced by the accumulation of our past and current experiences, but even more importantly is influenced by the personal meaning we attach to our perceptions of those experiences . . . our behavior is . . . a function of how we feel about ourselves. . . . Perception . . . refers to the process by which we select, organize, and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and inherent perspective of the world.

The perceptions of students regarding their homes and schools are singularly related to the accumulated experiences and influences in their lives (Schneideman 1945, p. 428). Young girls who ran away from home explained that, for them, their homes were functioning poorly (Stevens and Freeman 1970, p. 57). Perceptions of youth, like anyone else, are selective, noted Kelley (1962). He contended that people take in—perceive—what suits their purposes, goals, and directions. Combs (1962) commented that how any person behaves will be a direct outgrowth of the perceptions existing for him/her at any moment. What a person does, what he learns, is thus a

product of what is going on in his unique and personal world of awareness.

People behave in terms of personal meanings, perceptions, existing for them

at the moment of action.

The Theory of Personal Relationships

A major problem facing people in modern society, stated Brewer

and Tidwell (1977, p. 1) is the scarcity of non-destructive personal relation-

ships. According to Weinstein and Fantini (1970, pp. 21-22), those who

operate the schools are not establishing positive personal relationships and

are not making contact with students. They stated:

> Today's schools are failing to make contact with students because
> they lack intrinsic relevance for many children for four reasons.
> First, there is a failure to match teaching procedures to students'
> learning styles. Another reason for irrelevance is that material
> is used that is poorly related to the students' knowledge of his
> physical realm of experience. A third reason for poor contact is
> that the teaching materials and methods usually ignore the
> learners' feelings. The last reason for poor learning by students
> goes a step further than the level of relevance to ignoring the
> concerns of students.

In the classroom, the manner in which the personal relationships

develop between the teacher and the students and between student and student

tend to be of crucial importance in the learning atmosphere. As Allen et al.

(1970, pp. 25-26) commented:

> We believe that the main influence of the teacher in the classroom
> occurs in his moment-by-moment interaction with students. The
> attitudes of the teacher, and those of his student, flavor every
> relationship between them. The way this interaction develops
> tends to establish limits to the opportunities students have for
> participation, for making choices which appear significant to
> them, and for the thought processes they develop and use.

People, and perhaps especially teachers, often lose sight of the fact that, in spite of the 15 to 45 students in any classroom, learning, and therefore, education, is a one person at a time process. Crary (1969, p. 35) makes this point succinctly:

> Education deals with only one child at a time. The responsibility implied is grave indeed. For the child, if education to any considerable degree is effective, it can truly make or break him. Society often expresses considerable concern for children in general, but society calls no single child by name. The child may be the only one concerned for himself, and this subjectivity unguided may lead to a distorted image of self, and, at worst, to a destruction of self.

It would seem logical, therefore, to tap into the special world of the individual youngster and discover where his learning potential lies.

To gain access to the perception of the selected youth, this writer chose to use a theory entitled "A Theory of Democratic Learning Environments" developed by Barnes and Tidwell (1974). From this theory, four categories were chosen to assist the investigator in organizing and conducting the study. They are: (1) contact; (2) consult; (3) share interests; and (4) choose. In the following, each of these categories is considered in terms of selected background literature. The first of these categories is contact.

Contact

Contact marks the very beginning of an interactive situation. Any personal relationship is initiated and sustained through contact. Sterman (1976, p. 16), in commenting on contact in school settings, suggested that it is the process by which a teacher makes an initial move to form some sort of

relationship with a student. Contact, stated Zunin and Zunin (1972, p. 3) is the way one meets and relates to another person during the initial phase of the interaction. According to Barnes and Tidwell (1974), contact is an initiating action wherein one person greets another. It is, they suggested, the preliminary act of establishing warm, personal relationships. As these personal relationships develop, contact is the sine qua non of the process, permitting the initiator to begin discovering the various characteristics of the other person.

Ginott (1965, p. 68) averred that personal contact, when it is warm and responsive, can avoid the devastating effects of separation. He asserted that social relationships between people tend to stabilize emotions when personal feelings, attitudes, and experiences are the center of concern between people. This, he suggested, is accomplished through maintaining personal contact.

People, explained Fromm (1947, p. 51), are alone and related at the same time. They are alone to make decisions or to judge by using their power of reason. However, he continued, they cannot bear separateness or to be completely unrelated. This social separateness and unrelatedness can be offset by warm, personal contact. Rogers (1969, p. 167), in commenting on contact between people, suggested that each person prefers personal relationships rather than relationships where roles are acted out. The role relationship, he continued, appears as a mask worn by one or both partici-pants so that the real self does not emerge in the interaction.

Personal relationships in the classroom, according to Strauss (1959), consist of the teacher making contact with the students and inviting their participation. This contacting, if conveyed to the student on a personal level, indicates a willingness on the part of the teacher to work together with the young people. Combs (1962, p. 88) explained that teachers who desire to make genuine contact with students should show warmth, awareness, and a regard for each person, accepting each as he is and not as the teacher wants him to be. For Dewey (1947, pp. 257-58), the most productive contact with a person results when the initiator begins with the experiences of the other person and uses these to locate the interests of that person. To discover the experiences of another person leads one quite quickly from the initiatory phase of contact to another phase referred to in this investigation as consult, the second category of the theoretical framework.

Consult

Consulting, according to Barnes and Tidwell (1974), entails extending the person-to-person relationships of contact into areas of inquiry or discovery. The contact with students must always be maintained for maximum effectiveness in personal relationships within the learning process, according to Weinstein and Fantini (1970, p. 10):

> Significant contact with pupils is most effectively established and maintained when the content and method of instruction have an affective basis. That is, if educators are able to discover the feelings, fears, and wishes that move pupils emotionally, they can more effectively engage pupils from any background.

To consult, said Barnes (1977, p. 61), is to show interest in how the other person feels about or sees something. To ignore the individual student's interest in favor of the teacher's aims is an error in thinking. Clark and Kadis (1971, p. 31) suggested:

> We often make the mistake of assessing a student by his progress toward the goal we think he ought to have, or in relation to standards and values we have overtly or covertly set for him. We fail to understand him in terms of the direction towards which his own unique needs, goals, and values are steering him.

For the teacher to be most effective in this inquiry, stated Sterman (1976, p. 19), the student's contribution must be accorded every consideration by the teacher. Woodruff (1946, pp. 118-120) suggested that the process of consultation actually aids in maintaining and extending personal contact with students:

> Immediate contact is made with students as the teacher consults with each person in the classroom.

As Brown (1971, p. 12) explained, teachers should perceive and treat students as feeling, thinking humans. He continued that the personal consultative relationship is the very foundation of learning. Until teachers learn to respond in authentic ways to young people, he asserted, they will continue to repeat over and over the same wasteful, destructive mistakes (Brown 1971, p. 17).

The consultation process is a particularly important behavior in the interactive process at the point where the teacher feels the necessity to locate and achieve certain direction for the learning process. Silberman

(1970, p. 337) perceived that when teachers develop arbitrary rules and

regulations the students tend to view these actions as signs of excessive

power which ignore their lives and personal interests. Kelley (1962a, p. 17)

pointed out that a democratic classroom assists students in discovering their

interests and makes the learning situation more productive for them. Such

discovery of student interests can be greatly facilitated through careful and

patient consultation by the teacher.

Postman and Weingartner (1969), in reporting on a school where

teacher consultation and trust of students existed, suggested that when

students were treated as equals the teacher will be found to have confidence

in the students' abilities to judge for themselves what experiences are

valuable to them. They commented:

> The students did a great deal of writing and talking . . . they . . .
> asked many questions of an intensely personal nature. And they
> came every day. Not because they were required to come, but
> because they felt that what was happening had something to do
> with them. . . . The "subject" . . . concerned their perceptions
> of the world, and their attempts to communicate with that world.
> For this reason, each session was intensely interesting. . . . The
> instructor never had occasion to say, "Today we will discuss
> . . ." The students always knew what they were to discuss
> because, in a sense, the discussion of the previous lesson had
> not ended (Postman and Weingartner 1969, pp. 177-78).

McMurrin (1954, p. 13) reinforced this position when he stated:

> Consulting, a part of the identity process, is built upon the
> assumption that each person is capable of relevant comment and
> action, and that his existence is of primary worth.

Developing personal contact throughout any particular interaction

of teacher and student and employing consultation to locate the special inner

world of the student has the potential for setting the stage for cooperative,
shared learning. As Dewey (1971, p. 67) commented:

> There is . . . no point . . . which is sounder than its emphasis
> upon the importance of the participation of the learner in the
> formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learn-
> ing process, just as there is no defect in traditional education
> greater than its failure to secure the active cooperation of the
> pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying.

The active participation and cooperation of the learner alluded to
above by Dewey calls forth action on the part of the teacher designated as
share in this investigation, the third category of the theoretical framework.

Share

Students are anxious to be in classrooms organized in such a way
that they can pursue and share their interests according to Sterman (1976,
p. 24) Share, Barnes and Tidwell (1974, p. 6) stated, marks the beginning of
cooperative activity—where each person contributes, receives, and learns.
According to these writers, when personal contact and consultation are funda-
mental ingredients of relationships in the home and school, the persons tend
to share more with each other.

To do important things together, to share, was emphasized by
Dale (1972, p. 49):

> That knowledge is of most worth which enhances the mutuality of
> human beings and develops a sense of community, the doing of
> important things together. Why not make it a regular part of the
> instructional program of the school? We have all discovered that
> we learn something well when we try to teach it to someone else.
> Further, why do we assume that we must bring outside resource
> persons in? We fail to realize that the rich experiences of students
> are first-hand, easily available resources of learning.

