A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY FORMATION AND THE CURRICULUM

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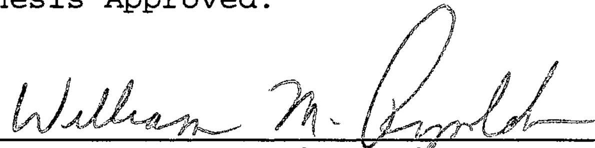

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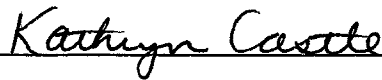

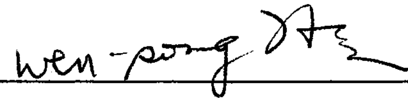

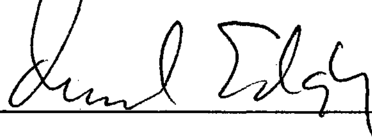

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> [Concepts of the self] operate in the individual and in the society as functional realities which play a key part in helping to fix the bounds of that very human nature of which they are supposed to be a model.
> --David Bohm, Human Nature as the Product of Our Mental Models (Gergen, 1991, p. 4).

The never-ending quest in this postmodern era is the desire to identify self. The culture of the Western world has been significant in its impact on individuals and the determining factors that define them. According to Kenneth Gergen, the concept of self may be defined as "our ways of understanding who we are and what we are about. Beliefs about the self seem pivotal to all our undertakings" (1991, Preface). In seeking personal fulfillment, we long to "know" ourselves. We desire to understand all the factors that identify who and what we are. Who is this person I call "me"? Why am I here? How do I fit in? Where do I belong?

McGee (1985) claims that

> From life's outset, we find ourselves on the prowl, searching to satisfy some inner, unexplained yearning. Our hunger causes us to search for people who will love us. Our desire for acceptance pressures us to perform

> for the praise of others. We strive for success, driving our minds and bodies harder and further, hoping that because of our sweat and sacrifice, others will appreciate us more . . . Our desire to be loved and accepted is a symptom of a deeper need--the need that governs our behavior and is the primary source of our emotional pain. Often unrecognized, this is our need for self-worth (p. 11).

Whether it be labeled "self-esteem" or "self-worth", the feeling of some kind of significance is a crucial element in terms of a human being's emotional, spiritual, and social stability. It becomes the force that drives the human spirit. McGee (1990, et al.) claims that understanding this single need in human beings opens the door to understanding our actions and attitudes.

> Because our performance and ability to please others so dominates our search for significance, we have difficulty recognizing the distinction between our real identity and the way we behave, a realization crucial to understanding our true worth . . . Our behavior is often a reflection of our beliefs about who we are. It is usually consistent with what we think to be true about ourselves (McGee, 1990, p. 25).

Although concepts of the self begin to form from the moment we are born into this world, the formation of one's

identity is a process that continues throughout a lifetime. This process becomes most visible during the adolescent years--those years of personal struggle in dealing with the transition from dependence to independence. Often termed as a "crisis" experience, the teen years reflect the ways in which we grapple with finding our own identity and our own place in the world. This search for self is not limited to the stage in life referred to as adolescence, but this does, however, seem to be the developmental stage in which the emerging self bursts forth in an intense effort to seek an understanding of it's own identity in the society of which it is a part. There is an intense struggle within the individual during these adolescent years to make sense of the world that surrounds them. It is a complex period in which the adolescent must find a way to confront the multitude of changes that are occurring both internally in their physical development, as well as the enormous deluge of external forces that surround him/her in the society and environment that is the world in which he/she lives. For many, it seems that suddenly, almost overnight, the adolescent wakens and looks into the mirror only to see a strange, awkward, and unfamiliar reflection. This person, no longer a child, and not yet an adult, begins this strange new challenge, the journey through adolescence.

It is this stage of life on which this research will

focus, seeking to both describe, and understand and interpret those influencing factors that impact the identity formation process.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY: A PLACE TO BEGIN

As an act of personal reflection, mine has been a lifetime pursuit of seeking to find my "authentic self," if in fact there really is one true, authentic self to be discovered. The task has not been an easy one. It has required a peeling away of the many layers of masks that I have managed to add to my outward appearance in my effort to find a sense of belonging--that yearning to "feel at home" in my own existence--to what has become an ongoing search for my own identity. Ironically, I have found that many of those masks had served as a relatively safe and secure place in which to hide my true feelings and escape from the realities of life--those realities which seemed uncomfortable and fearful. There was always the possibility that what I might find underneath those layers would not be acceptable or adequately meet those sensitive expectations I had for myself.

Trying on carefully selected replications of "identities" from various aspects of life and culture, mine had been an attempt to find one that "fit" and felt comfortable. In looking for comfort and a sense of peace in my existence, I had attempted changes, making myself

vulnerable to what I might discover about who I was. When the protective shields are somehow removed, the self feels completely exposed. There is an immense tension and anxiety that follows in the waiting to see if this "new self," the one that has remained dormant for some time, will become acceptable to oneself and to others. It is possible that this new revelation may only further isolate and alienate. As Florence Krall (1994) has so beautifully shared her own life story, she explains the experiences of her journey as being situated primarily in the margins of life--just on the edge, yet never feeling that she had been totally immersed in any one particular time, place, or setting.

In exploring the mind, Cypser and Cypser (1989) suggest that we have a nagging desire to get to know ourselves. We want to

> . . . be more aware, and to realize what prisons we may have fashioned for ourselves. To be all that we are capable of being, we intuitively feel that we must have knowledge of what we can be. We want to understand the opportunities we have. Finding our inner self, our true self, requires digging through layers of defensive masks and false assumptions. Breaking down old prejudices, discarding old ideas, and acquiring new ideas, can become a glad process of stretching and growth . . . We find that we must be open to new

> understandings . . . we will always be growing in awareness and knowledge. The further thrill of discovery and fresh illumination is always waiting (pp. 1-2).

Regardless of the masks I had managed to form to my physical image, underneath those layers lay the dormant essence of self, waiting and longing to find some form of expression--desperately wanting to scream out for identity. But how? Where? Who was the "real me"? After years of struggling to find my niche, my place, my identity seemed hidden from my vision, my perceptions of self, my ways of knowing. Desperately I was searching for a voice to adequately articulate the loneliness that existed deep within, wondering if I would ever be able to move from the margins to a place of community, acceptance, and a real sense of place.

As I have journeyed, I have been immersed in the process of exfoliating the layers--as if peeling away the layers of an onion, much like the process that Willis (1991) uses to metaphorically describe the search for reaching the core of the essence. Mine has been a process of peeling away, one-by-one, the masks of the many selves, in hopes of finding the new revelation of the authentic self. The cleansing process consumes a great deal of time, as well as considerable conscious effort. More importantly, it can

become an uncomfortable and fearful process, risking then, what might be discovered in this uncovering experience, and anxious about the response it might receive. Each layer of existence, each lived experience, has required a careful examination and meaningful interpretation for my understanding. My own personal search still continues as I seek my own significance.

Marginalization is often associated with those considered to be members of the minorities, or the oppressed peoples of society (Kozol, 1990, 1991, and Friere, 1993). This is not a matter of choice. However, I am inclined to wonder if it could be true that for some individuals, as well as groups, perhaps there might be a tendency to move toward the margins of their own free will, whether it be an unconscious or conscious act. There is a sense in which the margins may be viewed as an area that provides comfort and security. While in the margins, whether placed there by society and culture, or by choice, there is a sense of safety, a protective shield from the direct blows of an elitist society--a culture and society that denies those in the margins acceptability or respect. It could be, that it is in the margins, where one can withdraw from the madness of life, and there, in the loneliness and unacceptance, often obtain a more clear view of life in the mainstream. In our efforts to find that inner self, the "authentic"

self, we are required to dig through the layers of defensive masks and false assumptions that we have carried. For some the task is more monumental than for others. In disclosing ourselves, as each layer of masking is removed, many of us find that we have inadvertently built prison walls that surround us, walls that have prevented us from stretching to become what we are capable of becoming. As Gergen points out, "Increasingly, people are living through the 'dissolution of self'--experiencing directly the shocks of dislocation, the dilemmas of identity" (1991, Preface). It seems imperative, then, to explore this dilemma of identity in order to gain an interpretation and clear understanding of the concept of self. In our efforts to determine the factors that influence this dilemma, careful consideration should be given to the root causes and the implications on society.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM:

> What are the influences and impact of identity formation on adolescence? What are the common themes concerning identity formation that emerge from a textual analysis of various texts* that account for the voices of adolescents themselves?

* The texts that will be examined for this textual analysis include the following:

Adolescent Portraits: Identity, Relationships, and Challenges, by Andrew Garrod, Lisa Smulyan, Sally Powers, and Robert Kilkenny.

Gender & Ethnicity in Schools: Ethnographic Accounts, by Peter Woods and Martyn Hammersley.

What Can We Do About Violence? TV News Documentary Written Transcript, produced by Bill Moyers.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to explore the topic of "identity formation", with emphasis given to the factors that influence the formation of an individual's identity, how it affects one's perception of self, and its effects on the developmental progress of that individual through the adolescent years into early adulthood.

This chapter is intended to introduce the purpose for this research inquiry and the problematic that it presents. It will serve as the foundation on which this endeavor is based.

Chapter II will represent the relevant information gleaned from a review of the current literature relating to the problematic. This, in part, will include what I feel to be some major factors that have influenced the individual adolescent through the years prior to reaching this stage of development. Obviously, the recognition of the first 12 to 13 years of what the adolescent has experienced must be

considered if we hope to understand who this person is now and to gain a perspective of the "whole" individual. It would be incredulous to assume that an accurate perspective of the adolescent could be achieved without a careful examination of what has brought this individual to this point in their life journey.

In Chapter III, the methodology used in this research inquiry will be explained thoroughly. Using autobiography as a place from which to begin, I will seek to use my own lived experience to place myself in the context of those very factors that have influenced the formation of my identity and the problems that I had faced. A hermeneutical phenomenological perspective will be employed to seek to describe, explain, and interpret the lived experiences of those subjects who remain the focus of this study. Through textual analysis, I will seek to identify common themes that emerge from the multiple readings of three specific texts in order to establish a comparison with the information obtained in Chapter II, the review of current literature.

The actual textual analysis will be the focus of Chapter IV in this study. Through the theme analysis explained in Chapter III, I will endeavor to link together what is common in the review of the literature and in the lived experiences of the adolescents that are represented in these specific texts. Will this theme analysis support or

refute what the literature claims to be true? What will be found to be consistent and/or inconsistent with current literature? Are there, indeed, any common threads or universal truths that can be identified?

In conclusion, Chapter V will summarize the findings of this research, define my own personal conclusions, and present possible implications for further research. I do not seek to solve the problematic, but only to understand it and the ways in which it affects the assumptions made concerning adolescents in our society. Hopefully, insights gained will provide educators and other professionals who work with adolescents, some ideas and strategies that can help us to better understand and serve their needs. We may never succeed in finding the "one true" solution to the problematic, which is the focus of this research. However, the strive to increase and clarify our own understanding is essential if we ever hope to find any ways of helping to resolve some of the conflicts present in the dilemmas of identity formation.

If, in the field of education, we acknowledge the role of the school and the curriculum as playing an integral part of the structural and societal framework in which adolescents grow and develop physically, mentally, socially, and morally, and assuming that identity is a product of social construction in the society in which we live, it

would seem imperative to consider where and how these social constructions emerge and how they affect identity formation in adolescence. It is important to establish in this curriculum research inquiry that a thorough study endeavoring to address the problematic, cannot separate the lives of adolescents, life outside the school setting, and life in the classroom. Human life is comprised of the entirety of experiences that are a part of everyday living.

Miller (1990) suggests that curriculum is centered around the social relationships that exist between students and teachers, relationships among peers that occur in classrooms and other school experiences, and it is defined by the way schooling and social structures become interrelated. Therefore, the schools and the curriculum of the schools must be considered to be a relevant issue in this inquiry.

