

## **Continuing Issues in Adolescence: A Summary of Current Transition to Adulthood Debates**

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*The argument most often noted from the Panel on Youth Report is that essential to the transition-to-adulthood period is a youth's participation in work and other nonschool contexts. This article summarizes the criticisms of the suggestion that this youth participation should be fostered institutionally. The criticisms are placed into four sections; each section also contains a comment, sometimes in support of the criticisms, sometimes in support of the report.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the last 5 years, significant attention has been directed toward the field of adolescence in both research and policy. Several important commissions have been convened, and their recommendations have been presented before local and federal agencies and service organizations, and within many fields of scholarship. Last year's Annual Report of the Interagency Panel for Research and Development on Adolescence (Heyneman, 1974) set aside a section to outline the characteristics that these recommendations had in common. Four of the more

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prominent sources were included: Macleod (1973), National Commission for the Reform of Secondary Education (1973), *Report of the White House Conference on Youth* (1971), and the Panel on Youth (1973).

There are two levels on which common features can be identified: the tone of the discussion and the implications for policy of the arguments. The first was analyzed in the Annual Report of last year; the second was not. With respect to their tone, there seemed to be four common features which differentiated recent recommendations from those of the early 1960s. First, there is now less tendency to direct attention solely toward the materially disadvantaged. Second, the issue of family styles is treated more realistically, for there is less bemoaning the passage of the "extended" family. Third, as a result of the toll taken by overexpectations in the early 1960s, recent recommendations show less propensity to justify innovation in terms of monetary returns. Fourth, also in very marked contrast to previous trends, rather than be expanded, it has been seriously suggested that the role of the school be restricted to what it is believed to do better and more efficiently than other institution: the transferral of academic skills and ideas (Heyneman, 1974: 29-41).

The present discussion will follow the second level of common issues: the policy implications of the arguments. But particularly the discussion will focus on those arguments which have elicited the most public reaction over the past year. And among government representatives and scholars alike, the most well-known arguments have stemmed from the Report to the President of the Panel on Youth — sometimes referred to as the "Second Coleman Report" because of the panel's chairmanship by James S. Coleman. The report of this panel<sup>2</sup> (hereafter referred to as the POY Report) made recommendations for policy in six areas: (1) the structure of the high school; (2) alterations of activity between part-time work and part-time schooling; (3) residential youth communities; (4) legal structures which prevent youth from taking advantage of opportunities, e.g., minimum wages; (5) the use of vouchers for further education after age 16; and (6) federally funded public service programs. Within these six areas, the one overall argument which has received the most attention is the following: *that youth should be provided with alternatives to cognitive training in schools, and that psychologically essential to the transition-to-adulthood period is their participation in work and other social contexts.*

<sup>2</sup>The following were members of the Panel on Youth: John M. Mays, now a Science Advisor with the National Institute of Education; Zahava Blum Doering (Research Staff), now a consultant to the Rand Corporation; Norman B. Ryder of the Office of Population Research at Princeton University; Joseph F. Kett, Department of History, University of Virginia; Zvi Griliches, Department of Economics, Harvard University; Dorothy H. Eichorn, Child Study Center, University of California at Berkeley; John B. Davis, Superintendent of Schools in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Burton R. Clark, Department of Sociology, Yale University; Robert H. Bremner, Department of History, Ohio State University; and James S. Coleman (Chairman), Department of Sociology, University of Chicago.

So widely has this particular argument for youth participation been disseminated in the past year that a substantial variety of criticisms have emerged in the academic literature. These criticisms take issue with the POY Report's intentions, procedures, participants, and recommendations. But what appears below is a summary of the criticisms with particular reference to the most important: the POY Report's recommendations with respect to youth participation.

### WORK ROLES: LEADING THE BORED TO FURTHER BOREDOM

The recommendations of participatory roles for young people has led the POY Report directly into the battles over assumptions, practices, and effects usually reserved for vocational education, technical education, career education, and work/study programs.<sup>3</sup> In one way or another, each portends to transport pupils into work or work-simulated experience accompanied by assurances of stimulation to ambition, attainment of technical skills, and experience in occupational decision-making.