Ginott (1965, pp. 39-40) suggested that, in social relationships, feelings, emotions, attitudes, and perceptions are basic qualities of a person's being. To converse or work with a person, it is imperative, he said, to share these emotions. Additionally, he contended, it is important for persons to know their emotions and engage in an understanding of them. It is an adequate basis for sharing each other's experiences and lives. When students share interests, said Sterman (1976, p. 24), they will respond with a positive attitude toward school, society, and learning. Corey (1973, pp. 34-35) explained: "What I am advocating is a degree of genuine freedom for the learner where he becomes a partner in his learning journey."

Rogers (1961, p. 123) pointed out that teachers, rather than attempting to share common interests, frequently will exclude students by focusing on their interests. To bring the learning process to life and make it a lively, absorbing process is the aim of shared experiences according to Dewey (1966, p. 8):

> Sharing in actual pursuit, whether directly or vicariously . . . is at least personal and vital. . . . Formal instruction, on the contrary, easily becomes remote and dead—abstract and bookish.

Reich (1971, p. 9) concurred with Dewey when he stated that beginning with school, ". . . an individual is systematically stripped of his imagination, his creativity . . . his dreams and his personal uniqueness in order to fit himself into a productive unit."

Shared experiences tend to diminish individual isolation and broaden areas of mutual concerns in a process of democratic interaction.

According to Dewey (1947, p. 101):

> In democratic processes, isolation tends to be avoided. Isolation makes for rigid and formal institutions often accompanied by static and selfish concerns within a group. Democracy not only seeks to avoid isolation and exclusivity, but also broadens the shared concerns of individuals and groups.

Dewey (1947, p. 101) further strengthened the case for shared interests and activities as he discussed the nature of democracy:

> A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension of space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity.

Teachers can choose to change and commit themselves to more humane, democratic ways of behaving, stated Romey (1972, p. 247):

> Some people suggest that it costs more money and takes more people to create a free and humane environment for learning. I have seen enough teachers simply change the way that they do things to know that this is just another cop-out. The statement shows unwillingness to take responsibility and indicates that the person who makes it is not really interested in change or, more likely, that he fears it. The most important change costs little money but much commitment.

Fromm (1968, p. 115) spoke of choosing to change education so that it will:

> . . . relate itself to the living tradition, not simply by accepting it but by digesting it, by being in touch with it, and by creatively changing it.

The fourth category of the framework, following contact, consult, and share, is choose.

Choose

To make a choice, a person selects out an option from two, several, or many options. In a social situation, to be able to choose tends to create productive human relationships within the group. Hazel Barnes (1959, p. 43) maintained that choicing is at the base of every human action. Wesley Barnes (1968) contended that each person's choicing quality appears to be an expression of a sense of freedom. Dewey noted that choice involves preferences:

> Intelligent choice is still choice. It still involves preference for
> one kind of end rather than another one which might have been
> worked for. It involves a conviction that such and such an end is
> valuable, worthwhile, rather than another (Winn 1959, p. 11).

When, said Grattan (1930, p. 19) discrimination is made consciously in view of the probable future consequences of each of the possible ways of reacting to the situation, we call the act a choice.

The matter of being able to exercise choice drives directly to the core of a person's freedom. Chaitanya (1978, p. 350) spoke to this when he stated:

> The extent of freedom is measured by the range of alternatives
> from among which a choice can be made. The range by itself does
> not guarantee that the freedom will be used by man for his self-
> actualisation [sic] and moral growth, for he may make the wrong
> choices. But the possibility of choice is the first condition for
> any meaningful analysis of the concept of freedom and the possi-
> bility of its exercise in any given situation.

It would seem quite reasonable, therefore, for young citizens in a free society to experience and learn the importance of wise choicing, of practicing the decision-making process under many different circumstances. As Butts (1961, p. 123) emphasized when he said, "This makes particularly important the kind of education that will enable a person to make desirable decisions for himself," there is an obvious need for young persons to learn that they do have choices in their lives and that they are capable decision-makers regarding these choices.

It is not usual that schools emphasize the matter of personal choice in terms of what, how, when, and where students will learn. Although personal choice is at the heart of democratic conduct, students seem not to have many opportunities for its practice. Perry and Perry (1976, p. 484) commented on this, as follows:

> Students have little choice about being in the school until the age of sixteen, an age set by adults. Although students are the reason for the school's existence, and all decisions are officially made for the benefit and welfare of students, students have little or no impact on these decisions. Adults define what is good for the students, and adults do not happen to believe that what is good for students is necessarily what students want to do. A democratic society has an obligation to treat all its members with respect, and to consider its demands.

A sense of freedom, explained Fromm (1947, p. 248) is an inner quality of being in each human. Using this sense of freedom maintains productivity, he continued. Hazel Barnes (1959) maintained that the inner sense of freedom is the characteristic that establishes choice as an appropriate behavior prior to every human action. Each person is free at any time

to make a new choice for himself, to choose a fresh way of living out his existence. Each human, alone, determines the values by which he lives; he is not endowed with a ready-made self, but is constantly making himself through choice (Barnes 1959, p. 42). Choice is involved in all productivity among humans.

Personal interests logically have a quite direct bearing on the process of choosing. Dewey (1947, pp. 407-409) discussed this point at some length. He suggested that, when:

> . . . one makes a choice, one does so because of the desired results of that choice. There are no selfless choices without self-interest. One cannot make a choice without having one's self as the primary factor in making that choice.

As Dewey indicated, a doctor might treat people in the midst of a plague with no concern for his own safety. However, he does so because he prefers maintaining the efficient performance of his profession over his personal safety. Dewey continued:

> A man's interest in keeping at his work in spite of danger to life means that his self is found in that work; if he finally gave up and preferred his personal safety or comfort, it would mean that he preferred to be that kind of a self. The moment we recognize that the self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action, the whole situation clears up (Dewey 1947, p. 408).

Although students and teachers have come to regard the directions, orders, and assignments given by the teacher as being quite normal, this does not necessarily mean that they accept the implicit constraints and welcome the directions as their own. Kilpatrick (1925, p. 349) formulated it thus:

With young people it is only in slight degree that problems can be assigned. Assigned problems as a rule remain teacher's problems; they do not thereby become pupil's problems. Purpose cannot be assigned.

Barnes (1977, pp. 71-72) contended that to be able to choose, to select from as wide a range of choices as possible, is extremely important to each person. He explained that, when one uses the term democracy in learning, there is the suggestion that every person should have the greatest amount of choice possible in what he learns and how he wants to learn, that the matter of choosing is at the very heart of democracy and that the school-room is an excellent place for young people to experience it continuously.

The home also figures prominently in any young person's web of personal relationships. It has traditionally been regarded as a major agent of socialization of youth, as Talcott Parsons (1965, p. 44) stated:

> In socialization, the family is above all the agency for establishing cathexes and identification, for integration into the series of social systems in which the child will function as an adult. Above all, perhaps, it is the primary agency for developing his/her capacity to integrate with others, to trust and be trusted, to exercise influence, and to accept legitimate influence.

A somewhat less sanguine view of the impress of the family on the young was supplied by Laing (1967, p. 35) in the following:

> The family's function is to induce a false consciousness of security; to deny death by avoiding life; to cut off transcendence; to believe in God; not to experience the void; to create, in short, one-dimensional man; to promote respect, conformity, obedience, to con children out of play; to induce a fear of failure; to promote respect for work; to promote a respect for "respectability."

Young people, it is certain, do require the support of their families, but if this web of supportive relationships is perceived by the teenager as help which poses the threat of loss of autonomy, it is quite apt to be disliked, and even rejected. Ginott commented on this as follows:

> They strive to appear grownup, independent, and self-sufficient. They need to find their way without parental objection. They are like a person needing a loan, but wishing to be financially independent. Regardless of how accommodating the parental bank may be, the interest will be resented by the teenage borrower. Help is perceived as interference . . . autonomy, though feared, is valued above all (Ginott 1969, pp. 19-20).

Schneideman (1945, p. 428) perceived the home as being either a powerful force of satisfaction and productivity for the young people who are positioned in the family's web of personal relationships, or, on the other hand, a non-contributor to their well-being:

> The home represents the social, healthful, spiritual, cultural, and educational facilities which influence the child. These can be a force for tremendous good or they can mean next to nothing to its members.

In terms of warm and productive relationships required by young people to prosper, Perry and Perry (1976, pp. 375-76) raised doubts as to the efficacy of the family. They contended that communally reared children tend to have much lower rates of emotional disturbances and more responsive relations with their parents than do children growing up with traditional families. They averred, however, that: "It is doubtful that any human being can isolate himself completely from a primary group . . . in order to enjoy total freedom."

In considering the typical home and its social environment,

Schneideman (1945, p. 434) remarked:

> Genuine democracy does not exist in the average home any more
> than it does in the average school.

She continued that this lack of democracy resulted in serious and deleterious

results for the young people—and their parents. She further stated:

> The consequences [of undemocratic behavior] to both adult and
> child are detrimental mentally and morally. A member of any
> group who is commanded in every act loses on two counts: he
> loses the ability to think for himself, and hence to profit by
> whatever foolish act he commits, and he also loses dignity
> (Schneideman 1945, p. 434).

Parent-adolescent conflict in American society may be exacerbated

by a series of cultural developments which Cervantes (1966, pp. 140-141)

detailed as follows:

> (1) the rate of social change which, from the viewpoint of the
> teenagers, seems to divide the universe into two worlds—those
> who grew up in the pre-atomic age with Dad, Mom, Moses and
> Methuselah, and those who as modern youth have grown up in
> the postatomic age; (2) the adolescent peer group which, from
> the viewpoint of the parents, is liable to lead their child into
> trouble with the law, the school, with sex; (3) parental authority
> which, in trying to guide the youth's tomorrows with the maps
> of yesterday, brings restiveness and resentment; (4) smaller
> families with intensified emotional burdens which heighten oedipal
> antagonism, feelings of rejection, sibling rivalry, alleged
> parental favoritism, and generalized hostility; (5) conflict of
> parental and commercialized youth cultures; (6) parental
> delinquency (divorce, desertion, alcoholism, etc.).