In addition, to address this formation process, the role of gender will be further explored with the assumption that identity will be defined to a great extent by the implications imposed by stereotypical gender roles. In the patriarchal society in which we live, formation of identity would obviously be affected much differently for females than for males (Gilligan, 1993, Grossman & Grossman, 1994, Grumet, 1988a & 1988b, Hekman, 1990, Josselson, 1990 & 1992, Noddings, 1992, and Ostrander, 1984).

To begin this research, I must acknowledge the fact that the interpretation of this study will undoubtedly reveal my own personal bias. I cannot deny the phenomenological perspective of my own lived experience, nor can I deny the bias that I am of the female gender, a consideration that should prove to play an essential role in this study. As van Manen (1990) has suggested, "Objectivity means the researcher remains true to the object" (p. 20). The attempt here is to remain faithful to the true nature of the object in both the description and interpretation. He continues by adding,

> Subjectivity means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and in its greatest depth. Subjectivity means that we are strong in our orientation to the object of study in a unique and personal way--while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or of getting captivated and carried always by our unreflected preconceptions (p. 20).

It is to this end that I will endeavor to explore the depth and intricacies of adolescence in an effort to lay aside the biases, and consciously seek to see the purity of the influencing factors that work in the formation of identity in the youth of today's culture, and the differences that

may exist between those factors as they relate to males and to females.

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS:

Educators are aware that the home environment, the cultural environment, and the societal conditions play an essential role in a child's development during the formative years. These factors, in turn, will directly influence a child's experiences in school. In order to meet the individual needs of each child in the schools, educators must recognize the experiences and influences that have been a part of the child's world outside the physical setting of the school. Since parents, or other caregivers, are the child's first teachers, experiences the child has before beginning the formal education process will play a role as to the child's preparation for school, their behavior while at school, and how the child will face new situations encountered in this new environment. Interactions and relationships within the school setting, as well as the curriculum in the school, will further affect this child as he/she continues growing through these stages of development. Culture and society will make an impact, as the student dwells in an environment that will either foster a positive and healthy formation of identity, or will tend to further confuse and cloud that formation, carrying with it varying degrees of negative connotations.

Moving through childhood into the adolescent years is a difficult and often painful process. The process of "becoming", finding a sense of "identity" becomes a stage in the developmental process that comes at a time when the child becoming adolescent, is already experiencing changes physically, socially, morally, intellectually, and emotionally. The popular culture in which they live will further complicate these adjustments. As with all areas of child and adolescent development, teenagers will make transitions through these adjustments in different ways and to varying degrees. Influences that played a part in the early developmental years and experiences through the elementary school years have played an essential role in developing the concept of self in this individual. Neither fully a child, nor fully yet an adult, the teenage years become a complex and confusing mixture of change and discovery.

> The rapid change and newness of adolescence is compounded by the fact that teenagers struggle during these years to find answers to three life-shaping questions: Who am I? Who are my friends? Where am I going? (Mueller, 1994, p. 28).

Today's youth culture represents, what Mueller (1994) refers to as "a widening cultural-generational gap." On one side of this gap are the parents and adults who are

bewildered by the rapidly changing world of children and teens. On the other side of the gap are children and teens who long desperately for parents and other significant adults in their lives to willingly help them find their way through the maze of adolescence. Contemporary youth culture represents a gap that is confusing for adults and teens, and often becomes a painful time for both. Some are able to make it through bearing only a few scratches and bruises. Yet others, unfortunately, emerge permanently scarred from the painful process of children growing into adulthood.

The youth of today must deal with problems much deeper, more intense, and more complex than those encountered by previous generations. Teenagers are desperately searching for identity, meaning in life, direction, and a sense of purpose. The pressures they face from their peers and society help to create a condition of instability. In 1989, the American Medical Association issued this statement:

> For the first time in the history of this country, young people are less healthy and less prepared to take their places in society than were their parents. And this is happening at a time when our society is more complex, more challenging, and more competitive than ever before.

We face an adolescent society filled with school dropouts, teenage runaways, abuse of all descriptions, addictions to

drugs and alcohol, violence on the streets, in the homes, and in our schools, gangs, crimes that range from petty theft to brutality and murder, teen pregnancy on an unbelievable scale, abortions, an epidemic of AIDS that involves a high rate of adolescent victims as well as any number of other sexually transmitted diseases, a breakdown in the family and home structures, and teen pregnancies--all on a scale that is too frightening to imagine and of such enormous proportion that our society has yet had to deal with.

Children and youth must find better ways to communicate and build strong, meaningful relationships with others--their parents or other caregivers, their siblings and other family members, their peers, and other adults. They must learn how to accept themselves in order to be accepting of others. As adults and educators, we must seek deeper understanding of the dilemmas they face--what are the causes and effects of influencing factors, and how can we help them through these experiences in becoming healthy, "whole" adults? It is an urgent concern in light of the society in which we live, and we dare not turn away from the confrontation.

Clearly, how young people form their identities, both male and female, and how they find out who they are, how they relate to others, breakdown the destructive side of

peer pressure, and learn the skills of living life to its fullest, will play a significant role in shaping the futures of our children, and ultimately, the future of our nation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The nature of this study, as suggested in Chapter I, will be an inquiry that seeks to identify the factors in life experience that influence the formation of one's identity in adolescence and how those factors may vary due to gender. In order to establish a firm foundation and grounding from which to begin this research, a thorough understanding of the physical, social, and moral stages of development of the adolescent will be a necessary first step. In addition, careful consideration will be given to the ways in which the family history of these youth plays a role in the formation of identity. In recognizing the home and the family as the first and primary influence in the child's socialization and personal identification process, it will be important to seek an understanding as to the ways in which the home and family will further influence and affect socialization and identification later in life as the child then proceeds through adolescence and into adulthood. These factors will provide the basis from which the focus of this research will proceed.

This inquiry will further investigate the following areas:

* Influence of Schools and Formal Education Process
  - Curriculum

Teachers

Peers and Social Relationships/Social Skills

* Influence of Popular Culture on Adolescents
* Role Models as Sources of Identity
* Self-Esteem - Self-Concept
* Perceptions of Self
* Others' Perceptions of Self
* Influence of Stereotypical Gender Roles

Female Gender Operating in a Patriarchal Society

Inequality and Inequity

Commodification of the Female Gender

Research into the Treatment of Males/Females Schools and Society

Role of Class and Gender

Educators realize that schooling involves more than just the necessity to understand cognitive development in students. We must also have a clear understanding of the student's emotional, social, and moral development if we are to successfully educate the "whole" child and adequately help to prepare students to live and function in the society in which they live. Teachers must be concerned with the personal and the social aspect of their students as well as the cognitive and academic. In the years that span from birth to adolescence, we realize that a child spends a good

portion of this time in school. These are important years that play a major factor in the child's development, with the school providing the social setting in which these students will gain a sense of themselves and their relationship to others.

BRIEF REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE

THE CONCEPT OF ADOLESCENCE:

Adolescence has been defined as the stage of development that leads a person from childhood to adulthood. It is a period that is characterized by major physical changes of puberty and important cognitive and social changes. Adolescence is generally considered to begin around age twelve and continues until the child completes this stage sometime around age twenty (Seifert & Hoffnung, 1991). The ages may vary slightly among the various sources of literature.

There are a variety of kinds of ceremonies and rituals unique to various societies that are used to signify this transitional stage, such as confirmations, bar mitzvahs, and graduations. These serve as symbolic "rites of passage" that account for the young person successfully moving through this transitional stage of life.

In modern industrial societies such as ours, the roles

and responsibilities that a person is to assume when he/she reaches sexual maturity are much less predictable than in other societies due to the fact that technology and values continue to change at such rapid rates (Seifert & Hoffnung, 1991, et al.).

Understanding the historical setting of adolescence may help to shed light on how the idea of adolescence emerged and its significance as a social construction in our society.

According to Seifert & Hoffnung (1991, et al.), the idea of adolescence is a relatively modern concept. It found its origin in America largely as a product of the social changes that occurred during the industrial development in the nineteenth century.

> Because so much was changing so fast, people felt a growing fear that society would get out of control--that the country would be overrun by foreigners and that the dirty, unpleasant cities would breed crime and immorality. There were three major legal responses to this national "identity crisis" -- compulsory education, child labor laws, and special legal procedures for juveniles--and together they played a major role in making adolescence a social reality (p. 507).

Furthermore, up to this point, children and adolescents

accounted for a significant portion of the labor force in this country due to their willingness to work for lower wages in factory settings, thus threatening job security for many adults. These problems ignited a movement to create child labor laws restricting them from the work force.

As early as 1899, when the first Juvenile Court Act was passed by the Illinois state legislature, special legal procedures for juveniles were established as a way of dealing with the newly invented idea of "juvenile delinquency." Such developments served to solidify the social reality of adolescence further. Once this was accomplished, adolescence became an important focus of study for the newly emerging field of developmental psychology (Seifert & Hoffnung, 1991,p. 508).

Adolescence, as a psychological concept, was popularized by G. Stanley Hall, a psychologist, who is credited with being one of the first developmental theorists to study adolescence during the beginning years of this century (Takanishi, 1993). Hall believed that the stages of a child's biological and physical growth and personality development were predetermined in the sense that these were the same stages of development that occurred in the evolution of the human species.

Thus, a child's selfish, self-centered, and aggressive nature was thought to reflect the more primitive stages

> of human history. Adolescence, according to Hall, represented a second birth, in which evolutionary instinct was replaced by social and cultural influences in the form of parents and other adults; they now replaced nature in protecting the child from unfavorable social conditions and in guiding her transformation into an altruistic, self-sacrificing, and moral human being (Seifert & Hoffnung, 1991, p. 508).

Hall believed that adolescence was a stressful period because of the repetition of evolutionary conflicts and a teenager's increased vulnerability to social pressures.

Although there was little, if any, support for Hall's theoretical explanations, his view of adolescence being a period of intense stress and turmoil remains a popular notion in today's society. However, Takanishi (1993) is careful to point out that long before the term "adolescent" became popular at the turn of the century, those years between childhood and adulthood were of concern to parents, educators, ministers, and public authorities. He further suggests that there is just cause for a renewed concern about youth in today's society considering the kind of world in which we ask young people to grow up.

Takanishi, the executive director of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development explains that, more than

ever before, there is a widespread consensus today concerning the needs of all American youth.

> It is widely agreed that young people must experience secure relationships with a few human beings. Each individual needs to be a valued member of groups that provide mutual aid and caring relationships, to become a competent individual who can cope with the exigencies of everyday life, and to believe in a promising future in work, family, and citizenship. Each individual needs the care and challenge that comes from belonging to a community, whether that community takes the form of a family, a school, an after-school program, a religious organization, or a neighborhood. Apart from such associations, one cannot experience the shelter and acceptance combined with expectations and responsibilities that are now understood as essential ingredients in the transition to adulthood (Takanishi, 1993, p. ix).

We are reminded by Takanishi, that if we are to better understand and guide adolescents in today's world, we must rethink and attempt to rebuild the social supports that will allow the kind of caring and commitment that is needed. In order to accomplish such a task, a thorough understanding of the developmental theories that have emerged from the studies of adolescence should help us to maintain an

appropriate perspective of the adolescent.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT:

From the moment of birth, every individual goes through life experiencing a multitude of changes of various kinds and at varying rates. Changes that are developmental in nature are those that constitute a person's long-term growth, feelings, and patterns of thinking. Seifert and Hoffnung (1991) note that every change in life, however, is not truly developmental, and can be characterized primarily by continuity. "Once a child's basic sense of self develops," for example, "it remains rather constant as the child grows older" (p. 5).

Developmental theory falls into three major categories, or domains: physical, cognitive, and psychosocial. According to Seifert and Hoffnung (1991), knowing about human development can help us in four major ways. First, developmental psychology helps to provide realistic expectations for children and adolescents. Second, such knowledge helps us in responding appropriately to the actual behavior of children. Third, knowledge of development is helpful in recognizing unusual development, or significant changes from what is considered to be normal. Fourth, by studying human development, we are able to better understand ourselves. If we see how knowledge of development helps to explain many of the changes in the human being, who is

transforming from infant to adult, such knowledge should prove useful in understanding how these changes affect future development and identity.