To Hall (1974), however, the work experience idea has become so popularized that for the POY Report to jump on the same pedagogical bandwagon "boggles the mind." In the first place, Hall says, the workplace is boring. As he puts it: "the evidence is that people do not work because they enjoy it or because it is meaningful. Alienation and dissatisfaction in work is not simply occurring among blue-collar workers and low-level white collar workers. It is also happening to semiprofessionals and professionals" (Hall, 1974: 136). Stout and Browne (1970) agree. They say that "most jobs in an industrial society are hard and tedious and are not inherently satisfying . . . jobs tend to require little learning, provide few chances for intellectual stimulation, and are not linked to other jobs in a career ladder."

To other critics, the question of participatory work experience eventually boils down to this: how will pupils profit really, after the workplace has been stripped of all the fantasy which surrounds its discussion in the POY Report and in much of the educational literature generally? Say Behn *et al.* (1974: 43), "In contrast to the [POY] Report's romantic descriptions of work-as-an-outlet for idealistic, creative, and constructive impulses — evaluations of work in our society have found it to be alienating, dehumanizing, and violent to the spirit as well as to the body." Fitzgerald's comment is even more clear:

at the threshold of thought and hope they [the POY] may recall images of the busy tradesman, the honest craftsman, the sturdy yeoman . . . Desirable as asso-

<sup>3</sup>Criticisms of "career" education often contain objections identical to critiques of the POY Report. See, for example, LaDuca and Barnett (1974), Fitzgerald (1973), Mangrem and Walsh (1973), Rogers (1973), Nash and Agne (1973), Barth (1974), Hitchcock (1973), Hook (1971), Sproull (1973), and Grubb and Lazerson (1975).

ciation with the best adults might be, the actual situation for many youths will more often be working among employees in the lowest ranks of organizations. From dulled clerks and sullen navvies our young people can learn ways of spreading the work, soldiering, and getting by. Certain adolescents already exhibit an unattractive deviousness and grudging compliance, as do adults who find themselves in an indentured service which will not tolerate open defiance or escape. Such traits have survival value, of course, but we should not cultivate them further by providing opportunities for reinforcement modeling. (Fitzgerald, 1974: 30)

But that is not all. Separate from the “work is dull” objection to artificially placing young people in work roles, and aside from massive cost and logistical problems, a second objection is that it must eventually deal with the realities of economic and political disquietude emanating from the workers’ perception of “kids” competing for opportunities in a time of employment scarcity (Fitzgerald, 1974: 31).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, a third objection is even more serious, for it concerns educational equality — a subject which has been of special interest to the POY’s chairman. One longstanding criticism of work experience is its similarity in rationale to the British “modern school” movement.<sup>5</sup> Conceived originally to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue “life careers,” the modern school later became known as just another tracking mechanism. Thus classic sociological objections to the assumptions about vocational schools are clearly relevant to the POY Report.<sup>6</sup> As Stout and Browne (1974: 20) put it, what is to prevent lower- or working-class parents from feeling “that their children are being relegated to the very life experiences they are trying to escape . . . [since] they believe schooling is the route to upward mobility, they must also believe their opportunities will be reduced and that they are being forced into a dead-end detour.” And with respect to upper- and middle-class parents, hostility to work experience is even more predictable, for where is there evidence to convince them that learning what a shoe salesman or a plumber does during the day will improve their children’s performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests? Lastly, as Trow (1974: 21) points out, is it not true that diversity implies inequality, at least in terms of institutional prestige and status?

<sup>4</sup>However, Fitzgerald inadvertently provided one solution when he said: “So what remains? Work that no one (or no group in the community) values enough to pay for, or work that no one else wants to do, either because of the nature of the work or because it pays so poorly” (Fitzgerald, 1974: 31). Admittedly, work of this sort would not necessarily be “fun”—but it also, for some, may turn out to be the best work experience possible. However, to advocate that adolescents do work that “no one else wants to do” because the community cannot afford to pay for it, one must accept the premise that work experience is to be based on value *other* than the adolescents’ sole benefit. An alternative rationale, that this work is necessary for the local community, the group, the organization, or the family to which the child belongs, is discussed below in the section on obligations and responsibilities.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, O’Toole (n.d.: 16).