The young people of today are subjected to a number of unusually

stressful circumstances. Stevens and Freeman (1970, p. 22) took note of

this situation when they observed:

> The children of our time have more material advantages than
> children of previous generations, but because of the age of
> anxiety in which we live they seem to get less understanding
> and attention from parents, or the wrong kind of attention.

The writers continued, discussing the home environment and the deteriorated

personal relationships which some young people experience with their parents:

> Often nobody is at home to listen. Or, when parents are at
> home, they are too busy with their own lives to really listen.
> I have seen such parents in my office—the mother who will
> not stop crying, the father who will not stop talking, as they
> complain about their drug-ridden child. As I try to get a word
> in, I realize what the child is up against at home. The mother's
> tears make him feel guilty, the father does not talk to him but
> at him in a preachy way.
>
> My heart goes out to these youngsters as they stream into my
> office, one after the other and lay bare their innermost thoughts.
> Often they are relieved just to be able to talk to somebody,
> anybody, about what they feel (Stevens and Freeman 1970, p. 22).

Summary

In this chapter, selected literature concerning youth-in-trouble was

presented. This was followed by the introduction of what was termed a theory

of personal relationships which included the following four categories:

(1) contact, (2) consult, (3) share, and (4) choose. Certain literature related

to each of these terms was presented. Emphasis in dealing with these terms

was placed on the school environment and the relationships of teachers and

students. The final topic concerned literature bearing on personal relation-

ships in the home.

In the next chapter, data derived from the questionnaire employed in this investigation is presented and considered in relation to the theory and background concepts presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3

PRESENTATION OF DATA

In this chapter, selected data concerning the home and school per-
ceptions of youth-in-trouble were presented and examined. The data was
derived from questionnaires which had been administered to the sample of
youth-in-trouble and were presented under one of the four following headings:
(1) contact, (2) consult, (3) share, and (4) choose.

The data presented in this chapter were ordered in the following
manner. First, one of the sixteen questionnaire Statements was given,
followed by the Likert-type scale. This scale provided for five degrees of
response to each Statement, and these five degrees were assigned symbols
and weightings as follows: SD, Strongly Disagree (-2); D, Disagree (-1);
U, Uncertain (0); A, Agree (+1); and SA, Strongly Agree (+2). A composite
score, derived from the arithmetic average of the eighteen responses to any
one Statement, was computed and indicated on the scale with a small
triangle (▼). A short paragraph summarizing the responses to the State-
ment followed the scaled response.

Following the presentation of the scaled response and its summary
for a Statement, a series of comments by the sample of youth-in-trouble was

presented regarding their feelings concerning the Statement. This, in turn, was followed by a paragraph in which the comments were briefly examined.

Contact

Statement #1

> I see my parents as especially interested in establishing close
> personal relationships with me.


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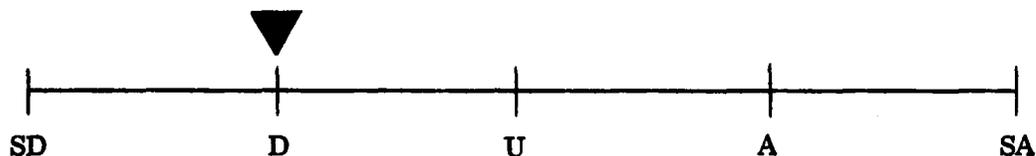
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed their parents as being interested in establishing close personal relationships with them. A majority of the youths indicated that parents made little personal contact with them. One youth (6%) reported that this had happened. Four youths (23%) were uncertain, and thirteen (72%) indicated that it had not occurred.

Presentation of Comments

> My mom is really a great person. She's so busy, though. She
> has two jobs and has a lot on her mind all the time. She supports
> the family.

> I like my mother, but we can't get close. It's hard. She's lived
> on the street, has been on the move, but has stayed in touch with
> me. She lives her life in a way, well, like I can't get close, O.K.?

They never stay in touch with me. I see my mother just before I
go to bed. I go to school and then I go to work. I'd like to be
close to them, but it will never happen. I just "hang out" at home.

The only time my parents are interested in me is if I conform to
their way of thinking. They know that I cannot and they haven't
changed.

Oh, wow! Mom tries, but she can't do nothin'. I'm on my own.
I just stay on the street most of the time when I'm not working.

My folks intend to stay in touch with me, but it never really
happened. It would be nice . . .

Well, my mother is interested in the wrong things. My father,
well, sometimes he's too close, like the time I ran away and then
came back.

I've lived with my grandmother for a long time. She really tries
to understand. My mother, well! My Dad, man, he doesn't care.
I haven't heard from them in years.

My old man's a drunk. He doesn't care. He can't help it. My
mother, I don't know how she lives there.

I haven't seen them for two years.

I never see my mother. I've been in, well, you know, in a lot of
homes. I really don't know my mother and I ain't seen my father.
He's been in and out of jail.

Examination of Comments

The comments on parent contact with youth-in-trouble ranged from

three youths who perceived their parents as trying to be in contact with them

to a number who saw their parents as making no effort at contact. Some of

the comments indicated outright parental rejection and abandonment. Certain

of the comments suggested an air of wistful desire that the parents would make

an effort at contact. Not one of the comments clearly indicated that a parent or parents were in effective contact with their children, as seen through the child's eyes.

Statement #2

> I see my teachers as especially interested in establishing close personal relationships with me.


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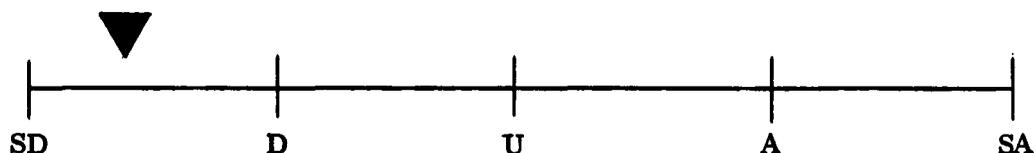
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed their teachers as persons who established close personal relationships with them. The youths reported that their teachers, in the main, did not establish personal contact with them. One youth (6%) indicated that there were some personal relationships established, three youths (17%) were uncertain, and fourteen (78%) strongly agreed that their teachers had made no contact with them.

Presentation of Comments

> I liked all my teachers, but I didn't pass any courses. No, they never knew any of my thoughts or ideas.

> Yeah, my art teacher was the only one who helped me. He talked to me and I felt that we were close.

> I had only one high school teacher who was O.K. We talked a lot about my dropping out of school. I think she liked me.

I missed too much school. I can't really say whether any teachers liked me or not.

I guess my teachers were O.K., but they didn't even know I was there.

Not one of my teachers ever got to know me. Never! Not once. It's unbelievable. They never ask you about how you're doing, how you feel.

Nobody paid any attention to my ideas. They didn't seem to care if I existed. They kicked me out just about every week.

I didn't want any teachers getting close to me. I hated them! They never did anything for me.

I got kicked out of school. I had a real bad time. No one ever stopped to talk to me about anything.

The teachers tell you to leave them alone and get back to work. You're treated as if you didn't belong there.

Examination of Comments

The comments on teacher contact with youth-in-trouble ranged from some slight contact to none at all. Certain of the comments indicated surprise and consternation as the youths reflected back on their past contacts, or rather, lack of contacts with their teachers. For one youth, not only were teachers perceived as not making contact, but the youth reported actual hatred for them. The pattern of the comments as reported, tended to indicate that the vast majority of the teachers experienced by these youths failed to get in touch with the personal lives of the youths. In some few cases, the youths reported that the teachers seemed unaware of their presence in the classroom.

Statement #3

> I see my parents as persons interested in staying in touch with
> me about things that concern them and me.

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|————————|————————|————————|————————|
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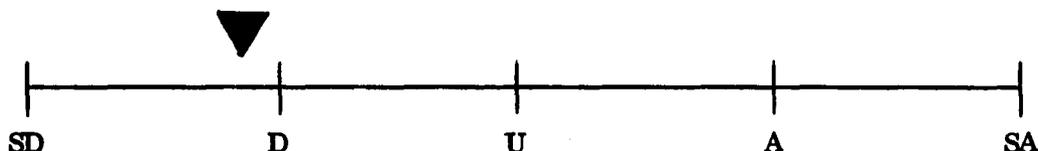
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed their parents as persons interested in staying in touch with them about their personal concerns. A majority of the youths indicated that their parents did little to stay in touch with their personal concerns. Two-thirds (67%) of the youths said that their parents definitely were not concerned about their interests, concerns, and aspirations. Four youths (23%) indicated that their parents did seem to be interested in matters of personal concern to the youths, while 2 youths (11%) indicated uncertainty about their parents' interest in their concerns.

Presentation of Comments

> My mother and I are very close. Sometimes she's almost too close.

> Now, I'm really close to my mother, but when the state had me in jail, I, well, I never saw her then.

> Yeah, even though I've been living away from home I stay in touch with Mom. I'm not sure if she's concerned about me. She's too busy with her new boyfriend. My boyfriend does more, is more concerned about me than my mother.

My parents will keep in touch me me about their concerns
without ever having time to listen to my concerns. It is always
so one-sided.

I have never felt very much concern or interest from my parents.
They have very selfish attitudes. Their "life traumas" seem
much more important to them than mine.

For two years I've been away from home. If anyone tried to get
in touch, I didn't know about it. I've been traveling. I don't
stay in touch.

I ain't seen my parents for years. I stay with my grandmother,
but she's too old. She tries, but she's too sick to handle it.

My mother? I don't let her get too close. She's concerned, but,
you know, not with the things I do, the things on the street.

My folks live in Pennsylvania. They can't be too concerned. I
try to stay in touch, but lots of times they don't know where I
am. The only people concerned about me are two boys who are
friends of mine.

My father, boy, he's so drunk he can't ever know what I do. I
stay close with my mother. What I mean is, I stay close some-
times. Really, my home is a terrible mess.

That's funny! My mother kicked me out for using her fingernail
polish.