The issue of "identity" is not new to the field of research. A review of theories on human development yields evidence that psychologists have, and continue, to research the topic of identity with great depth. The work of Erik Erikson, a German psychologist, presented a comprehensive theory providing a framework for the study of personal and social development and understanding the needs of young people in relation to the society in which they grow, learn, and later make contributions. His research was based on an emphasis of the emergence of the self, the search for one's true identity, and the individual's relationships with others throughout life. Erikson conducted extensive research dealing with troubled adolescents suffering identity crises and wrote about his observations in Childhood and Society (1950) and Identity: Youth and Crisis (1968). He argued that a main theme of life is the quest for "identity", a term he used to refer to

> . . . a conscious sense of individual identity . . . an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character . . . a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity (Miller, 1993, p. 159).

He viewed identity as the understanding and acceptance of the self and one's society, and the elements of trust, autonomy, and one's initiative all contribute to that identity.

"Identity formation" will be used to refer to the process of how an individual forms a sense of self and the factors that influence that process. Beginning at birth, this formation of the identity continues being constructed and reconstructed, depending on the various influences and experiences of each individual throughout the years of development: physically, emotionally, socially, and morally. In the field of education, the implications of this process are observable at all levels in the academic arena, and are especially evidenced during the years of adolescence.

There is little doubt that adolescence is a complex stage of human life. Although age spans vary in the research studies concerning adolescents, those whose age lies somewhere between about 12 years and 18-20 years are considered to be a part of the life stage we call "adolescence." These are the years that bridge childhood and adulthood, and it is during this age span that a wide range of major life changes occur. In fact, other than years that are considered as a part of infancy, it is highly unlikely that any individual undergoes a greater amount or

greater depth of changes at any other stage in the life cycle than they do during the years of adolescence.

> During the teenage years, the young person experiences puberty, which has an impact on physical, physiological and psychological systems. He or she undergoes a significant maturation of cognitive function. Major changes in the self concept are likely to occur, and there are radical alterations in all social relationships to be negotiated (Coleman, 1992, p. 1).

The developmental characteristics of young adolescents have been clearly defined. Physical characteristics include a marked increase in body growth and readily apparent structural and skeletal changes in which bones grow at a much more rapid rate than do the muscles. The rates of development vary greatly, especially in reference to the onset of puberty and the physical growth that accompanies it. The enormous amount of variance in the rates of maturation often confuse and frustrate many young people, as they question the normalcy of the differences in their own development as compared to that of their peers. Furthermore, those individuals who experience especially early or unusually late development have particular difficulties to face, which may have marked implications for their classroom performance as well as their behavior. The many physical and developmental changes during this time are

accompanied by psychological consequences, which affect one's self-concept and self-esteem. The physical changes occurring at this stage of development reach far beyond spurts of growth in height and weight. Internal changes are taking place in the reproductive system and the sexual characteristics of the individual. The functions of various organs, such as the heart and the cardio-vascular system, the lungs and the respiratory system, and the size and strength of the many muscles of the body, only to mention a few, are all changing inside the body of the adolescent. And though these changes may not always be visible to others, these internal changes directly affect psychological changes in the life of the individual who is experiencing them. The physique and the self-image are changing too, as the body alters radically in shape and in size. Many adolescents often feel awkward and clumsy as they try to adapt to these rapid physical changes. The changes in the body functions are also altered and this often becomes an area of real concern for the adolescent.

> Experimental evidence has clearly shown that the average adolescent is not only sensitive to, but often critical of, his or her changing physical self. Thus, probably as a result of the importance of films and television, teenagers tend to have idealized norms for physical attractiveness, and to feel inadequate if they

> do not match these unrealistic criteria. Studies have shown that adolescents who perceive themselves as deviating physically from cultural stereotypes are likely to have impaired self-concepts . . . (Coleman, 1992, p. 11).

Perhaps the most important effect that is produced by the physical changes in the adolescent is the effect they have on identity. The development of the adolescent's identity requires not only the notion of being separate and different from others, but it also involves the important sense of self-consistency for the adolescent and a firm knowledge and understanding of how he/she appears to the rest of the world, or what their perception is of how others see them. This effect on identity is crucial in the adolescent's further development. Other developmental changes that occur in adolescence include psychosocial characteristics, such as increased social interactions and the concern for friendships, the shifting allegiance from their parents and teachers to their peers, the constant examination of development as it relates to the overall "self," their quests for freedom and independence, and a self-concept that is in a constant state of fluctuation. There are cognitive changes that must be recognized as well. These characteristics will include increased abilities to make reasoned moral and ethical choices, and the ability to think

hypothetically, abstractly, reflectively, and critically (Manning, 1992, Coleman, 1992, Miller, 1993, and Crain, 1992). These characteristics and changes are only a selected few that occur during the developmental stage known as "adolescence," and in no means is meant to present a complete or thorough explanation or description of the many and varied changes that adolescents endure.

The brief descriptions given here serve only to offer an awareness that the adolescent years are increasingly difficult in light of the enormous amount of changes that confront the individual and over which he/she has no control. Perhaps this may explain why Erikson referred to this stage in development as one of "crises." Undoubtedly, recognizing and understanding such fundamental transitions in human development should give us some insight into some of the ways these affect the adolescent population. Such insight may even help to alter some of the negative perceptions that some have of our youth and perhaps spark a little more compassionate attitude toward them in light of such increased knowledge and understanding.

There seems to be a general agreement by those who have been concerned with the study and research of adolescence, that this stage may be described as one of great transition. It is a stage of transition that is marked by internal pressures such as physiological and emotional changes, as

well as external pressures that originate from interactions with peers, parents, teachers, and society as a whole. Coleman (1992) offers two types of explanation concerning the transitional process in adolescent development: the psychoanalytic approach and the sociological perspective. The psychoanalytic approach, according to Coleman, concentrates on the psychosexual development of the individual, and looks particularly at the psychological factors which underlie the young person's movement away from childhood behavior and emotional involvement. The second type of explanation, the sociological, represents a very different perspective.

> While it has never been as coherently expressed as the psychoanalytic view, it is nonetheless of equal importance. In brief, this explanation sees the causes of adolescent transition as lying primarily in the social setting of the individual and concentrates on the nature of roles and role conflict, the pressures of social expectations, and on the relative influence of different agents of socialization (p. 2).

While the psychoanalytic theory of development approaches the transitional process of adolescence by concentrating on the internal factors that affect the individual, the sociological perspective takes a completely different perspective, looking at society and the events outside the

individual, or the external factors, that affect this transitional process. Acknowledging that each of these approaches provides an important aspect in the adolescent's development that must be considered and understood in order to fully understand as much as we can about adolescence, this inquiry will focus especially on the sociological perspective, in an effort to analyze how the external factors affect adolescent development. It is the sociological perspective that will allow insight into the implications of such influences as they relate to education, teaching, schools, and the curriculum.

Other important developmental theories and their implications must be considered to have a thorough perspective of the "whole" adolescent. The work of Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist, has provided valuable insight into the cognitive development during the teenage years. Piaget's research is widely known for his theory of the cognitive stages of development. These stages were seen as sequential levels of development in which the individual learned how to adapt to his/her environment. As a part of Piaget's theory, he pointed out that a qualitative change in the nature of the mental ability can be expected at or around puberty, and it was during this stage in development that the individual progressed to the point that formal operational thought was finally possible (Miller, 1993,

Crain, 1992, and Coleman, 1992).

Finding Piaget's research in cognitive development to be of intense interest, Lawrence Kohlberg began to focus on the moral development of individuals, and conducted interviews with children and adolescents on moral issues. Building on Piaget's stage theory, Kohlberg's research emerged in a six-stage theory of moral development. Kohlberg claimed that his stage theory was not the product of maturation, as was Piaget's, suggesting that there was some kind of genetic blueprint that simply unfolded in the stage structure and in a sequential order. Rather, Kohlberg maintained that his stages of moral development were the product of socialization. According to Kohlberg, social experiences promoted development by stimulating the mental processes when confronted and challenged by issues of a moral nature. The child, through interactions with others, learns how viewpoints differ and how to coordinate them in cooperative activities which offer opportunities to consider the other's point of view, work out differences, and develop personal conceptions of what is fair and just in an open and democratic way. The less children feel pressured simply to conform to authority, the freer they are to settle their own differences and formulate their own ideas (Crain, 1992).

Gilligan (1993) significantly points to the fact that Kohlberg's research focused on only the male gender. She

argues that Kohlberg's six stages that describe the development of moral judgment from childhood to adulthood

> . . . are based empirically on a study of eighty-four boys whose development Kohlberg has followed for a period of over twenty years. Although Kohlberg claims universality for his stage sequence, those groups not included in his original sample rarely reach his higher stages . . . Prominent among those who thus appear to be deficient in moral development when measured by Kohlberg's scale are women, whose judgments seem to exemplify the third stage . . . [in which] morality is conceived in interpersonal terms and goodness is equated with helping and pleasing others (p. 18).

Gilligan (1993 et al.) concludes that Kohlberg's research implies that only if women enter the traditional arena of male activity can they ever hope to achieve any semblance of equal status. In accordance with that assumption, she further states,

> Thus women not only define themselves in a context of human relationship but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care. Women's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies. But while women have thus taken care of men, men have, in their theories of

> psychological development . . . tended to assume or devalue that care. When the focus on individuation and individual achievement extends into adulthood and maturity is equated with personal autonomy, concern with relationships appears as a weakness of women rather than as a human strength (1993, et al., p. 17).

Gilligan maintains that by implicitly adopting the male life as the norm, that the humanly constructed categories of knowledge attempt to portray the woman as being deviant. What Gilligan proposes is,

> Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation. Thus males tend to have difficulty with relationships, while females tend to have problems with individuation (1993, et al., p. 8).

Gilligan's research studies are representative of the notion that gender, does indeed, have a significant influence on the ways in which males and females differ in the formation of their self-concept, and thus, in the development of identity.

Certainly, knowledge of the cognitive and intellectual development, as well as the moral development, is necessary in an attempt to fully comprehend the various functions that

are at play when trying to understand how these affect the adolescent during the transition stage of development. William Perry's research is important to consider as well, as he studied how the intellectual and ethical development continued in the young adult years of development. Perry's research described developmental turning points that can affect relationships, integrity, and identity. "Growing acceptance of others' interpretations and values is essential in forming truly intimate relationships and for living in a pluralistic society" (Chickering and Reisser, 1993, p. 8).

The work of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky must also be considered for the purpose of this inquiry, for his name and his work are well known among scholars in the social sciences in many countries, including not only psychologists, but educators and teachers as well. The great interests of today, concerning Vygotsky's work, seem to lie in his theoretical views and in how these views can affect the improvement and reform of contemporary education. Vygotsky's theory proposes that psychological development occurs through teaching, learning and upbringing, and is visible in various types of spontaneous and specially organized interactions of the child with adults, of one person with other people--interactions through which a human being assimilates the achievements of historically shaped

culture. This theory claims that this sort of assimilation plays an essential role in a person's development. According to Davydov (1995), "in terms of its content, psychological development is an independent process, but it proceeds through interaction, through assimilation, and through teaching and upbringing" (p. 18). Vygotsky's famous expression connected with this theory was that "teaching must lead development forward," and not lag behind.

> Pedagogy must be oriented not to the yesterday, but to the tomorrow of the child's development. Only then can it call to life in the process of education those processes of development which now lie in the zone of proximal development (1987, vol. 2, pp. 252-251).

This theory of developmental education allowed Vygotsky to introduce the concept of the "zone of proximal development" into educational psychology. This concept essentially claims that what the child is able to do, initially only together with the help of adults and peers, now moves through the developmental process (or the zone of proximal development) until the child is able to work totally independent of the help of others.

Davydov, whose career followed and supported Vygotsky's theoretical premises, maintains that

> Developmental upbringing and teaching deals with the entire child, the child's entire activity, which

> reproduces in the individual socially created needs, capabilities, knowledge, and ways of behavior. The activity, if we see it as a special object of study, includes social, logical, pedagogical, psychological, and physiological aspects in its unity (Davydov, 1995, p. 19).

The various developmental theories briefly presented and described are only representative of some of the major theories explored. They help lay a foundation for understanding just one of the many factors that are significant in the attempt to understand the role they play in the life of the maturing adolescent. In recognizing the complexity of growing up in today's society, it is imperative to gain as much understanding as possible about those factors that comprise the total picture of this person we call "adolescent."