<sup>6</sup>Still the best criticism of vocational education assumptions is now a decade old. See Foster (1966).

And what does one do when alternative socializing environments attract differing racial and economic groups disproportionately? As he asserts, "All choices by young people do not offer the same opportunities and advantages for the future, and thus diversity of environments for youth, when they make for clearly unequal life chances (even as a result of the free choice of their participants), comes to be seen as the source of inequalities of achievement between groups and thus terribly vulnerable to egalitarian attack."<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, to those who read him carefully, it should come as no surprise to note that Coleman's response to Trow is to agree with him. "This is a question," he says,

to be addressed quite generally in social policy, but as Trow points out, it has particular relevance for institutions designed for youth . . . Trow raises questions such as these; upon their answer depends, I believe, the future of a humane society, with the richness of satisfaction that diversity of tasks and choice allows. (Coleman, 1974: 142)

### Comment

One strategy might be to encourage real candor with youth about unpleasant contradictions. For example, choices in career decision-making might improve by the learning of what negative consequences could result from any given choice. Then, instead of widening of occupational options (as is presently believed to result) being hoped for, participatory experience in the workplace might more reasonably be justified by widening an adolescent's awareness of the possible negative social, economic, and mobility consequences resulting from entering a particular occupation or a particular kind of training.

### MISSING: ECONOMIC AND ETHNIC SUBCULTURES

A major objection to the Panel on Youth's report is that it has no chapter or section dealing with the special problems of Black adolescents; nor with Chicano, or Native, or Italian, or Jewish American adolescents. There is no singling out of adolescence as it varies among families whose income and status derive from a stevedore, a farm laborer, or college president; nor is there special attention devoted to differing experiences of maturation in a single-parent, divorced, farm, suburban, or highrise apartment environment.

<sup>7</sup>In response to Trow's concern over who should participate and in what amount, one might bear in mind that no perfect consensus exists over how to resolve the contradiction between a policy for equality and a policy for efficiency (Anderson and Bowman, 1968; Heyneman, 1975a; Dobson, 1975).

Say Behn *et al.* (1974: 50-51), "The Report ignores social class differences in socialization" and gives "the impression that all young adults share identical environments." Hall (1974: 126) says: "The Report excludes from its analysis of youth the effects of sex, class, race, and ethnicity. We are given the impression that all young people are white, middle- or upper-class males going to or graduating from college." Complains Trow:

[It] deals with the age group 14-24, while it sometimes makes distinctions between older and younger segments of the "youth" population, it almost never makes any further internal distinctions within this broad age category. The observations about youth are for the most part broad and sweeping, and they make no distinctions between middle- and working-class youth, between rural and urban youth, between black and white youth. (Trow, 1974: 17)

### Comment

In response, one might ask which subcategories the critics would insist be included — and which excluded. And by what criterion might one include some and not others? Should a discussion of each and every socioeconomic and all conceivable ethnic categories be required even if the empirical evidence is equivocal that there are clean-cut differences in child-rearing patterns? Should distinctions be made between children of differing SES categories and children of differing social classes?<sup>8</sup>

It is important to remind ourselves that omission is not identical to neglect. The POY Report approaches the subject of adolescence with an emotional intimacy which demonstrates genuine concern, and yet it maintains a cultural distance which is anthropological in character. This is both unusual and refreshing. Its emphasis remains on experiences which seem common among young people being raised in the United States during this particular period in our history. I do not believe the absence of SES and ethnic divisions is an effort to ignore what each author would recognize as genuine subdistinctions. The POY Report seems to be an exploration of whether there is any universal experience at all.

Parallel to recent moves in the field of psychology to steer away from deficit models and reach some understanding of what constitutes "normal" development (Offer and Offer, 1975; Smith, 1972), the POY Report asks the following questions: (1) whether or not there is an underlying institutional

<sup>8</sup>The differences between class and social status have long been a subject of substantive theoretical discussion and empirical measurement. See, for example, Weber (1969) and Lenski (1954) and, more recently, Schneider (1975), Lehman and Lehman (1975), and Heyneman (1976).