Examination of Comments

The comments regarding parent interest in the personal concerns of

the youths indicated that only two sets of parents made any slight move to show

concern for their childrens' interests. The balance of the comments indicated

no interest in this whatsoever. The comments of the youths provided a general

indication that the question was not too meaningful to them since the parents

tended to ignore the youths' concerns. Four comments indicated that the

youths were living away from home and that this separation foreclosed any

communication from the parents concerning anything.

Statement #4

> I see my teachers as persons interested in staying in touch with
> me about things that concern them and ·me.

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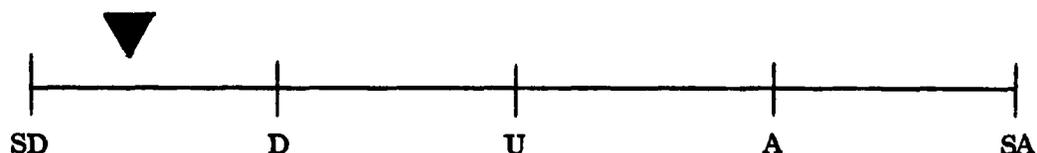
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-

trouble saw their teachers as being interested in their personal concerns.

None (0%) indicated that they saw their teachers as being interested in the

personal concerns of these youths. One (6%) indicated some uncertainty.

However, seventeen (94%) clearly indicated that teachers had no interest in

their personal concerns.

Presentation of Comments

> That's a funny question. Teachers, well, the regular ones, they
> don't stay in touch much at all.

> I've had only one teacher who knew me when I was out of school.
> They don't like kids that ditch.

> That's a strange question. In my regular high school they never
> did. I should say that I'm pretty hard to stay in touch with, though.

Teachers look at me as another face they've seen before, but they
never remember my name.

Naw, most of the time the teachers didn't know I was there.

I see my teachers around town. They don't even know me.

You crazy? Your head trippin'? No teacher ever stayed in touch
with me. Boy, they kicked me out. I was gone and they were glad.

I don't think I would like to have teachers staying in touch with me.

Examination of Comments

The comments regarding teacher interest in the personal concerns
of the youths indicated a near total lack of concern in the eyes of the youths.
In the main, the youths reported no interest at all on the part of teachers con-
cerning this attitude. One youth was somewhat uncertain about the question.
Another indicated that teachers should not stay in touch. Several pointed out
that the teachers had no idea who they were. Most of the youths said they felt
the teachers were completely disinterested in their concerns or, in fact, in
them as people.

Consult

Statement #5

I see my parents as persons who never check with me in making
plans about my life.

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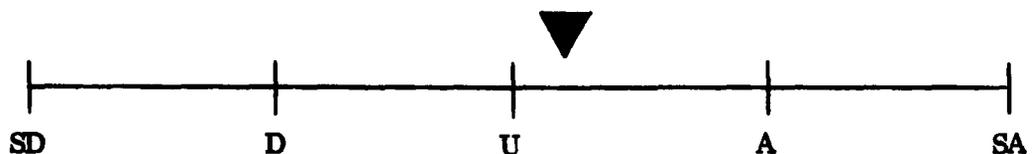
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed their parents as persons who checked with them concerning their life plans. One-half (50%) of the youths indicated that their parents did not check with them regarding their life plans. Five (28%) stated they were uncertain, while four (23%) reported that their parents did check with them about their life plans.

Presentation of Comments

About my mother, we talk a lot. She would never do anything without checking with me, especially if it's about my life. We really don't run each other's lives, though.

My folks wouldn't do something without checking with me.

Mom checks with me. It don't do any good, though. I do what I want anyway. I guess that's why I get into trouble.

They skip me all the time. I don't really do what they tell me to, but, yeah, they plan without checking with me.

These are hard questions. I ain't seen my folks in years and, well, my grandma, she's sick.

We talk with each other once in a while, but we run our own lives.

The reason I left home was, well, they planned my life without asking me. I left home the first time at 12. My mother and father don't get along too well.

My mother, heck, she sold my cat. She never checked with me. She just sold it.

I never see them. There's no chance for them to ask me anything.

Examination of Comments

The comments regarding parents checking concerning the life plans of the youths was mixed. Several youths said that their parents would always check if it pertained to their life plans. Several more youths indicated that their parents checked, but that they really ran their own lives. One youth indicated a strong feeling that the parents never checked, while another said that the parents were never seen. One youth reported leaving home because the parents were too involved in planning the young person's life.

Statement #6

I see my teachers as persons who never check with me in making plans about my life.
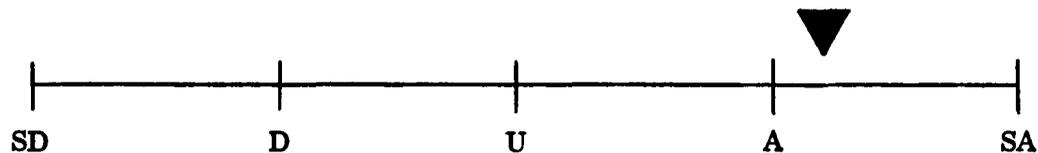
SD	D	U	A	SA

The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed their teachers as persons who checked with them concerning their life plans. Sixteen (89%) youths said teachers never checked with them concerning their life plans. Only two (11%) said that teachers inquired as to plans about the youths' lives.

Presentation of Comments

Sometimes teachers check, but not very often.

Teachers check a little, but not much. They're too busy. They work with the other kids mostly.

Teachers discussed what we were going to do with the whole class, but I felt they did so because they were required to talk about it.

Well, you're right. The teachers I've had just give assignments. They run the class and never check with us about it.

They've never checked with me. Teachers don't know about your life.

They've never asked me about anything. That's really stupid. Teachers don't care.

Yeah, that's right, never. Most of 'em don't even know you've been kicked out.

They ain't never checked with me, and it's not gonna happen, no way. I don't want that.

You're funny. Teachers don't give a darn, not at all.

Hey, never. I don't want that. I hate 'em. I don't want them messing around in my life.

Examination of Comments

The comments regarding teachers checking about youths' personal life plans clearly indicated that the teachers were seen as having failed to behave thusly. Seven youths' comments indicated that the teachers never checked with them. One youth hesitantly commented that the teachers checked to some degree, but explained that they were really too busy. Another youth stated that teachers simply did not know about the youths' lives. Two youths indicated that they did not care to have teachers know about their personal plans.

Statement #7

I see my parents as persons who consider my ideas as important as theirs and constantly ask for my ideas when they are planning.

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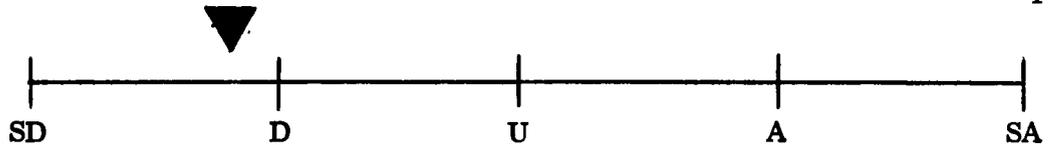
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed their parents as persons who considered the youths' ideas equally as important as theirs, and who used their ideas in planning. Sixteen (89%) of the youths indicated that their parents did not see their ideas as equal. One (6%) said the parents asked for the youths' ideas, but was unsure about whether the parents used the idea in planning. One (6%) was not sure whether the parents considered the youth's ideas as equal.

Presentation of Comments

About my folks, we're close. We plan everything together.

Planning with my parents consisted of me listening to what they intended for me to do.

Naw, well, I don't talk to her about things. She's too busy.

It would worry my grandmother to talk about things with me. I plan the groceries and some other stuff, but not much.

The only time my parents ask me is when they are nosy. They don't include me in any planning.

Never—I'd never want my mother and father to plan with me. Never!

No, my mother doesn't ask me. Sometimes I need her when I get in trouble with the law. I'm on probation. When I'm on probation, I need her.

I haven't seen my parents for a long while. When I lived with them, their ideas were always the most important.

My parents and I talk about each other's ideas, but my ideas are not as important as their ideas. I don't see 'em too often.

> There's no one equal to my parents. They know everything. I
> don't count at all!

Examination of Comments

The comments regarding parents as persons who consider their childrens' ideas as important as theirs and sought the youths' ideas in planning, clearly indicated perceptions of low parent estimates in this area. Sixteen of the youths noted lack of parent action in this. One youth said the parents planned while the youth listened. Another explained that the parent was too busy. One youth indicated no interest in having the parents involved in planning. One youth talked about the fact that the parents and the youth planned everything together. Still another youth exclaimed that the parents know everything and that no one was equal to them. On the importance of ideas, a youth viewed the parents as being interested, but the youth's ideas were not as important as the parents'. Overall, the youths' statements gave the impression that the parents not only did not consider the youths' ideas as important as their own, but seldom used them in planning.

Statement #8

> I see my teachers as persons who consider my ideas as important
> as theirs and constantly ask for my ideas when they are planning.

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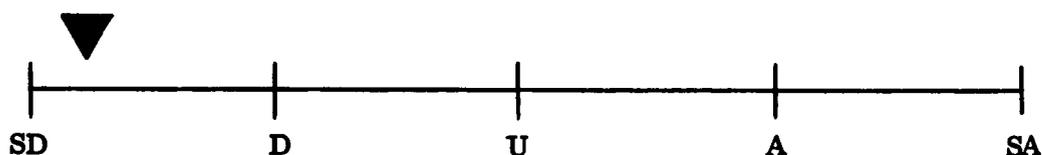
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed their teachers as persons who consider youths' ideas as important as theirs, and whether the teachers ask about their ideas in planning. Seventeen (94%) of the youths indicated a feeling that the teacher did not consider their ideas as important as the teacher's, nor did the teachers use their ideas in planning. Only one (6%) of the youths was uncertain about this matter.

Presentation of Comments

A few teachers did. What used to bother me was that they didn't treat you like a real person.

Oh, sometimes, but you know teachers, they're the boss. They don't think students know anything. No, they don't really ask for your ideas . . . sometimes, maybe. Maybe to make you feel good.