FAMILY HISTORY:

Kochan and Herrington (1992) suggest that the source of many of the problems that face school students, and possible solutions for those problems, lay deep within the troubling changes that are consistently occurring in society at large and are clearly observable in the family lives of the students. We are living in a time of immense cultural and societal change. "Lives are marked not by traditions and stability, as in the past, but by temporariness resulting in

feelings of impermanence and insecurity" (p. 42).

The "traditional" family that existed two or three decades ago no longer exists in America. This "traditional" family used to be comprised of two parents, the father working outside the home, while the mother stayed at home to care for the children. "As of 1986, only seven percent of American families fit the criteria for a 'traditional' family" (Kochan and Herrington, 1992, p. 42). Families of today may consist of a single parent, joint custody of children in divorced homes, blended families, or foster families. In 1994, only 50.8% of all youths were living with both biological parents (Coontz, 1995). The "extended" families of years past which provided a sense of support and family history are rare in our nation. Family generations have become separated by age barriers, geographical distance, and values. There is now a clear generational gap between children and adults in most families. Even the religious ties that once had significant influence over families has eroded in many homes.

In today's society, many mothers have become a part of the work force outside of the home. Changing patterns of education and career expectations, as well as the economic necessity to add to family incomes, have brought increasing numbers of women into the workplace. Family responsibilities have been redistributed, thus changing the

structure of the family. The big shift in care for children is away from care that is provided in the home by a parent or a relative, to care outside of the home that is provided by someone other than the parent or other relative of the child. Over the past two decades, there has been a substantial increase--a doubling since the early 1970's--in care for preschool children in child care centers (Hofferth, 1987). With economic pressures and stress, there seems to be less and less free time available to parents for spending with their children in positive interaction and family activities. According to the National Coalition of Advocates for Students, "between one quarter and one third of all school-age children come home to empty houses each day" (Mernit, 1990, p. 41). All too often, children are left to spend countless hours in front of televisions to be passively occupied and entertained. In The State of America's Children 1992, the Children's Defense Fund tells us that the "average American youngster has spent 11,000 hours in school by the time he or she is 18, but a staggering 15,000 hours in front of a television screen" (p. 55). This leads children to feelings of isolation, which many claim to be one of the major causes for the drop in academic achievement in school as well as a major cause of teen suicide in our nation.

There appear to be three dominant trends in today's

society with reference to families. Divorce occurs in almost half of the marriages of today, as compared with those of two decades ago.

> Researchers have found that parental divorce reduces the child's school achievement, chances of high school graduation, and completed years of schooling, and increases the probability of early sex, childbearing, and marriage. Boys seem to be affected more strongly than girls, and the effects last longer (Hofferth, 1987, p. 82).

Even with such high statistics, though, it is estimated that as many as 30 to 40 percent of those who have divorced will remarry. Further, many young women are postponing marriage until their early twenties (Hofferth, 1987). Such dramatic changes in the home have a major impact on the lives of children. The "Ozzie and Harriet" families of the 1950's is characteristic of a family structure that today is the exception, rather than the norm. It is important to keep in mind, however, that there is no "one" perfect family form that automatically protects children in their formative years of growth and development, while others automatically put them at some kind of risk. The diversity of families implies that every family will have strengths and weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and particular circumstances that make up its unique structure and will ultimately help

to determine the outcomes of the family members. However, with the many dramatic changes in the makeup of the American family in today's society, children are now confronted with a myriad of new risks that are a part of growing up.

Acknowledging that the home and family are where the earliest learning experiences occur for children, it is easy to see that with the breakdown of family structures these children turn next to the school for affirmation, nurturing, value as individuals, and personal identification. The schools, then, become responsible to fill the gaps left by the home. To understand what those "gaps" represent, we must first recognize what changes have occurred in home and family structures that prompt such action.

David Elkind (1995) has presented an inclusive view of the paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism, with special reference made to its relationship to the family and the schools. "Postmodernism venerates language, rather than thought, and honors human diversity as much as it does human individuality" (p. 10). Elkind defined the "modern" family as a social system that could be characterized by a kinship system and certain sentiments, perceptions, and values. This nuclear family unit was viewed as the ideal family form that was characterized by domesticity and love, and provided the appropriate environment in which to care for children, raising them to become responsible adults and productive

citizens. These families were also characterized by values such as honesty, hard work, fidelity, responsibility, and thrift, and were transmitted from the parents to the children. Togetherness was a value that placed the family ahead of self, doing things for and with the family taking precedence over doing things for oneself and with friends. Children were seen as innocent and in need of parental guidance and protection. "Childhood itself was seen as a very precious time, to be cherished and protected" (p. 11). The perception of childhood was that of a magical time that children could look back on with great pleasure. Adolescents were viewed as being immature and, therefore, in need of adult supervision in regard to the setting of limits and guidance. For this reason, a great many programs and clubs appeared as a part of the school and community environments. Thus, the modern schools perpetuated the values and sentiments of the nuclear family and provided guidance and support as part of the responsibilities of teachers, whose task it was to guide and support young people in their adjustment to the larger society. Evidence of this could be seen in the formation of various school organizations, such as the debate club, the drama club, and pep squads, only to mention a few examples.

Elkind cited the postmodern family as being permeable, with the recognition that the nuclear family is only one of

many different family forms, each of which is capable of providing for the needs of the children. "Single-parent, two-parents working, remarried, and adoptive families are just some of the permeable kinship structures that are evident in America today" (p. 12). It is in the postmodern family too, that the sentiment of romantic love has given way to the sentiment of consensual love. With the acceptance of premarital sex, young people today have sexual relations by mutual consent without any intentions of lifelong commitments, which extends the prominent notion today that divorce is always an option for marriages that fail. Parenting has become a "shared" responsibility between mother, father, and various other caregivers.

Families have also become much more involved with the external world in this postmodern society. Television, computers and other forms of advanced technology, inexpensive cars, superhighways, and jet travel have extended the boundaries between home and workplace, between public and private life. Children have become exposed to anything and everything, from gourmet cooking, MTV, soap operas, and movies that portray violence and crime as acceptable behavior, for example, through television and media technology. Autonomous family members pursue their own interests above the interests and/or needs of the family, and the togetherness of the modern world has given

way to the precedence of the individual in the postmodern world. Lifestyles have become hectic and fast-paced in today's society. Children are viewed as competent now, because they have been forced to deal with the major changes of the family structure and lifestyle--dealing with issues that the children of modern nuclear families never knew.

The perception of adolescent immaturity has also changed dramatically in this postmodern era. As Elkind (1995) points out,

> . . . adolescents today are seen as sophisticated, as quite knowledgeable about drugs, sex, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, and modern technology. This new perception is again reflected in media portrayals of teenagers who are sexually active, who may be using drugs, and who consider themselves equal to their parents in decision-making competence" (p. 13).

The shift from modernity to postmodernity has brought tremendous changes in society and the family, and in how we think about, perceive, and value ourselves and our world. The schools have also undergone a major transformation for, as Elkind reminds us, the school is the mirror of society and the family. The sentiments of the permeable family are now reflected in today's schools by continuing the historical trend of gradually assuming parental functions,

such as sex education, daycare provisions for pregnant teenagers, and drug awareness and prevention programs, only to suggest a few examples. There are still those in many educational settings, however, who continue to teach students to live in a modern society and a modern world that no longer exists, and thus the need for continued transformative school reform remains.

Doll (1993) claims that one feature of postmodernism is its eclectic nature--choosing and combining traditions from the past and present that appear to have the greatest relevance for the task at hand.

> When we are successful in this pragmatic task of choosing and combining, we produce "a sticking synthesis of traditions"; we continue the tradition of the modern while at the same time transcending it. When we are unsuccessful, our eclectic mixture becomes . . . "psychedelic bazaar." Which outcome occurs depends on the choices we make. Educationally, we need to be trained in the art of creating and choosing, not just in ordering and following. Much of our curriculum to date has trained us to be passive receivers of preordained "truths," not active creators of knowledge (p. 8).

INFLUENCE OF SCHOOLS AND THE FORMAL EDUCATION PROCESS:

Howard Gardner (1991) has suggested that human beings reared in a relatively complex, schooled society will be exposed to at least three different ways of representing knowledge. Each of these ways of knowing is powerful and worth acquiring. In principle, Gardner asserts, these ways of knowing can work together in a powerful way; however, they rarely do because of the tension between development and education which stems from a lack of harmony. Gardner explains that every normal human child comes to know the world in a certain way, before the years of schooling. Using Piaget's work as foundational, during infancy and thereafter, the child acquires a great deal of knowledge from several senses and motor activities. In the years that follow infancy, the sensori-motor knowledge is complemented by "first order symbolic knowledge"--the capacity to know and describe the world in terms of words, pictures, gestures, numerals, and other common and readily learned symbolic vehicles. By the time the "formal schooling process" begins, the child has already achieved considerable competence in both sensori-motor and symbolic forms of knowledge. Further, the child will have developed some very strong theories of the world--theories of how the mind works, theories of matter, theories of life, and theories of the self (Gardner, 1991, et al.). Thus, the child enters

school with certain intuitive understandings and theories, some of which are accurate and some misconceived. In this new environment, the child is exposed to a new set of understandings and ways of knowing, which Gardner (1991) refers to as "scholastic knowledge." There is, however, a third set of knowledge structures which serve to complement the universal sensori-motor forms and the variety of scholastic ways of knowing. This third way of knowing, Gardner refers to as "culturally valued skills." In a more advanced school society, the skills are

> . . . those abilities and roles which are highly valued in the culture and which are transmitted by the most effective possible means to the younger generation. The roles encompass ones which are virtually universal like a parent's; ones which are shared by a significant portion of the population; as well as ones which are far more restricted . . . in a more advanced "schooled" society, the [individual] will draw on notational, literary, pictorial, and graphic knowledge . . . younger individuals have the opportunity--seldom available within the school walls--of observing the competent adult at work and noting how the various forms of knowing are drawn on synergistically in the successful execution of the tasks associated with that role (Gardner, 1991, p. 119).

The suggestion is that developmental theories must be linked with what we know about pedagogical understandings concerning knowledge and our ways of knowing. It is imperative that we remember that thinking involves much more than ideas about the world we encounter outside of ourselves. We also think about ourselves and make judgments about ourselves, deciding that we like or dislike what we are and what we do. Over time, we begin to develop a self-concept.

> We develop identities: names we call ourselves, come to believe in, and announce to others. Such identities become who in the world we think we are. Identities and self-judgments do not come out of a vacuum, and it is naive to believe that we freely arrive at them. To abuse a child influences that child to see himself or herself in a negative light, to see an individual who is without worth. To participate in schools where one is unable to achieve is to come to perceive oneself, at the very least, as a poor student and, in many cases, as a stupid human being . . . and to regard oneself as worthy or unworthy has a lot to do with our social life. Our view of self is a result of our socialization, not just in childhood but in every social situation. It is not accidental, nor does it come from freely thinking about who we are. Our

> thinking about ourselves is social, just as is our thinking about the world outside (Charon, 1995, p. 133).

This, again, helps to support the evidence that the education of individuals is a complex task, which requires consideration of all influencing factors on the learner.

All humans are social beings. Charon (1995) claims that being social means that humans need others in order to survive, and that almost all our needs, physical and emotional, are met somehow through our interactions with others. Much of what we become is determined by our socialization. Our identities are social constructions.

> Socialization is the process by which the various representatives of society--parents, teachers, political leaders, religious leaders, the news media--teach people the ways of society and, in so doing, form their basic qualities. Through socialization people learn the ways of society and internalize those ways--that is, make them their own (p. 30).

We are not born with the knowledge of how to deal with, or survive, in our environment. This requires that we learn social skills that are necessary for our very survival.

> Besides showing us how to survive, socialization is also necessary for creating our individual qualities. Our talents, tastes, interests, values, personality

> traits, ideas, and morals are not qualities we have at birth but qualities we develop through socialization in the context of the family, the school, our peers, the community, and even the media . . . how others act toward us, what they teach us, and the opportunities they provide us are all important for what we become. As we interact with others, we choose the directions we will take in life . . . (Charon, 1995, p. 31).