experience for all youth, (2) whether that common institutional experience is sufficient for providing optimal development, and (3) whether there is some additional and/or divergent experience to be encouraged which could provide an improvement. "Our report," replies the POY's chairman,

is based upon a perspective about the settings in which youth find themselves in modern society. That perspective is, in brief, that certain institutions outside the school which once served extensive socialization functions for youth now are much less able to do so . . . . Schooling, once an auxiliary institution to these others, has expanded to fill the vacuum. The result is an ever-lengthening period of life during which young people are physically mature but unnecessary to the economic functioning of the family and the society, and kept dependents to train for self-improvement in school. It appears to us that, although this trend was far from uniform for all youth, it is increasingly coming to be so, and that this should lead to an examination of the emerging institutionalization of youth. The trends appeared to us self-evident, and the utility of such an examination appeared self-evident as well. (Coleman, 1974: 139)

True, a summary report on a subject as broad as the transition to adulthood needs to consider the effects of experience within many subcategories of population. But it need not excuse itself for believing that the experience of adolescence, especially with respect to schooling, has common elements. In short, the burden rests on the critics to prove that there is no common element; it is insufficient to argue simply that no youth subpopulations were chosen for special sections within the report — its not having been done is obvious to a reader of only the table of contents. The question which remains is this: if the perspective to which the chairman refers is *not* universal, the appropriate critique should contain information as to how and to which groups it does not apply, and why. Until evidence of this nature is forthcoming, the POY Report cannot legitimately be taken to task with this particular criticism.

### THE SCHOOL'S ROLE: A QUESTION OF MISINTERPRETATION

There has been no objection to two of the POY Report's assertions: that the length of time in school for the average child is longer today than ever before, and that the proportion of an age cohort in school has increased correspondingly. But the assumption that this extended school experience therefore hinders the transition to adulthood stirs up very considerable disagreement. For example, the POY Report is accused of attributing more socialization weight to the school than the institution deserves. As an ex-president of the National Education Association representing the teaching profession, Wise remarks that teachers "take issue with the Report's premise that psychological characteristics of youth today are largely shaped by the school and student role occupied by young people for a large part of their youth. This introverted conclusion overlooks

the influence of society, government, and mass communication” (Wise, 1974: 116). Behn and colleagues concur:

While the report defines the socialization effects of schools and work in exceedingly narrow ways, we will argue that the socialization literature does not support that conclusion. In contrast, virtually all agencies of socialization including family, school, community, media, and work contribute to the formation of attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge required for work . . . . Any reading of the socialization literature tends to conflict with the extreme isolation of institutional roles reflected in the Report. To the contrary, all agencies of socialization overlap in their mission to transmit the culture. Surveys of the literature on socialization of the young to occupational roles show links between family interactions, peer influences, schooling experiences, and occupational experiences on the one hand and work roles on the other . . . . In our view there is little support for the narrow stance that school and work perform narrow socialization roles and other institutions are not important at all. (Behn *et al.*, 1974: 51-52)

A colleague of the Panel on Youth’s chairman at the University of Chicago, Dreeben also takes the report to task for simplistic thinking on socialization. As he puts it, “The notion that families of orientation cease to be important during the 14-24 period of their children’s development, and that they are indifferent to questions of taking responsibility for others and self-management, strikes me as nonsense. Schools are not the only important institution in the firmament . . .” (Dreeben, 1974: 44-45).

Objections have been raised to the POY Report’s presumption that pupils operate solely in the passive mode and that schools do little to encourage self-sufficiency. For example, the Report states that schools “do not provide extensive opportunity for managing one’s affairs, they seldom encourage intense concentration on a single activity, and they are inappropriate settings for nearly all objectives involving responsibilities that affect others” (POY Report, 1973: 146). To this, Wise replies: “schools have focused on helping youngsters acquire skills, but they have not done so to the exclusion of ‘objectives relating to responsibilities affecting other persons.’ Any good institution pursues and achieves a wide range of goals . . .” (Wise, 1974: 115). Dreeben is no less direct. “It is a gross over-simplification,” he says, “to regard schools as institutions devoid of all opportunities for action and experience save of being taught. In fact, I suspect it would be virtually impossible to design an institution capable of providing only one experience” (Dreeben, 1974: 45).