I don't think so. Not now, never.

I can't remember one teacher who asked me about my ideas. Sometimes they would ask, but you always felt they were looking down on you.

There's a difference in teachers. Most of them don't ask anything except embarrassing questions and give tests.

Whenever I try to have an ordinary conversation with a teacher, the teacher thinks that I'm trying to "butter him up" for a better grade.

It was teachers that made me quit school. No, they don't like me or my ideas.

Never, they never ask . . . no, never.

No, never.

Examination of Comments

The comments regarding teachers as persons who consider youths' ideas as important as theirs, and ask for youths' ideas to use in planning were clearly in disagreement with the statement. Three youths said never, while others explained that the teacher is boss and usually doesn't ask for their ideas. One youth had a slight conflict when explaining that even when teachers asked, they were looking down on you. Another youth indicated that teachers contributed to the youth quitting school. Some of the youths felt that teachers had ulterior motives when the teachers asked for youths' ideas. Not one of them stated that the teachers considered the youths' ideas as important as theirs.

<u>Share</u>

Statement #9

I see my parents as persons who work with me on activities that interest me as well as them.

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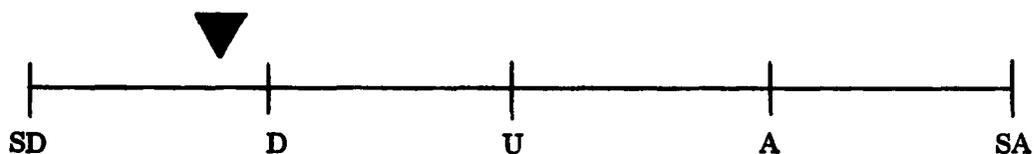
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed their parents as persons who work with them on activities that interest the youth as well as the parents. Only one (6%) youth stated that

parents shared an interest with the youth. Sixteen (89%) indicated that there
was little or no parent interest in such activity. One (6%) youth indicated
uncertainty concerning this matter.

Presentation of Comments

Almost daily we work on things together.

Yeah, I think so, but my mother never knows what my interests
are. I sure don't share or know hers.

I'm living alone, but if I can, she and I have lunch together.

Never, I don't do anything that interests them. All they do is
boss me. Once in a while my mother is O.K.

Since I moved in with her, my mother does things for me. She
works hard.

For a long time that was the way it was. After I ran away it
changed. We do nothing now. My father is thinking of moving
out.

I'm not sure what you mean. We don't know what each other's
interests are.

No, they just got their divorce. They weren't interested in me.

No, I said it before. I don't see my parents. My grandmother
hardly knows anything about me. She's too old.

We live too far apart.

Examination of Comments

The comments regarding parents as persons working on common
activities with youth showed considerable variation. In general, the youths
indicated that parents do not work with them in common activities. Only one
youth stated that parent and youth worked together regularly. One youth

indicated that they worked together, but then suggested that they have no common interests or activities. Another youth said that in shared activities, the parents boss all the time, while another explained that during a divorce, the parents had no interest in the youth. Several of the youths lived away from their parents, hence they could have no shared activities. Still another youth could not seem to grasp the question, since the youth and the parents did not know each other's interests. One youth explained that they worked on activities together before the youth ran away, but upon returning, all of the common activities stopped.

Statement #10

I see my teachers as persons who work with me on activities that interest me as well as them.

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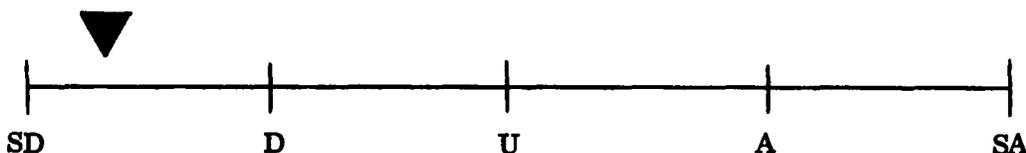
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed teachers as persons who work with youth on activities of common interest. Eighteen (100%) of the youths said the teachers shared no activities with them. One youth said it had happened once in his experience, but never again.

Presentation of Comments

For one assignment when I was a sophomore, my English teacher really worked with me. I thought I wanted to write. She liked my writing, and I did a lot of it. It was one of the best things I did.

In high school? Yes, I had a math teacher who really worked with me, but I really didn't like my P.E. teacher. I hate to run because I was bad at it. I was really bad. He made me do laps all the time.

Once in a while they did things with me, but not often.

I don't ever remember that happening.

I wasn't in school very much.

In high school? Not at all.

Well, it didn't happen.

They never worked with me. I didn't want them to know what my activities were. They're too nosy.

No, I don't think so.

Examination of Comments

The comments on teacher sharing common activities with youth-in-trouble was viewed by the youths as not occurring. Two (11%) had mixed feelings. This was indicated when the youths stated that it happened once in a while. Another youth said it occurred once on an English assignment. The remainder of the youths clearly indicated that sharing common activities never occurred. One youth stated that it never happened. Another explained that teachers were already too nosy. One explained that distasteful activities had been forced upon the youth.

Statement #11

I see my parents as persons who use my plans.
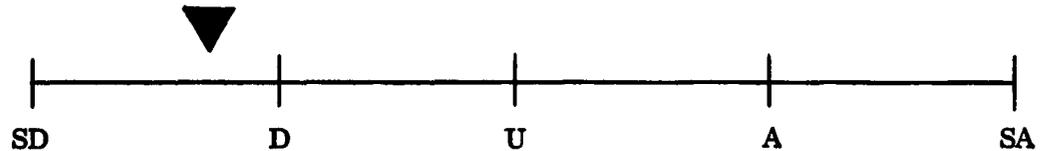
The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed their parents as persons who use the youths' plans. Two (11%) of the youths indicated that their parents used their plans in making certain decisions. However, sixteen (89%) stated that parents were not only unwilling, but resisted the idea of using the youths' plans.

Presentation of Comments

Yes, especially when it's about my life. Since I returned from Texas this has happened more. Before that, well, not very often. I guess that's part of the reason I ran away.

When I was little I used to live with my parents, and we planned together a lot. Now, well, I don't live with them.

No, they never even knew my plans. I'd never tell them.

They give you plans without checking with you. Well, that's not right. I don't see them, and my grandmother never knows what I do.

No, I don't think my parents, my mother, needs to see my plans. We're close, but not for that.

My parents have "tunnel vision." If I have anything to say, I'm immediately a "know-it-all."

No, not at all. They never listen to me.

I, well, kind of run my own life. My mother runs hers.

Only when I'm working around her [mother's] house. She doesn't know what I do.

I wouldn't let them know my plans, no way. If I told them my plans they would freak out.

Examination of Comments

The comments on parents as persons who use youths' plans indicate clearly that youth do not perceive this as happening. One youth said that parents never listen. Another indicated that the parents use the youth's plans when they concern the youth's life. Several youths do not live with their parents, hence the use of their plans could not occur. Still another youth stated that the parents run their lives and the youth does the same. A shift in parental behavior was noted when a youth stated that the parents used the youth's plans at an earlier age in life, but had not done so since the youth was in high school. Frequently it was indicated that, as the home situation changed, the parents' use of the youth's plans changed. One youth, for instance, explained that prior to moving away, parents did not use the youth's plans, but upon returning, that changed.

Statement #12

I see my teachers as persons who use my plans.
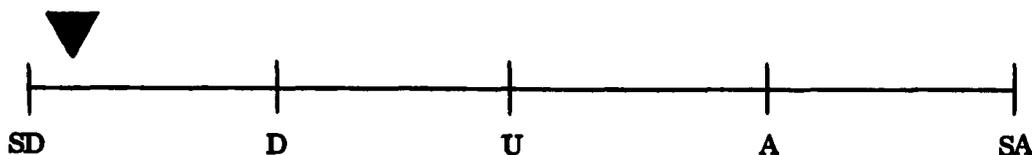
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The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed teachers as persons who use their plans. All eighteen (100%) of the youths rejected the statement. There was only part of one comment that indicated any variation from this pattern.

Presentation of Comments

Well, when I was in elementary school, I think it was when I was in 4th grade, we planned together. The teacher was really nice, but in high school, no.

I haven't been in regular school for years.

These are really funny questions. I've never been asked anything like that.

Not in my life.

Never.

My life had really got messed up. No teacher ever planned with me.

What do you mean? Teachers in the high school don't plan with you. They tell you. Do this, do that, get your assignments, you know.

Teachers embarrass students. They have me. They make suggestions which they think will help us students learn.

Examination of Comments

The comments on teachers using plans of youth-in-trouble were totally in disagreement with the statement. One youth stated that it happened in elementary school, but not in high school. Other youths regarded the question as not too serious. A number of youths totally rejected the possibility

that teachers might use youths' plans. One youth stated that teachers don't

ask them about their plans, they tell them.

Choose

Statement #13

I see my parents as persons who accept my decisions when we
participate in family matters.


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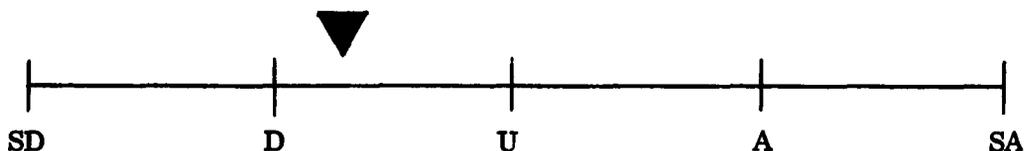
The intent of this statement was to determine whether parents accept

the decisions of youth-in-trouble in family matters. Thirteen (72%) of the

youths stated that their decisions were rarely used in family matters. How-

ever, four (23%) explained that their parents accepted and used their decisions

in family affairs. One (6%) indicated uncertainty.

Presentation of Comments

Yeah, I make my own choices. That's what you mean, isn't it?
In family things, yeah, we do some of it together.

All of our decisions are about equal. It has to be that way.