Charon goes further to suggest that the very way that we view ourselves is a result of our socialization, not just in childhood, but in every social situation. The way in which we think about ourselves is social, just as is the way we think about the world around us. In fact, almost everything we do has an element of the social since we live our entire lives interacting and embedded in society. This social interaction helps us to develop a sense of self and we come to see ourselves through the eyes, words, and actions of others. Much of the socialization experience for children and adolescents occurs during the hours they spend in school. It is, therefore, imperative that education look closely at the kinds of environments provided in the schools for the young people as they move through the developmental process of childhood and into the years of adolescence. Further, the relationship that exists between the "social" and the "cultural" must be considered.

Sociologists maintain that human beings are unique socially, in that our lives are linked to others and to society as a whole in many complex ways, and culturally, in that what we become is not a result of instinct, but of the ideas, values, and rules that are developed in the society in which we live. It is important to recognize the complex interrelationship between the social and the cultural: "our culture arises from our social life, and the continuation of our social life depends on our culture" (Charon, 1995, p. 29). Who we are, what we become, and our very identities have become a social construction of the society in which we live.

> Almost everything in life leaves its mark on a child's character: home, street, language and customs of the child's world, its music, technology, television and radio; almost anything that happens during a child's waking hours, and even what happens in dreams may have consequence. To live is always to live under the influence of the world. The world influences the child as well as those pedagogically responsible for the child. In the midst of all those influences stand the parent and the teacher . . . There is a single-mindedness, an intensity, a personal quality, a consistency to the pedagogical orientation that can make the parent or the teacher more influential than

> the conglomerate of influences impinging on the child from the larger culture (van Manen, 1991, p. 80).

We cannot deny that everything that is a part of our daily life experiences, either explicitly or implicitly, powerfully impacts the way we live and who and what we become. Nor can we deny the fact that, as educators, we have the unique opportunity to help shape at least some of those experiences for the child within the setting of the school classroom and the pedagogical orientation of the curriculum.

My view of curriculum in education is consistent with that of Janet Miller. In Creating Spaces and Finding Voices (1990), she defines her perspective of curriculum as,

> . . . centered within students' and teachers' biographical, historical, and social relationships. From this perspective, curriculum is created within the relational classroom experiences that individuals share with texts and one another; at the same time, curriculum also is defined and created by the intersecting forces of existing schooling and social structures. Curriculum research, therefore, encompasses examination of the constantly changing nature of individuals' possibilities within these educational experiences and situations, particularly as they are shaped and reshaped by cultural, political,

historical, and gendered dimensions of experience (p. 2).

As educators in today's postmodern world, Madeleine Grumet (1995) is careful to remind us that our relationships to the world are deeply rooted in the relationships that we have with those people who care for us.

> Their interest in us is necessary to our capacity to be interested in the world that interests them . . . curriculum is never the text, or the topic, never the method or the syllabus. Curriculum is the act of making sense of these things and that requires understanding the ways that they do and do not stand for our experience (pp. 19-20).

It will be this definition of "curriculum" that will provide the framework for this inquiry concerning the identity formation of adolescents and its relationship to curriculum research.

Debates continue in education concerning what elements should be considered as basic to the curriculum. William Pinar (1995) has suggested that such debates must consider how the curriculum is linked with questions that concern the self and identity. He asserts that in order to understand curriculum as a construction of identity, an understanding of education as a form of social psychoanalysis is required. Educationally, to understand curriculum as a text of

identity is the beginning to understanding ourselves. According to Pinar,

> . . . the question of school curriculum is also a question about the self, the American self. Understanding curriculum as a racial text means understanding America as fundamentally a racialized and gendered place, as fundamentally, an African American place, and the American identity is inescapably African American as well as European, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Asian American, female and homosexual (p. 26).

Such an understanding of the curriculum requires a shift in debates concerning the curriculum from the focus point of multiculturalism or equity to the relationships between knowledge and ourselves. Pinar reminds us that white does not exist apart from black, but instead the two co-exist and intermingle, and to repress this knowledge is deforming to all, but especially to those who are white and male.

> All Americans are racialized, gendered beings; knowledge of who we have been, who we are, and who we will become is a text; curriculum--our construction and reconstruction of this knowledge--is indeed a racialized, gendered text (p. 26).

Pinar goes further to suggest that the debates over what is basic to the curriculum are also debates over identity.

What seems to be of certainty in the educational experience, is that students who achieve and succeed in school experience a meshing or overlap between the knowledge taught in school and the knowledge that has personal meaning to them. These students

> . . . participate competently in instruction as a result of having a confident cultural identity as well as appropriate school-based knowledge and interactional structures . . . knowledge that empowers is situated within and interacts with "the themes and language of the students". Students who are disabled by their school experience do not experience congruence between school knowledge and the knowledge they bring to school with them (Sleeter, 1991, p. 51).

Knowledge that is both generated and learned within the context of everyday life structures how students think about themselves, their world, and their experience.

Gergen (1991) has explored the dilemmas of identity that we experience in our society, and asserts that the technological changes and achievements that have taken place during recent decades have directly impacted relationships and the notion of community among people. We have moved from relationships that have been characterized as deeply committed and personal to a vast array of disconnected and incoherent relationships that are more general and formal.

These reflect a bombardment of social stimulation that has brought us to a point of social saturation, which has profoundly changed the ways of understanding the self. In the postmodern society in which we live, our culture has become a product of the technologies of this social saturation. "With the intensifying saturation of the culture . . . all our previous assumptions about the self are jeopardized; traditional patterns of relationship turn strange. A new culture is in the making" (Gergen, 1991, p. 3). Further, he suggests that,

> . . . under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality. The center fails to hold (p.7).

Everyday life has become characterized by constant change; often it seems that the only real constant "is" change. The boundaries shift, leaving a sense of insecurity and instability in the very structures that form our society and the culture of everyday life.

> With the spread of postmodern consciousness, we see the demise of personal definition, reason, authority, commitment, trust, the sense of authenticity,

> sincerity, belief in leadership, depth of feeling, and faith in progress. In their stead, an open slate emerges on which persons may inscribe, erase, and rewrite their identities as the ever-shifting, ever-expanding, and incoherent network of relationships invites or permits (Gergen, 1991, p. 228).

Such constant change and instability brings, for many, a sense of temporariness and a loss of personal meaning, that is, at best, one that is shallow and ever-changing.

In acknowledging that schools play an essential role in the process of socialization among young people and their relationships with others, and helps them to gain of sense of themselves, then Gergen's study offers great insight in determining the effects of the social aspects of education that strongly influence and impact adolescent identity formation.

In 1987, the California Department of Education prepared an indepth Task Force Report on education at the middle school level. The report suggested that this particular stage of the education process was extremely vital due to the fact that those students who fail at the middle grade level often drop out of school and may never again have the opportunity to develop to their full potential in life. Students at this age are unique in that no other grade span encompasses such a wide range of

physical, intellectual, social, and psychological development.

> The success of the educational reform movement depends on meeting the needs of middle grade students--both academically and socially. Failing to address these needs jeopardizes efforts for educational excellence and, more importantly, for these students' own future success . . . The most effective instruction at the middle grade level emphasizes academic integrity while making an emotional connection with students (p. v).

The report further suggests that during these years, the students will be tested by their own maturation and by demands for academic preparation. The first challenge of these schools, they claim, is to help these students feel "connected" to the school in positive ways and provide opportunities for them to increase their feelings of self-esteem, since adolescents are intensively self-conscious. Middle schools must provide these students with a caring transition from elementary school to high school, as well as to provide for them academically. This requires that a school environment that is intellectually stimulating must be provided for adolescents.

As a part of the report, the issue of an essential "core curriculum" for middle school students was studied and presented. The report asserted that, to be educated

persons, these students should possess an informed perspective about themselves and their society. Such a perspective is developed through knowledge and skills needed to make reasonable and intelligent decisions concerning personal, economic, and civic rights and responsibilities. Believing that the middle grade years are the most critical period in the lives of young adolescents to achieve such a perspective, the report offered the following statement concerning the core curriculum that goes beyond the normal presumed content subject areas for these students.

> The content of core curriculum subjects must be linked to the heightened curiosity of young adolescents about themselves--who they are, how they fit into the world around them, how that world functions, and what exciting prospects for their lives lie beyond the immediate horizons of their present knowledge and experience. Educators must help middle grade students wrestle with answers to these questions. Young adolescents must learn to draw upon the vast reservoir of accumulated knowledge available to them and to see its meaning from the dynamic, rapidly changing world which they are about to inherit. Unless this connection occurs in the middle grades, students risk trivial, superficial responses to the personal challenges which they will encounter throughout their

lives (pp. 2-3).

The positive school culture that this report suggested would include that explicit attention be given to not only high academic standards, but commitment to high standards of personal and social behavior as well, and jointly defined by all school personnel. In addition, it would require that these personnel have a clear and strong understanding of the multiplicity of developmental characteristics of the early adolescent years. This knowledge would then be reflected in an atmosphere of caring communicated to the students. In such an environment, teachers would likely be in positions to have a powerful influence and impact on the lives of their students, thus reinforcing a high sense of efficacy, and generating a positive, contagious, and dynamic sense of optimism that encourages mutual respect, autonomy, and learning to occur. Caring, compassionate school environments may give young students a reason to go to school, and then help to foster a positive climate for interaction and active learning to take place. Further,

> . . . teachers serve as a mirror through which children see themselves. If what is reflected is good, children will make a positive evaluation of self. If the image is negative, children will deduce that they have little worth (Kostelnik, Stein, and Whiren, 1988, p. 29).

The influence of the school and of teachers cannot be

undermined in its impact on the lives of students as well as their influence on a young adolescent's struggle for identity. For these young people, schools represent both an important environment for academic purposes as well as a continuing source of experiences and interactions in a social context. What young people learn in school is largely dependent on their perceptions of the world around them, as well as what is important and meaningful to them personally, and what actually becomes a part of themselves.

POPULAR CULTURE AND PEER GROUP ASSOCIATIONS:

> . . . We can be certain that other forces also have a stake in defining the people as something else: the people who need to be disciplined more, ruled better, more effectively policed, whose way of life needs to be protected more from alien cultures . . . Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged; it is also the stake to be won or lost in the struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises and where it is secured. It is not a sphere where socialism, a socialist culture--already fully formed--might be simply "expressed." But it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why "popular culture" matters.
> --Stuart Hall (as quoted in Roman, Christian-Smith, and

Ellsworth, 1988, p. 2).

Popular culture is a part of everyday life; it is the world in which we live. Although many people maintain the false belief that popular culture is associated only with the adolescent youth population, Sterns and Sterns (1992) would suggest that pop culture is actually now American culture, and that it has become the very core of everyday life. Even more importantly, it has become a new national identity for America, by the ways in which other countries have come to know America. Countries around the world perceive life in America by the images presented by our popular culture, such as Elvis, Madonna, Disney World, TV soap operas, rap music, rock 'n roll music, and fast foods, only to mention a few examples.

An honest look into popular culture would reveal that our identity and what we are becoming is situated in what we have and what we own (Giroux, 1994). Most people living in this postmodern setting do not know who they are; they only know what they have, and thus, they become what they have. "Things" have become more important than people. It is a tremendously strong power element that is in operation all around us. One of the major principles at work in popular culture belongs to the world of production and consumerism. Popular culture teaches us to become dissatisfied with ourselves and the way we are. In so doing, those who profit

from mass production of any product we could ever want or need, can almost immediately make available to us whatever it might be that will help us to overcome our dissatisfaction and give us what will surely satisfy our needs, our wants, our desires, and bring us great contentment in life.

Fiske (1989) maintains that popular culture is an act of consumption and an act of production. It is greatly concerned with meanings, pleasures, and identities, and its efforts are to define who we are. The roots of popular culture are deeply embedded in the social systems that are at work in our society.

> Popular culture is deeply contradictory in societies where power is unequally distributed along axes of class, gender, race, and the other categories that we use to make sense of our social differences. Popular culture is the culture of the subordinated and disempowered and thus always bears within it signs of power relations, traces of the forces of domination and subordination that are central to our social system, and therefore to our social experience. Equally, it shows signs of resisting or evading these forces: popular culture contradicts itself (Fiske, 1989, pp. 4 & 5).