Additional objections to the manner in which the POY Report conceives the transition-to-adulthood period give rise to charges of naivete in yet another direction. Where is the evidence, Timpane *et al.* (1975) argue, that today’s youth are any more or any less adequately socialized for adult roles under present arrangements? “We are unable,” they say in their report to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, “to find evidence that youth of recent years are impaired in their ability to assume responsibility when they become adults”

(Timpane *et al.*, 1975: viii).<sup>9</sup> For how can one assume, as the POY Report does, that the two truisms about longer and wider schooling in industrial society lead directly to age segregation, and that in turn, to inadequate socialization? "The Report," say Behn *et al.* (1974: 50), "does not even attempt to document the overriding presumption that youth are growing up to be less competent adults today than they were in the past." In agreement, Dreeben says,

The third straw man is the pervasive and tacit assumption, running through the Panel's discussion of issues and presentation of alternatives, that there is something wrong with the way youth now makes the transition-to-adulthood. Indeed, this may be a correct assumption; the problem with it is that it remains tacit. For if there is one point about which the Panel might have sought empirical evidence, even if sketchy or indirect, it is whether present arrangements — based on the preemption of youth by schooling and the segregation of youth from those different in age — impede maturity, exact undue psychological costs, narrow perspectives, and create the incapacities that the Panel would have us believe its proposed alternative might restore. Without this crucial evidence, the Panel's argument crumbles, and its recommendations become little more than interesting talking points. (Dreeben, 1974: 45-46)

Moreover, some critics can even point to empirical evidence which supports the charge of POY Report naivete. Within the abundant U.S. labor market statistics is the fact that, far from being isolated in the role of "studenthood," very significant proportions of young people *already* play additional roles. As Dreeben points out, using the POY Report's own demographic statistics,

among those 14-17 years old, over 300 per 1,000 enrolled in school are members of the labor force; as age increases, the proportion of young people in school who are also at work increases monotonically; over 600 per 1,000 of those aged 22-24 are employed . . . . Society has apparently decided that for large numbers of young people, school and work are not incompatible. (Dreeben, 1974: 43)

In point of fact, it is probable that higher proportions of students in the United States are normally employed in the work force than is the case among youth within any other industrialized society. But, in addition, a surprisingly high proportion of students also work by donating their labor in the marketplace — adding an additional \$7.6 billion to the annual G.N.P. in the process (Eberly, 1976).

So with all of this responsible out-of-school activity already a part of daily life, what might be the response of those thousands and thousands of

<sup>9</sup>An intriguing demographic argument, opposing the POY Report assumption of a longer transition-to-adulthood period, was advanced at a recent sociological conference. It held that if one defines the transition(s) to adulthood as passing through five stages of "leaving school," "entering the work force," "departing from the family of origin," "marriage," and "establishing a household," then, instead of increasing, the time taken to pass through adolescence has in fact decreased markedly since the industrial revolution. Therefore, today's youth might be assuming adult responsibilities *earlier* than they once did (Modell *et al.*, 1975).

young people currently engaged, after being told by the well-meaning advocates of work experience that for purposes of their personal growth they need to spend additional time away from school to experience work roles? Stout and Browne say that their most likely response will be to demand wages for this "experience." Many of those who are working after school "are doing so to save and pay for college tuitions so they can avoid having to spend the rest of their lives doing the kind of work available to them after school" (Stout and Browne, 1974: 121-122). According to some critics, the real danger comes when the pedagogues assume ignorance of labor market realities on the part of pupils. This may or may not be true given varying environments, but their argument is that there is, as yet, little hard evidence to suggest that work curricula or even work experience leads to higher monetary returns than does exposure to academic skills. Lastly, they like to point to the tendency among those calling for educational "alternatives" to neglect the distinction between job preparation and job availability over a lifetime.

### Comment

Dreeben's point is well taken. Pupils already work. The POY Report is short on evidence of inadequate socialization and even shorter on evidence which could pinpoint the effects of segregation by age. But what Dreeben and other critics miss is potentially the most revolutionary of the POY schooling recommendations. It certainly doesn't lie in age segregation. Nor does it lie in recommending work experience. The point is what to do about the process which has hoisted the plethora of noncognitive functions onto the school: the teaching of driver's education, a bogging array of sports, metal shop, environmental, ethnic, career, and sex education, all taking place under one institutional roof commonly accommodating several thousands of adolescents at a given time. The members of the POY suggest, and there is sufficient evidence to take them seriously, that (1) the school's most efficient function is the transfer of academic skills; (2) that the school itself should be honed down and expected to do primarily what it does best; while (3) other experimental institutions be developed to specialize in whatever *community or neighborhood* variety of noncognitive experience the parent and child wish to negotiate.