I think so. My house is pretty relaxed most of the time, but we
don't see each other very much.

I do that myself. They [my parents] couldn't do that. They live
in Pennsylvania.

If it, the choice, affects me, yes. The rest is none of my business. I don't think you can call where I live, the Detention Center, a family.

My family? Well, it is not much. My grandmother, my brothers, my dogs. We don't do that [make choices together]. It's hard. My brother works or gets into trouble.

They have to accept my decisions. I'm not letting them run my life. We just live and let live.

I live away from home. I make all of my decisions. No, I don't ask her, my mother. She wouldn't know what to do.

I make all of my own decisions. My mother would be surprised if I asked her. She doesn't do that.

Examination of Comments

The comments on parents accepting the decisions of youth-in-trouble elicited a variety of statements. Concerning personal decisions, one youth stated that he made the choices concerning his life, but felt that the family accepted these when they related to family matters. Another felt that decisions in family matters were relatively equal. Several youths explained that they could not be involved in family decisions since they did not live at home. One youth sharply asserted that the parents had to accept the youth's decisions, that it could not be otherwise. Another youth stated that the parent would be surprised if the youth even asked about decisions. The youth commented that he would never seek that.

Statement #14

I see my teachers as persons who accept my decisions when we participate in school matters.

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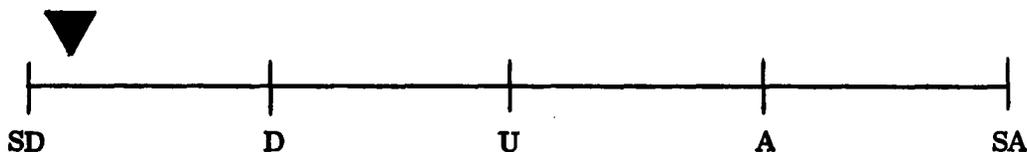
The intent of this statement was to determine whether teachers accept the personal decisions of youth-in-trouble regarding school matters. Eighteen (100%) of the youth rejected the idea that teachers accepted the youths' decisions.

Presentation of Comments

I make all my school decisions. Teachers, unless they like you, never let you decide. They ring the bells, you're locked up, they ring 'em, you're let go. You can't make any decisions.

No, I don't think they're supposed to. They make the decisions.

Sometimes I'd like to talk with teachers about that. They really feel they know everything. Well, some of them will accept your choices.

No, I don't think so. I don't think that happens in school. They tell you what you're supposed to do.

No, teachers make all of those.

Never.

Hey, I'm not sure you understand. I wasn't in school. They kicked me out. I'd get kicked out 2 or 3 times a year.

Examination of Comments

The comments on teachers accepting the decisions of youth-in-trouble regarding school matters indicated that the youth clearly rejected that idea. One youth explained that the youth made all school decisions. Another asked whether youths are supposed to make decisions about school matters, but concluded that the teachers make the decisions. Still another youth stated that teachers feel that they know everything, hence there is no room for considering youths' decisions. All of the youths stated clearly that their decisions were not accepted by teachers regarding school matters.

Statement #15

I see my parents as persons who regard my selections as equal to theirs.

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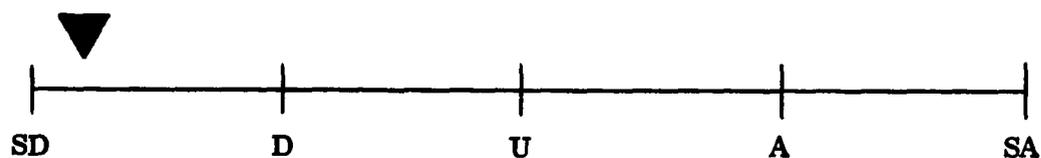
The intent of this statement was to determine whether parents regard the selections of youth-in-trouble as equal to theirs. Seventeen (94%) indicated that their parents do not regard the youths' selections as equal to theirs. One (6%) indicated that the youth's selections were in fact equal.

Presentation of Comments

I can't say equal, but they let me make my selections on most things. Sometimes I can reject their plans or ideas. On school and my life, I run things.

Yes, completely. Only I personally feel my mother's ideas in most cases are better than mine.

They have too many years on me. I can't even see their point of view let alone be considered as equal.

My parents feel I live in another world and they won't accept what I do.

I come up with things to do that my mother won't go along with. Hers are better as she sees them.

No, I don't think we even think of equality. That's not how we do things.

We don't talk about that, my grandmother and I. No, she's boss. No one is equal to her.

No, my father runs everything. He's at the top, I'm at the bottom, whether he's drunk or sober. It's a complete dictatorship.

No way. My mother doesn't trust me to make as good decisions as she does. I don't see her often.

When I get together with my parents, we don't do things that I want to do.

All my mother does is yell and argue with me about things I want to do.

Examination of Comments

The comments on whether parents regard the selections of youth-in-trouble as equal to theirs clearly indicated that the youths generally disagree with this statement. Most of the youths pointed out that parents do not regard

their selections as equal. Some indicated that parents control and select everything. Others explained that the parents are complete dictators, still others asserted that their parents do not trust them. One youth indicated that the parents live in a completely different world, hence equality of selection is impossible. Another youth experienced difficulty in thinking of the process of equality. While nearly all of the youth clearly disagreed with the possibility of parents regarding their selections as equal, they also had difficulty in imagining it changing.

Statement #16

I see my teachers as persons who regard my selections as equal to theirs.
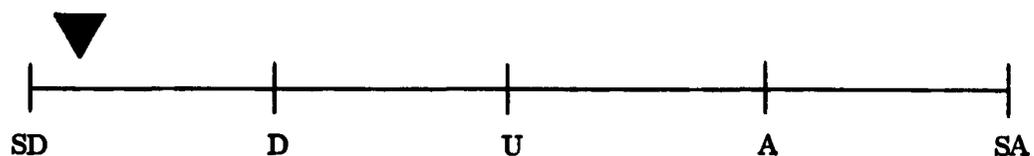
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The intent of this statement was to determine whether youth-in-trouble viewed teachers as persons who regarded youth selections as equal to theirs. Eighteen (100%) youths reported that they clearly disagreed with the statement. There was no apparent equivocation concerning this question. It was rejected.

Presentation of Comments

Some teachers may make you think you have a say in what's happening. I've not seen any of what I think about ever being used.

Teachers never ask me. They just do what they do.

I want to do my thing, but teachers and schools just won't let you change their way for what you want to do.

I do what I want to do, what I can get away with in school. Teachers don't give me a chance to find out.

That'd never happen. Teachers are supposed to decide what to do. I don't remember ever having a teacher thinking I'm equal to him in anything.

The teachers didn't want to hear my ideas. Equal? No.

Teachers never think of me as equal in anything.

Teachers always treated me as, like, below them.

When I wanted to do my thing, the teachers wouldn't let me. I ran.

All my teachers would do is tell me to leave school and not come back until I did what they wanted.

## Examination of Comments

The comments on whether teachers regard the selections of youth-in-trouble as equal to theirs indicate with a certain clarity that they disagreed with and rejected the statement. Several youths commented that teachers regarded the youths as below them and unequal. The youths' responses were clear; their selections were regarded as inferior by teachers. One youth reported that the teachers did not want to hear the youths' ideas. Another

stated that the teachers never asked, while another indicated that the teacher would ask the youth to leave school if he made certain selections.

Summary

In this chapter, data collected by questionnaire from the eighteen young people, referred to in this investigation as youth-in-trouble, were reported. The data were presented in two forms, one of which was a series of Likert-type Statements and their associated scales. The composite score of the eighteen youths' responses to each Statement was indicated on its respective scale. The other form of data presentation consisted of the comments of the youths regarding each of the Statements, together with a brief examination of the comments.

In the next chapter, a case study is presented. The case is actually a composite picture of a number of the youth-in-trouble. Following this, the final chapter presents a summary of the findings of the investigation and sets forth certain recommendations based on the findings.

CHAPTER 4

A CASE STUDY OF YOUTH-IN-TROUBLE

Oscar's mother was a comfortable person with whom to talk. Her bright, quick smile telegraphed the information that she was pleased to experience another's presence. She spoke with great animation and vitality and seemed to especially enjoy talking about her son, Oscar.

She regarded herself as black, and Oscar's ebony face reflected this lineage. She had been married three times, the first husband having been from Jamaica and black. The second was a white European. This marriage had lasted only a very short time and had been chaotic, violent, and destructive. Her third husband was a Mexican black. Each of the three husbands had fathered one or more of the seven children of which Oscar was the second child.

The mother, except for brief periods when she was pregnant, had been continuously employed and was at the time working in the advance planning department of city government. Oscar's father, the first husband, was an alcoholic who seldom had a job. Any idea of what he had been like came to Oscar from his mother in the form of stories, anecdotes, and opinions. The three marriages were a discouraging pattern of broken relationships, violence, despair, and fear which lead to separation and divorce.

Oscar's home life was further complicated by his brothers and sisters. An older brother was in prison, while three of the younger children were either in a state youth detention center or a semi-private residential treatment center. The youngest brother was still in elementary school and had established a reputation with his teachers of being a "trouble-maker." It was believed by several professional social workers who knew the situation that there had been numerous cases of wife and child abuse as well as a certain amount of incest within the family. All of the children, at one time or another, had run away.

In spite of the trouble, disarray, and chaos of his family, Oscar appeared to conduct his life in a manner which permitted him to move through the cauldron of scathing familial relationships with a minimum degree of personal involvement. Through it all, he maintained an amazing degree of care and abiding love for his mother. She in turn held him in great endearment.

Oscar was known by his school friends as "cool" or "smooth." He managed to bring a semblance of stability into his life by maintaining an aloofness not often found in people. Throughout his early years in school, he had managed to avoid any special problems in his relationships with his teachers. This changed, though, as he entered high school. He had struck up a friendship with one of his teachers and reported to this person that several of his other teachers had insulted him and had called him "stupid" on

numerous occasions. "Man, they're real jerks," he said. "Besides," he continued, "I'm really bored by the classes. I haven't got any interest in what they think I should learn."