The contradiction of popular culture that Fiske is

referring to is seen in the ways in which it demands that we either conform or resist, but we cannot remain neutral. No matter how hard we might try to, neutrality is only short-lived, and whether we will honestly admit to conforming or resisting, its subtle nature will eventually cause us to move in one direction or the other, and it becomes much easier to conform than to resist. We might even say that conformity becomes the path of least resistance.

We are all social beings, looking for places to be accepted, seeking some kind of significance in our day-to-day existence. The social dimensions of our culture are crucial in the ways in which they play with us in the areas of social constructions of identity and self-consciousness.

> All popular culture is a process of struggle, of struggle over the meanings of social experience, of one's personhood and its relations to the social order and of the texts and commodities of that order (Fiske, 1989, et al., p. 28).

Fiske goes further to illuminate our thinking about the social implications of popular culture.

> Society is structured around a complex matrix of axes of difference (class, gender, race, age, and so on), each of which has a dimension of power. There is no social difference without power difference, so one way of defining the popular is . . . to identify it by its

oppositionality to "the power bloc" (Fiske, 1989, et al., p. 30).

Fiske uses the concept that popular culture is our way of "making do." Reynolds and Block relate this concept in their discussion of how the curriculum in our schools has become a form of "making do" (Martusewitz & Reynolds, 1994). Evidence of the tactics used in our schools in making do with the curriculum can be seen in the everyday life characteristics of "adaptation, manipulation and trickery" (Fiske, 1989, p. 34). This is what Reynolds and Block refer to as students "making do" with what the school system provides for them. It is popular culture. The students feel caught in a system that forces them into modes of being in which they do not wish to conform, and because they have nothing more than what society has given them, they find various ways to express their resistance; sometimes in passive ways, while others become much more overtly visible. Unfortunately, all too often it is the latter expression of resistance that is usually noticed and called to our attention. We need only to look as far as the daily news on TV, in the newspapers, or on the radio to get a good dose of the image of a youth culture in its demise. We have become bombarded with story after story about American teens who are consumed with violence, self-centeredness, greed, bad work habits and ethics; they are apathetic, lazy, school

dropouts, and the list could continue on and on. There is a tendency to relate these characteristics to adolescents, when actually such an image, in reality, defines many more than just the youth. Yet whose pictures are the ones seen, for the most part, in any TV news segment that depicts violence and crime, for instance--none other than the American youth. It has become all too easy to cast the blame for many of the ills that plague our society on the youth. We see it, we don't like it, and so we blame them for the ugliness of their lifestyle and the negative images they project, and then proceed to marginalize them as an unacceptable part of the American culture.

Undoubtedly, adolescence has more than its share of problems and difficulties in light of the complexity of the multitude of changes with which they must negotiate. More often than not, the very word "adolescent" has come to carry a negative connotation, and is defined largely by what it is not--neither child nor adult--legally, in status, role, or function. Takanishi (1993) claims that we suffer from an "adolescent rolelessness" in modern society.

> Adolescents have no prepared place in society that is appreciated or approved; nonetheless they must tackle two major tasks, usually on their own: identity formation and development of self-worth and self-efficacy. The current social environment of

adolescents makes both tasks very difficult (p. 14). They are not truly roleless, however, because our society in general, parents, and schools do set certain roles for them, but these roles are often not meaningful and productive to meet the needs of many adolescents. Other roles assigned to the adolescent population are often determined by their peers. This rolelessness that Takanishi refers to, is perceived by adults as undesirable because adolescents do not have contributing, active, productive roles that are consistent with and valued by the adult society. In addition to the biological and psychological changes that grace the adolescent stage of life, these young people are confronted with dramatic changes in their social environment as well. The transitions between elementary school to junior high and then to high school, as well as the accessibility and availability of drugs and other substances of abuse, add to the difficulty of this age group. The transition from youth to acceptable adult roles has become an inconsistent and ambiguous task. Consider some of the aspects that contribute to the confusing inconsistency with which the youth must negotiate: driving, one of the accepted rites of passage into adulthood, may begin as early as age fourteen or as late as age eighteen, depending on the state laws, but the age of eighteen remains set for voting privileges and responsibilities to the military service.

Affluent youth are usually expected to go to college (yet another right of passage to adulthood) and are afforded the opportunities to do so, whereas the minority and inner-city youth rarely have opportunities to attend college and future prospects for work are greatly decreased, and the obstacles for transition into adulthood are more profound. According to Takanishi,

> Adolescents may well be the most maligned and misunderstood age group in our culture . . . [many] refer to the period as the "nightmare years." Adolescents are supposed to be rebellious, defiant of adult authority, moody, unmanageable, high risk-takers with no thought of the future, alienated, and so on (1993, p. 2).

Adult reactions range from wanting to control adolescents entirely to having nothing at all to do with them. Research in recent years, however, has brought a paradigm shift that Takanishi claims as having moved to a viewpoint that early adolescence is now recognized as a crucially formative period in the life span. It has become a time of great opportunities and not only a time of great risks.

> All adolescents, regardless of economic background, race and ethnicity, gender, and geographical region or country, have basic needs that must be satisfied: to

experience secure relationships with a few human beings, to be a valued member of groups that provide mutual aid and caring relationships, to become a competent individual who can cope with the exigencies of everyday life, and to believe in a promising future in work, family, and citizenship. To meet these needs, all societies, including our own, must provide adolescents with an education, broadly conceived, that provides a basis for making informed and wise decisions about their futures. This learning must occur in caring communities, whether in schools or in other community organizations, where well-prepared individuals are respectful of and sensitive to adolescents' developmental needs (Takanishi, 1993, p. 1).

The role of education and schools would seem to have an increased significance in its responsibilities to adolescents who must make the complex and difficult transitions that are required of them in this postmodern society. The role of critical theory in education is referred to by Martusewitz and Reynolds (1994), as perhaps being the most influential element affecting the critical educational community.

To be critical means a willingness to act in the world, which includes acting on one's self through reflective

> practice, as a means of creating spaces of life for oneself and others. It means being concerned with ethics; that is, with the considerations of the consequences of effects of one's action on the world. This includes an awareness of the tensions between authority, knowledge, and diversity; the ways that knowledge and power intersect to form specific relations in social life. In education, this means a willingness to explore schools' relations to the social hierarchy, asking who controls curriculum development and policy, what forms of knowledge are considered "real knowledge," and how these relations affect our ability to think and act in such a way may well expand the specific schools to a broader understanding of educational experiences and meaning in social life. It may mean that we begin to consider curriculum as the sum or what is possible to learn in the world (p. 18).

Giroux (1989) argues for a theory of popular culture that embodies a language of possibility that will free educators to address the most pressing problems confronting schools and society by engaging conditions for the production of knowledge that is relevant and emancipatory. Giroux calls for pedagogical planning and practice that recognizes the voices of those who have been marginalized and excluded, and making schools not only instructional sites, but cultural

sites as well, educating students to be critical rather than passive.

> . . . educators need to educate students to view schools as places that not only produce subjects but also subjectivities and that learning is not merely about the acquisition of knowledge but also the production of social practices which provide students with a sense of place, identity, worth, and value. In other words, educators need a theory of pedagogy and popular culture that alerts them to overcome the ways schooling makes some students voiceless, the ways teachers and students are often reduced to technicians, the ways particular forms of authority subvert the ethical force and possibilities of educational leadership and learning (Giroux, 1989, p. ix).

For educators to be engaged in this sense would require a serious reflection into their personal pedagogical theory and practice, and become immersed in the language of the everyday of the communities of which students are a part. Giroux (1989) claims that the issue of critical pedagogy demands that educators be attentive to how

> . . . students actively construct the categories of meaning that prefigure their production of and response to classroom knowledge. By ignoring the cultural and social forms that are authorized by youth and

> simultaneously empower or disempower them, educators risk complicitly silencing and negating their students. This is unwittingly accomplished by refusing to recognize the importance of those sites and social practices outside of schools that actively shape student experiences and through which students often define and construct their sense of identity, politics, and culture . . . Educators who refuse to acknowledge popular culture as a significant basis of knowledge often devalue students by refusing to work with the knowledge that students actually have and so eliminate the possibility of developing a pedagogy that links school knowledge to the differing subject relations that help to constitute their everyday lives . . . If one of the central concerns of a critical pedagogy is to understand how student identities, cultures, and experiences provide the basis for learning, we need to grasp the totality of elements that organize such subjectivities (Giroux, 1989, p. 3).

There is intense value in acknowledging and including popular culture in the development of a critical pedagogy. It offers the possibility of understanding how a politics of pleasure addresses students in such a way that shapes the contradictory relations they often have to schooling and the politics of everyday life. Giroux (1994) suggests further

that in this postmodern condition, we cannot underestimate the power of texts and images that produce identities and shape the relationship between the self and society in an increasingly commodified world, and the tremendous expansion of the power of representation that it embodies.

> Popular culture [needs to] be seen as a legitimate aspect of the everyday life of students, and be analyzed as a primary force in shaping the various and often contradictory subject positions that students take up . . . popular culture needs to become a serious object of study in the official curriculum (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 120).

The politics of popular culture lie at the core of everyday life. It concerns itself with the day-to-day negotiations of unequal power relations in various structures, such as the family, the classroom, the media, the immediate work environment, and society at large. It is a matrix of pleasure, relevance, and empowerment, and in a society that seems to have lost its firm boundaries, adolescents are caught in the constant power struggle.

Schools play an important role in the social development of youth, because they are the institutions that provide the context for the dynamics of social relationships. Youth from all segments of society are assembled in these public institutions called schools, and

are engaged in the interrelationships among varying members of the adult society, as well as those interactions with their peers. It is this peer culture that becomes a dominant part of the socialization process of youth. The significance lies in the social categories and social identities that emerge from within this socialization process.

In this youth culture are certain internal differences, and it is the recognition and interpretation of these differences that is shared by the members of that culture. Two dominant categories exist in the youth culture of schools: those who share the goals of the school and those who form a counter-school culture. The basic division between these categories is a social process that is common to virtually all public schools, and it generates and institutionalizes differences among adolescents on the basis of their responses to the school, and they are representative of the stereotypes that help to define the adolescent's role. The "Jocks", a term that originated in sports, represent those adolescents who participate in school activities, symbolize a lifestyle that embraces the ideal American culture and all that is viewed as healthy and wholesome, and are the most visible of all the students as representing both the school and the adult mainstream. The "Burnouts", on the other hand, characterize those students

who are seen as a deviant subculture and represent all that is counter to the adult ideal. These students come from a working class home, enroll in vocational courses, are addicted to all forms of abusive substances, skip classes, tangle with law enforcement officials, and generally are seen as trouble-makers.

> It is these two categories, and the oppositional relation between them, that mediate social class and control change in the adolescent world as their members cooperate, through their competition, to control and interpret the world around them . . . their two separate cultures are in many ways class cultures; and opposition and conflict between them define and exercise class relations and differences . . . each category defines itself very consciously as what the other is not. Through their competition and the relative universality of their social differences, the Jocks and Burnouts cooperate to maintain the hegemony of the American class system in the school . . . [the categories are] a function of competition among adolescents for control over the definition, norms, and values . . . as defining the individual as a social being (Eckert, 1989, p. 5).

For those students who do not wish to identify with either of the two dominant social categories, they choose to be

identified as "In-betweens" and describe their social identity in terms of the traits shared, and sometimes those traits that are in opposition, with each of the categories. The whole notion of social categories represents a reflection of the tension between the adolescents' need for clarity of choice and identity, and their needs for individuality, autonomy and freedom, and change. Common to each of the categories is the characteristic that these adolescents, regardless of their affiliation to one of the social categories, are eager and fearful about growing up, and they both seek and fear the autonomy that qualifies them for adulthood. It is evidence of the contradiction of popular culture.