One by-product of this honing process would be an opportunity to have smaller public schools. And, by all agreement, these would be nicer places to be educated.<sup>10</sup> Thus expectations for the "school" for once have a chance to become consistent with what it can do best. To this implication of the POY Re-

<sup>10</sup> If stripped of extracurricular extravagances, smaller schools would not necessarily be more expensive, and there may be evidence that smaller schools, even in volatile neighborhoods, would be less conducive to criminal behavior (McPartland and McDill, 1975).

port, so at variance today with most other recommendations for adolescence, no critic has yet spoken.

**ASSUMPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: AN UNBALANCED  
SCALE IN FAVOR OF YOUTH RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES  
AND IN NEGLECT OF YOUTH RESPONSIBILITIES  
AND OBLIGATIONS**

Since its twentieth-century inception, the study of adolescence has generated substantial argument on the subject of youthful rights and privileges. Originally established to insure absolution, the juvenile justice system recently has undergone court-mandated reforms which in addition would assure juveniles of the legal rights available to adults (Beaser, 1975). By law the young have been promised the privilege of attending school for 12 years free of charge, and protection against exploitative employment.<sup>11</sup> Recently educational systems have been modified so that youth could play a role in choosing what they wish to learn. The POY Report reflects an extension of these concerns, and recommends that youths be assured the opportunity for many other experiences as well.

In reaction, some critics have argued that the scale of these concerns is unbalanced; that following precedent from civil rights movements, the Panel on Youth mistakenly conceives of youth as an underprivileged "class" of citizens in much the same manner as other government commissions have viewed problems pertaining to Blacks, other ethnic minorities, women, and the impoverished. Trow, for example, cautions readers of the POY Report in the following manner:

readers may want to look more closely at the "youth culture" that the essays discuss with the same cool, unromantic eye that characterizes much of the report. For example, the authors note that "youth are a subordinate nation"; there is "an essential similarity between youth's position relative to adults today, and the position of Negroes in relation to whites described in the 1940's" (p. 118). Surely this is overdrawn and misleading, one of the rare instances in the report in which the ideology of youth which is properly the object of analysis, affects the tone of the analysis. (Trow, 1974: 19)

But Trow's caution appears halcyon next to the implications of Baumrind's argument. In essence, she lays down an intellectual gauntlet which would deny the extension of identical adult rights and privileges to nonadult populations. Following praise for advancing women's equality, she remarks that "the social movement in the United States that has as its praiseworthy objective to grant more power to powerless persons has been expanded without reason or logic to include dependent children" (Baumrind, 1974: 79). Instead of giving cre-

<sup>11</sup>Perhaps we need to remind ourselves how recent a luxury this is and how few are the societies which even today can afford it.

dence to the juvenile rights which sanction positively the "narcissistic, selfish aspect of adolescent development," the Panel on Youth, she implies, would have done better to reiterate the concurrent need which juveniles have for direction, structure, and even "adverse stimuli."

Reacting to the Panel on Youth as well as other recommendations for "youth participation," Baumrind is one of several scholars who believe that there has been an overemphasis on what ought to be provided for adolescents in neglect of what ought to be forthcoming from them. In her opinion, this can have disastrous effects. Her view is important and should be thought about carefully. In essence, she says that

Within the high school, student obligations (not the least of which is the obligation not to injure others or extort money) should be clearly stated and rigorously enforced. Crimes committed within the high school setting should be punished just as rigorously as crimes committed within any other setting. The tendency of many school officials to look the other way when crimes are committed by either minority or underprivileged youth has the effect of positively sanctioning unacceptable aggression.