As a student, Oscar was never really defiant or disobedient to school authority. Rather, his approach was to move about inconspicuously and work quietly at whatever he did. If an assignment bored him, he resorted to his art work which was a special interest of his in school. This passion for art was grounded in his skills at sketching, drawing, use of colors in painting, and his choice of subjects and perspective. This tactic occasionally brought him into conflict with a teacher who resented his unwillingness to follow instructions.

Oscar seemed never to intrude into the lives of the teachers or his fellow students. He was patient to an amazing degree. For instance, he would not talk about art with his art teacher until the teacher was ready to talk to him. When the teacher did get around to checking with Oscar, he might say, "I want to do some oil painting," or whatever he had in mind. He was very clear about what he wished to do. And he always worked alone, seeming to prefer the quiet and pleasure of his own thoughts and efforts.

He would work with the teacher if, as he put it, "He is friendly to me and reaches out to me." On the other hand, he stated that, "If a teacher doesn't want me in his personal life, I will not be there."

Once Oscar was in a mathematics class when a test was being given. He disliked math, and so chose to paint at his desk rather than take

the examination. The teacher came to his desk and questioned him as to why he was not doing the test. Since there was no reply, the teacher began scolding him for not working. Oscar did not react in a conventional, submissive, or aggressive way. He simply went quiet. The teacher, in a very authoritarian manner, insisted that Oscar do the test or, as the teacher put it, he would certainly fail him. Oscar slowly arose from his desk and quietly walked out of the room.

Oscar was completely aware of every detail of the teacher's behavior and was later able to describe it. He indicated that he had no feeling that he should invest himself in a heated controversy. He carefully chose his behavior and acted on it with the idea of not permitting himself to become involved in any verbal confrontation.

Oscar had performed well above average in all his school subjects in elementary and junior high school. His difficulty really began when he reached high school. It was the quietness that seemed to disturb and rankle teachers. They appeared not to be able to tolerate this. It wasn't that he didn't wish to communicate with them, but just that he refused to talk when they approached him as authorities. He simply chose not to speak when he perceived that he was being ordered to do something or he was being manipulated. He left school mid-way in his first year of high school.

Oscar had a job working in a car wash at the minimum pay of $2.70 an hour and earned approximately $80 to $90 a week at this work. At the same time he was working the street. A portion of that world for him

was pimping. He had a range of tricks from $5 through $35, $50, and up to $70. Another part of his street world was dealing drugs. Usually, he confined himself to the light drugs, but occasionally he dealt in heavy drugs. From these efforts he earned $12,000-$15,000 per year. Oscar said he'd "like to get out of drugs, but needed the money for himself, his mother, and the children at home."

He shared his money with his mother. She never had the faintest idea where it came from or what the extent of his money resources were. He bought clothes for her when she needed clothes; he paid rent for her when she needed rent money. The two of them, mother and son, never did anything outside the home together at any time. As a result, she knew nothing of his street or school world, since he never spoke of them with her, nor did she inquire of him regarding them.

Oscar had the same "cool," level-headed view of the street that he did of his home and school. One event will serve to illustrate this. Oscar attended a party one evening which involved drinking, dancing, drugs, sex, and dealing. It happened that he had just made $300 on a deal and had this money in his wallet. One of his friends caught him in a somewhat isolated area of the house where the party was being held and put a pistol to Oscar's head, demanding the $300. Later, Oscar, in a gentle voice, rationalized the robbery thus, saying, "What comes around, goes around." Then he said evenly, "I avoided the fellow for a while."

Oscar had a large number of friends and acquaintances all over the community. Most of these young people were school dropouts and were working the street. He commented on these extensive contacts: "I got to know a lot of them because if you're ever sent to the tank (the students' label for the dean's waiting room), you get to know the others who are waiting there to see him. I never got sent there, but I met kids who had been and they knew others who had been to the tank, and so it goes. Everybody gets to know everybody."

Oscar, his friends, Tink and Lewis, and a number of other street people reported that school people seemed to have no concern for the interests, cares, and concerns of their personal lives. As an instance of this, Oscar's friend, Tink, commented that he "was really upset when they took my brother to jail one night. I cried all night. I didn't want my mother to know that I cried. The next day I went to school and one of the teachers asked me if I'd been on drugs because my eyes were red. I said, 'No.' The teacher said, 'You're lying.' I said, 'I don't have to take this _____.' The teacher pointed to the door and said, 'Then you don't have to be in this class.'"

Another instance of an instructor's lack of care and concern for certain students involved Lewis who was a skillful basketball player. He turned out for the team and used some of the dribbling he had learned on the playgrounds. The coach noticed him doing this and called him over. He said to Lewis, "Look, we don't play nigger basketball out here—we play . . .," and Lewis said, "White, honkey basketball?" The coach then said, "You'll

never make it on my team, nigger." Lewis then said, "I don't need a white

honkey to play with." And that was it. It was over.

Still another of Oscar's friends became involved in a situation in

which the school people seemed unable or unwilling to understand the problem.

It involved Marge, a young black girl who lived in an area of town where there

was a great deal of vicious fighting occurring. She and her mother moved to

a predominantly white section of town to avoid the fighting.

Marge enrolled in the local school. Later she reported to friends

that she liked it alright there "because it was a different form of violence."

When asked about this she said, "The teachers have no ability to talk to black

kids at all." She explained this as follows: "Some of the kids I had dated in

the first place we lived followed me one day to my new school. When I went

into the school, a dean caught me and said, 'You've got to get that stopped or

you're in trouble.' I told the dean that I had no way to stop them. And then I

asked him, 'What's the dean for if he doesn't protect me?'"

Marge went on to talk about her social studies class in her new high

school. She said, "That's not social. All that is is history. What happens in

the high school is so unrelated to my life that I daresn't tell anybody about it."

Oscar spoke of this unrelatedness when he said, "Those people in

the high school are more dangerous for me than any people on the street." He

explained this by saying, "If the people at school find me with $300 in my

pocket, they'll send me off to the most inhuman place I know of in all the world."

Another of Oscar's friends, John, told the following story about his encounter with a dean. John said, "I was called in by the dean. He asked me, 'John, who did you ride to school with this morning?' I said, 'Dean, I don't think that's any of your business.' This infuriated the dean. After a long time he cooled down enough to talk O.K. to me. Things were pretty much back to normal with us and we were friendly again, so I said to him, 'Dean, I understand you're going to be moved to another high school next year.' The dean shot back at me, 'I don't think that's any of your business, John.'"

A number of Oscar's friends were involved in negative relationships with their parents. One of these was Jane. She and Oscar know each other on the streets, since they both dealt drugs and also saw each other occasionally as they were going to some entertainment or party in the same car. When Jane was in trouble and being taken off to court, she was asked, "Do you want your mother or father to go to court with you?" Jane replied, "That's stupid! That drunken -----. I never want to see him! He's a weekend drunk. All week he's Mr. Nice, Mr. Personality, Mr. Cool. On the weekend he's completely drunk and beats my mother. I don't know how she stands it."

From quite another perspective, Oscar's mother, as delightful and as socially attuned as she appeared to be, had a tendency to make quick judgments concerning the plights of her various children. She blamed the schools and the street for their troubles. The home relationships ensuing from the three marriages were never mentioned as figuring in this context.

As different as Oscar's world seemed to be, he had goals in mind for himself which involved much further schooling. Although art was a special interest and pleasure for him, he seemed to realize that the opportunity to make a career of it was very limited.

He had developed an interest in law, evidently as a result of his skill in dealing with many delicate matters of law enforcement on the street, and hoped to become a lawyer one day. He seemed to have a very clearly conceived idea that what was regarded in the regular world as illegal occurred because of the injustices and inequities in the law. He aspired to become a lawyer so that he might participate at an effective level in rectifying these injustices and inequities.

Oscar did complete his high school work and received his diploma. This came about when one of his street friends put him in touch with an alternative school program especially designed to meet the needs of youth-in-trouble (see Appendix B for details of this alternative program).

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptual patterns of secondary school students who were considered to be youth-in-trouble, regarding their personal relationships within the school and the home.

A theory, referred to in this study as "A Theory of Personal Processes," was developed with which to provide order and direction to the investigation. This theory developed out of a survey of selected literature treating the categories of: (1) personal contact, (2) consultation with others, (3) sharing knowledge and concerns with others, and (4) choosing. From these categories, which constituted the theoretical framework of the study, a questionnaire was developed.

A random sample, consisting of eighteen youth-in-trouble, was administered the questionnaire. The data collected from the questionnaire were organized according to the categories of the theoretical framework and were then studied to identify possible emerging patterns of personal relationships in the home and the school. The summary and recommendations were developed from these data.

Summary of the Findings

Contact

In terms of personal contact, the youth-in-trouble reported that they perceived their parents as not being particularly interested in establishing close, personal contact, since thirteen, or 72% of the youths responded negatively to this statement. Four youths, 23%, were uncertain, while only one, 6%, reported that the parents were inclined to establish such conduct.

In regard to the parents' inclination to be in touch with their children regarding things of mutual parent-child concern, the youth-in-trouble also responded in the negative to this statement. Twelve, 67%, perceived the situation thus, four, 23%, saw their parents as having some concern for staying in touch regarding mutually shared concerns, while two (11%) indicated uncertainty.

The overall pattern of contact between the youth-in-trouble and their parents seemed clear from the standpoint of the youths' reported perceptions. It was not happening according to 67% of the youths.

With regard to the inclination of teachers to establish close, personal relationships with the youth-in-trouble, fourteen of them, 76%, indicated that teachers seemed not to be interested. Three youths, 17%, were uncertain, and one, 6%, agreed that the teachers made contact with the youth.

In terms of the teachers' interest in getting in touch with the concerns of youth-in-trouble, seventeen of them, 94%, perceived that teachers lacked interest in this. One youth, 6%, was uncertain.