> Within the context of the school, which mediates between adolescents and adult society, the corporate norms associated with Jocks are positively evaluated and rewarded, while the noncooperative norms associated with Burnouts are stigmatized and discouraged. As a result, the school provides not an open community in which individuals can explore their values and pursue their interests, but a social regimentation in which particular values and interests restrict each individual to a well-defined place in the institution and in the adolescent community (Eckert, 1989, p. 23). The social categories that differentiate between the

students in school are part of an organized production process of subjective value. Wexler (1995) claims the product of this process is

> identity, selfhood, the "somebody" which the students work to attain through their interactions in school. The process is the organized shaping of a distribution of images of identity . . . they make a difference for how the student defines herself [himself] and is reciprocally defined by and defining of friends, teachers, and parents. These images of self are stereotypes, relatively unrefined, almost caricature types of social identities. But, students and teachers work with them and produce them in the course of the interactions . . . These practices are highly structured, dividing within class and gender into identity types which are the "somebody" that you have become (p. 9).

Even in their resistance to school life, students unintentionally contribute to social reproduction and the central and defining activity while in school is to establish at least the image of an identity. The adolescent pursuit to "become somebody"--the effort to establish an identity--becomes the underlying basis for the social life of the school.

Wexler (1995) maintains that educators have

concentrated on cognitive skills and curriculum and knowledge in the schools while neglecting the social construction of identity. Failure to provide students with the core elements of modern social relations in the schools has helped to shape the struggles that confront youth. What matters most to the youth is their struggle to become somebody and establish their identity through social relations--this is what life in school is about. Wexler claims that the current crisis in education is a crisis in the school itself.

> The main thing about schools is that they are one of the few public spaces in which people are engaged with each other in the interactional work of making meaning. These are the places for making the core meaning, of self or identity among young people . . . They want to be somebody, a real and presentable self, anchored in the verifying eyes of friends whom they come to school to meet. While they are aware of life after education, in the occupational world of work, and in varying degrees acknowledge interest and attention to the learning of school subjects, their central and defining activity in school is to establish at least the image of an identity (Wexler, 1995, et al., p. 155).

This provides educators with the tremendous task of analyzing their pedagogical perspectives concerning the

curriculum of the schools. The role of the school is crucial in the ways that adolescents come to view themselves and others, and in the social relations in which they define themselves. The popular culture of adolescence, with a clear understanding of where these youths have come from, who they are, and what they bring with them to the educational institution, is imperative in providing them with the positive and nurturing kind of environment that will foster normal and healthy social relations and interactions. Furthermore, schools offer powerful and influential adult role models at just the time in the young person's life when positive role models are most needed. Perhaps educators should place more emphasis on the changes in role and status in schools, which will lead to a redefinition of the place of the individual in the social structure. It seems clear that the task of schools in educating young people, must make exerted efforts to extend the curriculum to include popular culture as an essential element in the structure of schools and the interactions that take place on a daily basis.

SELF-ESTEEM, PERCEPTIONS OF SELF, OTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SELF, GENDER, AND PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH ADOLESCENCE:

According to Beane and Lipka (1986), one of the difficulties that those who wish to work with, or research, the concept of self-perceptions, is the lack of clarity of

the definition of terms--self-concept and self-esteem. These terms have been used by many interchangeably. Beane and Lipka, however, maintain that these two terms are actually representative of two distinct dimensions of self-perceptions. They assert that self-concept is the description an individual attaches to himself or herself.

> The self-concept is based on the roles one plays and the attributes one believes he or she possesses . . . Self-concept is not referred to as positive or negative since it expresses only a description of the perceived self and does not involve a value judgment of that description by the individual (p. 5).

They proceed further to explain that self-esteem is something completely different, for it refers to the evaluation one makes of the self-concept description and, more specifically, to the degree to which one is satisfied or dissatisfied with it, in whole or in part.

> Thus when we refer to the self-esteem of others, we may say that it is positive, neutral, or negative, or use other terms that denote the quality of the self-esteem or the intensity of the individual's feelings. Self-esteem judgments are based on values or value indicators such as attitudes, beliefs, or interests . . . . The point of understanding the place of values in self-perceptions is that an individual may not have the

same self-esteem judgments others would have under similar circumstances (Beane and Lipka, 1986, et al., p. 6).

The main purpose for making the distinction between self-concept and self-esteem seems to clarify that even though they are both distinctions of the broader terminology of self-perceptions, self-concept is descriptive in form, whereas self-esteem is evaluative in its form. It is important to remember, however, that this distinction in terminology is not universal, and therefore, there will be considerable sources of literature that do, in fact, use the two terms interchangeably.

Research indicates that many of the problems evident in today's youth are closely related to their self-esteem. Problems associated with violence, drugs, abuse, gangs, corruptive behavior, and even suicide are an outgrowth of feelings of low self-esteem and self-worth. In developing a curriculum with a preventive approach to adolescent problems, Kramer (1988) found that the issues of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, students dropping out of school, violence, and suicide were only symptoms of far deeper problems, however. Kramer defined five major conditions from which these symptoms emerged:

> (1) lack of self-esteem and self-respect; (2) inability to communicate thoughts and feelings on an intimate and

genuine level; (3) few, if any, conflict resolution or decision-making skills; (4) unrealistic expectations about how life was supposed to be; and (5) a complete misunderstanding between men and women who, as a result of quite different upbringings, had different ideas about how to approach life and how to live it (1988, p. 56).

Kramer concluded that these social dilemmas were issues that began when these individuals were very young, and the only way to prevent these symptoms would be to help these youth to effectively deal with the crucial areas of self-esteem, communication, conflict resolution, and sex roles and expectations.

Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, and Kilkenny (1992) cited several case studies in which adolescents were faced with the challenge of identity and social relationships. One adolescent was deeply concerned with any appearance of being "different" in reference to relationships with other adolescents, a fear that controlled his actions and behavior throughout his school years. He spoke of the difficulty he encountered in identifying those features about himself that defined his identity, his feelings of insecurity, and his constant fear of rejection. In his quest for individuality and identity, he was forced to recognize that his past experiences had helped to shape the person he had become,

and his acceptance of himself and his unique characteristics would free him to enjoy his peer relationships.

Other case studies cited, further acknowledge that the varied dilemmas facing adolescents revolve around identities and their relationships with others. The studies suggest difficulty in the ability of adolescents to accept themselves, acknowledge their individual differences and identities, and the influence this has on their relationships. The manner in which they deal with these issues has a positive or negative effect on the direction in which they continue living.

"In this struggle to be 'simply human,' the struggle for identity, many adolescents come to view themselves as creatures apart from humanity, alienated from the mainstream" (Gerler, 1986, p. 436). Adolescents often feel that no one cares for them, their problems are larger and more difficult than those that others must experience, and they view any unique individual characteristics as a deviation from the norm or what is accepted. Gerler suggests that their search for identity too often leaves many young people feeling very much alone and without hope. Further, Gerler (1986, et al.) concludes that there is a tendency to alienate adolescents during this painful time of growth and physical changes, as well as the social influences and pressures. Evidence is seen in adolescent

problems of depression, attempted suicide, eating disorders, substance abuse, preoccupation with physical appearance, and defiant forms of behavior. Gerler emphasizes the need for educational programs that aim to give young adolescents the skills for critical thinking and decision-making in combination with strong feelings of self-confidence and self-acceptance that will enable them to make a stand when confronted with peer pressure.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) and Crisci (1986) also address the issue of alienation, or the lack of a sense of belonging, as it relates to adolescent development. Crisci suggests that social skills development and character development complement the development of cognitive skills. Therefore, educational programs need to provide young adolescents with certain skills for living. The ten concerns for adolescents that should frame the curriculum include:

(1) self-concept (liking and accepting oneself),

(2) feelings (dealing constructively with such emotions as loneliness or fear),

(3) attitudes (developing a more positive mental state),

(4) friends (building constructive relationships),

(5) family (appreciating and strengthening family bonds),

6) marriage (establishing trust, loyalty, and commitment),

(7) parenting (learning the elements of effective parenting),

(8) money (understanding the principles of financial management),

(9) careers (goal setting and life planning), and

(10) philosophy (discovering meaning in life and one's personal perspective) (p. 440).

Ianni (1989) suggested that the adult society needed to play a significant role in providing a structure for adolescent development. Youth conflict and confusion were inevitable, according to Ianni, when such social institutions as the home, the school, and the workplace present different standards of adulthood. "The sense of identity and the social role of a teenager can change radically with the surrounding social environment" (Ianni, 1989, p. 675). He responded to the importance of peer groups and their influence on all children, especially in the lives of adolescents, as settings for social development. Communities shape socializing institutions that foster the learning of its values, and schools become central institutions in the lives of adolescents, "assigned a role at least commensurate with that of families in the preparation of adolescents for later life" (p. 680).

Seibel and Murray (1988) noted that one of the early signs of vulnerability on the part of adolescents toward suicidal tendencies was identified as failure in school--easily observed by peers and adults--that diminishes a young person's self-esteem. They further suggested that the daily interaction between teachers and students provided the teachers with the greatest opportunity not only to help identify maladaptive behaviors, but also to help students by providing curriculum-based strategies that focus on self-awareness, communication, and decision-making and problem solving techniques, as well as personal alternatives and resources. The school, then, could provide an intervention plan in which vulnerable children are guided through difficulties resulting oftentimes in youth suicide.

Most research studies concerning the problems of the adolescent society support the same areas of development as being crucial in determining predictable outcomes for further development. At the top of the lists are concerns with self-identity, self-awareness, or self-esteem. Relationships, including those with parents, other family members, friends, and especially peers and peer pressures, along with problem solving and conflict resolution skills, appear to be major focal points in current research, adding support and strength to the notion that these areas must, indeed, have a significant influence on "identity

formation."

STEREOTYPICAL GENDER ROLES AND GENDER INEQUITY:

It seems apparent that the notion of gender and stereotypical gender roles are an essential element in addressing the identity formation of adolescents. The terms "sex" and "gender" must be differentiated when addressing this issue. "Sex" refers to the biological aspects and characteristics of a person, whereas "gender" is a term that has been socially constructed.

> Gender involves those social, cultural, and psychological aspects linked to males and females through particular social contexts. What a given society defines as masculine or feminine is a component of gender. Given this distinction, sex is viewed as an ascribed status and gender as an achieved one (Lindsey, 1994, p. 3).

When one refers to "gender roles", these may be defined as those expected attitudes and behaviors which a society associates with each of the sexes. These include "the rights and responsibilities that are normative for the sexes in a given society" (Lindsey, 1994, p. 4).

Females, historically, have been a silenced, devalued, and objectified group, marginalized in a society dominated by male values and ideologies. Some of the literature refers to females as always being termed the "other", and

she is "always other in a hegemonic order that is hierarchical and patriarchal and built on control and domination" (Stone, 1994, p. 225). Woman has been considered to be inferior to man. In reference to education, Sadker and Sadker (1994) state,

> Girls are the majority of our nation's schoolchildren, yet they are second-class educational citizens. The problems they face--loss of self-esteem, decline in achievement, and elimination of career options--are at the heart of the educational process. Until educational sexism is eradicated, more than half our children will be shortchanged and their gifts lost to society (p. 1).

Although both boys and girls experience difficult problems with self-esteem during adolescence, girls usually experience a very definite and long-lasting decline in their self-esteem.

> In contrast to boys, who generally judge themselves by what they are able to do, girls generally portray their worth in terms of their physical appearance. Thus, girls exhibit constrained views of their potential and their "place" in society and much less confidence in their abilities--particularly in math and science (Harris and Pickle, 1992, p. 12).

In the 1991 report, Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging

America, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) urged all educators to continue exerted efforts to help establish gender equity in our schools. For the educational system to be equitable, schools must create an environment in which each person, whether male or female, comes to feel valued and respected, and an environment that fosters one's self-esteem. Further research suggests that curriculum in schools is usually derived from the productive world, which is most often associated with a male culture, rather than the reproductive world, which is most often associated with the female culture (Grumet, 1988, Noddings, 1984).

Current research further lends support and credence to gender inequity in education, in the workplace, and in our society as a whole. Klein (1988) suggests that educators have a double standard in teaching, evidenced in the expectations of female students as opposed to male students. Gender stereotyping is typical in most of our schools, and thus contributes to sex discrimination. Shakeshaft (1986) asserts that, in education, females are accorded neither equality of treatment or equality of outcome in most of our schools, thereby, presenting a major crisis in education.