Youth is the appropriate time for the individual to learn how to adjust to the fact that options are finite . . . . During childhood, parents protect children from the natural consequences of their actions by functioning as buffers and preventing premature foreclosure of opportunities for later action . . . . Adults who continue to protect the youth in this way or to reward into late adolescence his egoistic, antisocial, irrational side prolong unduly his period of childhood omnipotence. The effort on the part of many "liberated" adults and communities to provide adolescents with a plethora of unreal options effectively neutralizes the efforts of other adults who would require of youth that they reciprocate for services received with something of value and that while dependent upon their elders for support and sustenance they adjust to their idiosyncrasies and limitations. Adults have the responsibility to provide a youth not with a multitude of pseudopossibilities but rather with genuine choices among a few good options. (Baumrind, 1974: 81)

But Baumrind's point is not hers alone. Similar concerns were expressed recently in the Kettering Foundation's recommendations for the reform of secondary education.<sup>12</sup> After reviewing a wide sample of school publications dealing with student rights and responsibilities, the commission found that "about 99 percent of the content of these documents deals with student rights and less than one percent with responsibilities" (Report of the Task Force '74, 1975: 46). In response, the commission laid out a list of what it felt was needed: the responsibility for all adolescents to protect the constitutional rights of others, to obey "reasonable" rules and regulations established by the board of education and implemented by school administrations, to refrain from "libel, slanderous remarks, and obscenity in verbal and written expression," and to "undertake a social commitment" (Report of the Task Force '74, 1975).

<sup>12</sup>See National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education (1973) or Report of the Task Force '74, established by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation (1975).

### AN INTERMEDIATE LEGAL STATUS OF ADOLESCENCE?

Reacting to the POY Report, Schrag comments that the "authors of the report are conscious of the deleterious constraints which minority<sup>13</sup> status places upon youth though they are justifiably unwilling to accord adolescents full adult status." What will be needed, he says, "is a recognition by all age groups, children, adolescents, and adults that those between say ages fifteen and eighteen are no longer children nor yet adults" (Schrag, 1976a: 17). In response, he argues for a "legally defined status between the two" in which the semiadults could participate politically (e.g., vote and run for certain offices) and affect those elected officials whose decisions have the greatest impact on their own lives, such as "members of local boards of education, state superintendents of public instruction, justices of the juvenile court, and, of course, those officials whose task it would be to administer the new institutions relating to youth." In addition, he suggests that young adults "be elected or appointed to serve as advisors and consultants to the juvenile court and all other institutions dealing with juvenile problems" (Schrag, 1976a: 19-20).

But, unlike others, Schrag balances his argument for more youth participation privileges with the suggestion that youth take on obligations of service to the community. He says that youth should

have the responsibility of devoting a certain minimum number of hours a week or a month to such public service work . . . among the many service oriented sectors where the demand for personnel far exceeds the supply, in nursing homes and homes for the aged, or orphanages, hospitals, day-care centers, etc. (Schrag, 1976a: 18)

### SUMMARY COMMENT

Although the POY Report mentioned the benefits which accrue from obligating youth to work for the good of the community in the context of Israel's kibbutzim, the discussion stopped short of recommending a requirement of public service in exchange for privileges extended. But is it so unreasonable an assumption, as in the context of a family, that youth be requested to help? Is there any community, even the wealthiest, which today can afford all that it needs in the form of assistance and maintenance? What I suggest is a switch in the primary rationale for work experience from principally benefiting the youth as an individual to first benefiting the community. This is neither a simple nor a small emphasis shift, but rather a different (and currently unpopular) philosophy about rearing children. It suggests that when young children become

<sup>13</sup>Schrag's use of the term "minority" here is a synonym for "nonadult"; adult status therefore implies "majority" status.

adolescents something be exchanged for protection, education, the privilege of driving, and other services extended to them from the adult community.

The basic question of the Panel on Youth was how we should raise our young people given what we know to be the complexities of an urban, industrial society. The Panel suggested that our society should extend additional privileges to youth by providing them with nonschooling activities; it was argued that these new experiences would benefit their education. But to those critics who are concerned with the balance between privileges and responsibilities, the reason for young people doing work in and outside of school should not necessarily be based on the youth's need for more education, but on the community's need for real assistance which it cannot now afford. Perhaps this particular criticism of the POY Report may turn out to be the most interesting of all.

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