The overall pattern of contact between youth-in-trouble and their teachers was clear insofar as the perceptions of the youth were concerned. Contact behavior was not present according to 86% of the youths.

When considering the four statements subsumed under Contact, the youth-in-trouble reported perceiving that they were not being contacted effectively either by their parents or by their teachers.

In reflecting on the summary data regarding contact, the salient point is that neither parents nor teachers were making effective contact with youth-in-trouble as perceived by the youths. According to the theory used in this investigation, contact is the sine qua non of personal processes. Not only must it occur at the outset of the personal interaction, but it must be maintained continuously throughout the relationship. Without contact, youth-in-trouble report feelings of rejection, alienation, and abandonment. In instances when these youths report personal contact, they speak of feelings of warmth, awareness, concern for others, and a general sense of well-being.

Consult

In terms of parents consulting with their children about the childrens' life plans, nine, 50%, of the youth-in-trouble reported that this did not happen. Five youths, 28%, indicated they were uncertain regarding this, while four, 23%, reported that their parents did check with them about their life plans.

Concerning the parents treating their childrens' ideas as equally important as their own, and constantly seeking ideas from the children in planning, sixteen of the youth-in-trouble, 89%, reported their perception that it did not happen. One youth, 6%, was unsure on this point, and one, another 6%, indicated that his parents did consult with him and did use his ideas in planning.

The overall pattern of consultation between the youth-in-trouble and their parents was somewhat clear from the standpoint of the youths' perceptions. The parents, on the average, were seen as not consulting with their children by 67% of the youths.

Teachers were perceived by the youth-in-trouble as failing to check with the youths regarding their life plans by sixteen, 89%, of the eighteen youths. Two youths, 11%, reported that their teachers checked with them about their life plans.

The youth-in-trouble, in seventeen cases, 94%, perceived their teachers as not considering the youths' ideas as important as theirs, and as not constantly seeking the youths' ideas in planning. Only one youth (6%) was uncertain.

The overall pattern of consultation between youth-in-trouble and their teachers was quite clear insofar as the perceptions of the youth were concerned. Teacher consultation was not occurring, according to 89% of the youths.

In considering the four statements subsumed under Consult, the youth-in-trouble perceived that they were not being consulted in an effective manner either by their parents or by their teachers.

In reflecting on the summary data regarding consult, it is unusually clear that neither parents nor teachers effectively consulted with youth-in-trouble regarding their personal interests. According to the theory used in this investigation, consult is an extension of contact and represents the method by means of which the interests of the youths are discovered. These interests constitute the basic ingredients, the driving force for learning, personal development, social processes, and work. Without consultation, youth-in-trouble report the experience of anomie ("turned off") and hostility as a result of disengagement with the world of their personal interests. When youths report being consulted, they exhibit enthusiasm, cooperative spirit, and a desire to act.

Share

Regarding the matter of parents working on projects of interest both to them and to their children, sixteen of the youth-in-trouble, 89%, indicated that, in their perception, it did not happen. One youth, 6%, agreed that the parents indeed did work on projects of mutual interest. Another youth, 6%, was uncertain about this.

In terms of parents using the plans of their children, again, sixteen of the youth-in-trouble, 89%, saw their parents as failing to do this. Two of the youths, 11%, perceived their parents as using certain of their plans.

The overall pattern of sharing between the youth-in-trouble and their parents was very clear from the standpoint of the youths' perceptions. The parents were seen as not consulting with their children by 89% of the youths.

Teachers were perceived by the youth-in-trouble as not working with the youths on projects of mutual interest in all eighteen, 100%, cases. One youth stated that it had happened to him once, but never again.

In regard to teachers using the plans of youth-in-trouble, all eighteen, 100%, of the youth reported the perception that this did not occur.

The overall pattern of sharing between the youth-in-trouble and their teachers was seen as not occurring by all, 100%, of the youths.

In considering the four statements subsumed under Share, the youth-in-trouble perceived that they were not included in the sharing process at an effective level either by their parents or their teachers.

In reflecting on the summary data regarding share, the more than obvious point is that neither parents nor teachers were seen as sharing the interests of youth-in-trouble. According to the theory used in this investigation, sharing is the behavior by means of which people draw together in mutual exchanges. Without sharing, the basis for cooperative effort is not

present. Although reported instances of sharing in this investigation were sparse, still, when it does occur, the participants contribute, draw from each other, develop a quickening sense of community, and expand their learning.

Choose

In terms of parents accepting the decisions of their children while participating in family matters, thirteen, 72%, of the youth-in-trouble reported that their decisions were rarely or never used. Four youths, 23%, indicated that theirs were used. Only one youth, 6%, indicated uncertainty in responding.

Parents were seen as not giving the childrens' decisions equal value with their own by seventeen, 94%, of the youth-in-trouble. One youth, 6%, did indicate that the youth's decisions were accorded equal value by the parents.

The overall pattern of parental non-acceptance of childrens' decisions within the context of the family was quite clear. The parents were perceived by 83% of the youth-in-trouble as not accepting the youths' choices.

Teachers were seen as not accepting the decisions of students who were participating in school matters, by eighteen, 100%, of the youth-in-trouble.

Teachers were also perceived as not regarding student selections as equal to their own, by eighteen, 100%, of the youth-in-trouble.

The overall pattern of teacher non-acceptance of student choices was quite clear. The teachers were perceived by 100% of the youth-in-trouble as not accepting the youths' choices.

In considering the four statements subsumed under Choose, the youth-in-trouble perceived that their choices were not accepted either by parents or teachers.

In reflecting on the summary data regarding choosing, the conspicuous point is that neither parents nor teachers recognized the choices of youth-in-trouble, as perceived by the youths. According to the theory used in this investigation, choosing underlies the entire process of freedom and democratic living. Not only must it occur, but it must be present in all relationships. Without choosing, the youths reported limited options, increased frustration, and loss of productivity. When it is present, interest in self and others tends to heighten, learning is accelerated, and productive human relationships ensue.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Further studies, extending and deepening the investigation of the lives of youth-in-trouble be undertaken utilizing a theory framework of personal relationships.

2. A data base be developed concerning the lives of youth-in-trouble including information regarding: (1) home, (2) school, (3) street, (4) court, and (5) juvenile detention to be used in future investigations.

3. Financial resources from government, private foundations, and school systems be developed to support studies of youth-in-trouble which utilize the theory of personal relationships.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Contact

Statement #1

I see my parents as especially interested in establishing close personal relationships with me.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #2

I see my teachers as especially interested in establishing close personal relationships with me.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #3

I see my parents as persons interested in staying in touch with me about things that concern them and me.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #4

I see my teachers as persons interested in staying in touch with me about things that concern them and me.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Consult

Statement #5

I see my parents as persons who never check with me in making plans about my life.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #6

I see my parents as persons who consider my ideas as important as theirs and constantly ask for my ideas when they are planning.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #7

I see my teachers as persons who never check with me in making plans about my life.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #8

I see my teachers as persons who consider my ideas as important as theirs and constantly ask for my ideas when they are planning.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Share

Statement #9

I see my parents as persons who work with me on activities that interest me as well as them.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #10

I see my teachers as persons who work with me on activities
that interest me as well as them.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #11

I see my parents as persons who use my plans.

SDA_____   DA_____   U_____   A_____   SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #12

I see my teachers as persons who use my plans.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Choose

Statement #13

I see my parents as persons who accept my decisions when we participate in family matters.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #14

I see my teachers as persons who accept my decisions when we participate in school matters.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #15

I see my parents as persons who regard my selections as equal to theirs.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

Statement #16

I see my teachers as persons who regard my selections as equal to theirs.

SDA_____ DA_____ U_____ A_____ SA_____

Your comments:

APPENDIX B

THE CENTRAL CITY ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

Since the school district included so many youngsters, it was not surprising that there would be many and diverse demands for special educational services. Included among the demands were those for alternative programs of various kinds.

One of the Central City School District's alternative programs was referred to as the Central Alternative Program (a pseudonym) hereafter referred to as CAP. CAP was established ten years ago to serve the high schools of the district. It was created to provide a place where students experiencing serious difficulty in their regular schools would have a last chance to continue their education and possibly complete their programs and acquire a diploma. This was a very small program at the outset, operated by one instructor-counselor and two teacher aides serving 15-20 students in one large room of an elementary school.

The CAP, perforce, was organized and operated on the basis of the philosophical orientation of its instructor-counselor. The orientation of this person was later to be called "democratic processes." The aim of the process was that each youngster who entered the program would be accorded special, individual attention and would be accepted as a person of worth, dignity, and uniqueness.

In accepting each youth as being of special importance, the staff of CAP operationalized a theory which called for the adult school people in the program to behave in ways which would place the young person at the center of a newly developing web of personal relationships between himself and all others in the room—a web of relationships which would serve as an affirmation to the youth that he was an equal among equals, that his cares, concerns, interests, and aspirations were not only acceptable, but honored—that he mattered to others.

The learning experiences of a new student to the program, viewed through the organizing and systematizing framework of the theory, was immediate and relevant. It dealt with him and his inner world of thoughts, anxieties, and pleasures. It was an unusual experience for the young person. He probably had never been with people who behaved that way toward others, and the situation required much reorganizing of his habitual patterns of thought and behavior.

In any event, learning for the young person devolved around his own interests. Where they would lead him was an uncertain thing, but learn he would, since, according to the theory, thinking man cannot not learn. The learning usually involved books, periodicals, writing equipment, mathematical symbols, scientific procedures, among many other tools of learning.

The context within which the young person's learnings occurred contrasted markedly with traditional classrooms. The competitive elements were gone, replaced by relaxed, cooperative efforts which heightened the

enjoyment of learning and, in a subtle way, reminded him that he was in charge of his own learning—and his own life.

The site of CAP was changed from the elementary school to what had been a small private home on the edge of an athletic field. The staff grew to four teachers and an assortment of teacher aides and volunteers, with the instructor-counselor as coordinator of the program. The philosophical under-girding of the original program continued.

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