"High achievement in mathematics and science is a prerequisite for lucrative careers that have been traditionally closed to women and minorities," claims Scott-Jones and Clark (1986, p. 521). They report data that

supports the fact that teachers treat boys and girls differently. Male students receive more attention, praise, encouragement, and criticism from teachers than do their female counterparts, and boys have more contacts relating to their academic work than do girls. Research conducted by Noddings (1992) further supports gender biases as evidenced in education, and addresses particular attention to significant differences in the fields of math and science especially.

Sadker and Sadker (1986) stated that classrooms at all levels in the educational system are characterized by an environment of inequity, and that bias in classroom interaction inhibits student achievement. Their research indicates a unique fact that emerges from the experience of female students in our nation's schools: female students start out ahead--in reading, in writing, and even in math--and twelve years later find themselves lagging behind the male students in the same system.

> From grade school to graduate school to the world of work, males and females are separated by a common language. This communications gender gap affects self-esteem, educational attainment, career choice, and income (p. 512).

Campbell (1986) noted that similarities between the sexes in math achievement are found more frequently than

differences in the elementary years, and if differences are found, they usually favor girls. By high school and beyond, however, there are many sex differences found in mathematics achievement, and they always favor boys. Similar results were acquired when comparing achievement between girls and boys in science and computer education. When Sadker, Sadker, and Steindam (1989) investigated educational reform in reference to gender equity, they found little accomplishment in promoting educational equity or closing of the gender achievement gap. Their research points to a contradiction between national scores on standardized tests, where boys outperform girls by the secondary school level, and report card grades, where girls are shown to outperform boys.

CONCLUSION:

The review of current research literature supports that issues concerning children and youth, especially during the adolescent years, and that are crucial in terms of healthy human development revolve around the individual's identity--feelings of self-worth and value, and social interactions and relationships. These issues are central to future development and achievement, both personally and academically. They represent significant concerns that must be addressed by educational, societal, and cultural structures that provide the framework in which these young

people grow and develop. In addition, gender plays an important role in the influence of society on youth, with its unrealistic expectations and inequity between the sexes, demonstrating a clear bias against females.

The literature indicates an emphasis on the problem of self-identity on the part of youth in our nation, as an important source of youth tension that we experience today. Such knowledge would suggest that our society fails to make clear to our youth what the exact status or role of the adolescent is within society. There is an apparent uncertainty pertaining to how society should perceive the adolescent--as still a child or as an accepted member of the adult community. This ambiguity presents a difficult situation for adolescents who struggle with their efforts at establishing their own self-concept and identity, and become more confused as to what role they are expected to play. These issues will have to be addressed now and in the future if we ever hope to find solutions to the problems facing our young people in today's society--in order to understand the postmodern crisis in "identity formation".

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The text of Chapter II has been an attempt on my part to share a portion of my findings as I surveyed current literature available that I felt was relevant to identity formation in adolescents. Some of the research was directly indicative of the relationship to the focus of this inquiry, while other findings are significant in the ways in which they indirectly influence adolescent identity formation. My attempt was to increase my own awareness of the various aspects of life experiences that have influenced the adolescent prior to this stage in his/her life. We can safely assume that we cannot simply dissect one period of time from the lived experiences of any person and fully comprehend what it means in the context of this inquiry. The human being is a total package of all the influences that have impacted their life stories since they first entered the world.

Now, the stage is set, having explored the adolescent's development physically, cognitively, and psychosocially. I have attempted to understand the role of the family, the school, those who share their world, such as peers, and what the research reveals about popular culture, which is the world in which they dwell. These have been, for me, the major areas that needed to be explored in order to prepare

to address the focus of this research--the problematic of identity formation in adolescence and the influences that impact it.

Chapter III will now focus on the methodology and procedure in which I will frame this research inquiry. It is representative of my attempt to situate myself at the core of my own personal experience as I endeavor to make a comparison with the experiences of others. Seeking to understand adolescent identity from their perspective requires that I set aside my own preunderstandings and perceptions. Only then will I be able to remain open to the ways in which the experiences of others can be related first to my own lived experience and autobiographical understandings, and secondly, to compare the perceptions these youths have of their own experiences as compared to my findings in the literature review of Chapter II.

Are there clear and direct correlations between the current research literature, in broad and universal terms, that can be evidenced in the life stories of those who openly share their lived experiences in their own words, through the textual analysis which will be explored in Chapter IV? I seek not to merely describe these lived experiences, but rather to interpret what their stories actually tell us about who they are, how they see themselves, their world and their place in it, and to

understand what has impacted and influenced the directions of their lives through the formative years leading them to adolescence.

Willis (1991) claims that

> Phenomenological inquiry thus includes both intuitive scanning of one's own life-world and empirical, naturalistic gathering of evidence about the life-worlds of others. Phenomenological states are known through direct evidence of one's own primary experience and indirect evidence of the primary experience of others (p. 178).

This is indicative of my reasoning to begin this research by exploring the autobiographical account of my own personal lived experience, and then turn to the lived experiences of others in a phenomenological inquiry.

In this chapter, I will address the purpose of any research inquiry, and then attempt to relate it to the problematic proposed in Chapter I. Further, I will fully explore the components of each of the three metholodogical procedures I will use in conducting this inquiry. My endeavor here is to fully clarify what the methodology requires, my understanding of how it works, and an explanation of how it will be utilized in exploring the research at hand. Moreover, it is an acknowledgement of my own naive understandings and the ways in which I hope to

remain true to the research, keeping it as pure and free from any preunderstandings I may have concerning what I may find.

The use of autobiography helps me to place myself and my own lived experiences at the heart of the research. It provides the foundation on which I am able to relate to the lived experiences of those subjects toward whom this study is focused.

A phenomenological perspective utilizing hermeneutics is my attempt to not only look to those lived experiences of others, resulting in only a descriptive analysis of my findings. Rather, I will apply hermeneutics to the textual analysis in order to gain a greater depth of understanding and interpretation of what these voices of adolescents are really trying to express. Beneath their words, are the feelings, emotions, influences, attitudes, values, and beliefs that shape their worlds. Interpretation of these covert expressions is vital if I hope to argue that this research is valid in its findings.

Therefore, it is difficult for me to actually separate the various methodologies used in this study. It is, in fact, the ways in which they interrelate that is a primary factor for using the combination of autobiography, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and a textual analysis of the lived experiences of the adolescents as they relate them.

For example, my method of interpretation will be through a textual analysis of the lived experiences of others as well as of my own autobiographical account. Each methodology will intertwine with one or more of the other methodological procedures in some way in this endeavor, in the hopes that it will have been thoroughly researched and supported in its conclusions.

van Manen, in Forms of Curriculum Inquiry (Short, 1991) suggests that using a methodology for phenomenological inquiry in curriculum emphasizes the use of empirical evidence in the life-worlds of others.

> Its major value for curriculum studies . . . arises from its affirmation that one's own life-world can be known within the common sense world of everyday experience, for this affirmation opens the way for consideration of descriptions of the life-worlds of others (p. 181).

With this explanation of the reasons behind choosing these particular research methodologies, I now move on to an explanation of the purpose of all curriculum research inquiry, with specific emphasis given to those methodologies to be used for the purpose of opening new understanding in the inquiry of the problematic of this work.

CURRICULUM RESEARCH INQUIRY:

The purpose of research inquiry is to find knowledge

that is not yet known to the researcher; seeking out answers to those questions that prompted the inquiry in the first place. Inquiry, then, should produce some measure of knowledge and understanding, although it may not necessarily provide complete answers to all the questions. Curriculum research, or curriculum inquiry, involves various forms of inquiry methodology (Short, 1991). Knowing which form or forms of inquiry may be necessary, requires that an attempt is made to use those that will best help to answer the questions that prompt the research. The type of questions being asked, then, will determine the methods of research to be used.

> To understand the nature and structure of curriculum inquiry, we need to understand its relation to inquiry in general, its structure, its relation to curriculum practice, its current status and problems, its special features as a field of practical inquiry, and the necessity of employing multiple forms of inquiry in addressing curriculum research questions (Short, 1991, p. 2).

The purpose of this inquiry, as mentioned in Chapter I, is to seek to identify the various aspects of life and society that help to influence and impact the process of identity formation in the adolescent. This research will be "human science" research in that it deals with human

phenomena, as opposed to "natural science" research, which would deal with natural phenomena. In order to gain an understanding of the questions raised for such an inquiry, the methodology used must be one that is appropriate. According to van Manen (1990), the methodology used for research refers to,

> . . . the philosophic framework, the fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science perspective. It includes the general orientation to life, the view of knowledge, and the sense of what it means to be human which is associated with or implied by a certain research method . . . methodology means "pursuit of knowledge" (pp. 27-28).

Procedure, van Manen goes on to say, refers to the way in which we proceed with the research, according to the rules and generally recognized practices of research. According to Dilthey, as recorded in van Manen (1990), nature can be explained, but we must seek to understand humans; "we can grasp the fullness of lived experience by reconstructing or reproducing the meanings of life's expressions found in the products of human effort, work, and creativity" (p. 181). Further, van Manen suggests that,

> Hermeneutics and phenomenology are seen to be involved in all the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences that interpret meaningful expressions of the

active inner, cognitive, or spiritual life of human beings in social, historical or political contexts. To say it differently, human science is the study of meaning: descriptive-interpretive studies of patterns, structures and levels of experiential and/or textual meanings. Human science research is the activity of explicating meaning (p. 181).

This research inquiry will be a qualitative study, since the nature of the study is not such that the data can be quantified or measured. The study will seek to gain and deepen a rich description and clear understanding of the factors that influence the identity formation process in the adolescent genders. It is my assumption that many of the factors will be consistent as the study progresses; however, there will undoubtedly remain some factors that are not universal to all adolescents in general, and then to the male and female genders in particular. There should be significance in each of the factors, whether or not they can be categorized.

The qualitative research methodology to be used in this curriculum research inquiry will be autobiography, hermeneutic phenomenology, and textual analysis.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY:

Autobiography has come to be recognized as a legitimate

field of knowledge in the field of curriculum. It has been my own lived experiences, those relating to identity formation and the challenge it served in my own adolescence that has prompted this research. Therefore, autobiography has become the initial point from which this study will proceed. It is highly personal in nature, and an experience that I know very well, which provides a foundation of knowledge on which to build this research inquiry. It is me; it is what I know and who I am. The use of autobiography in curriculum and education research is addressed by Graham (1991), who has asserted that,

> . . . to talk at all about knowledge and the curriculum is inevitably to talk about the self and the manner in which that self makes the flux of experience intelligible . . . For if all knowledge begins in self-knowledge, or is a function of self-knowledge, then we cannot be said to truly know something until we have possessed it, made it our own (p. 3).

Graham continues further to say,

> . . . that writing one's autobiography or writing autobiographically engages a conception of knowledge as a function of reflective self-consciousness and of the active construction and reconstruction of personal experience. When cast in these terms autobiography can be conceptualized as a narrative undertaking focused on

> the events of an individual's life that supports a view of the knowledge so gained as at once personal, active, and experiential (pp. 8-9).

The use of autobiography as a methodology for this research inquiry, provides a dialectical relationship between myself and the world in general, and the world of education in particular. The way in which I know and perceive myself in relation to the inquiry itself brings me closer to the subject and the experience of the dilemmas of identity and social acceptance in our society. To do research is to question the way we experience the world as human beings. The more fully I know and understand myself, the more meaningful will be the knowledge and understanding that emerges from this inquiry.

> Autobiography, it is argued, as the vehicle that comes closest to fulfilling this urge toward self-knowledge, not only stands poised to reveal the hidden sources of one's attitude toward one's educational experience, but actually demonstrates the validity of a constructivist approach to knowledge and the workings of a subject-in-process (Graham, 1991, p. 118).

The works of William F. Pinar and Madeline Grumet, who have advanced the view of autobiography as curriculum theory, will be relied on to serve as valid and resourceful guides in this journey into autobiography, as will also

Robert Graham's work.

HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY:

Hermeneutic phenomenology, as a research methodology, requires the use of two distinct methods: phenomenology and hermeneutics. Each is valid in its own right and stands as a form of research; when combined they carry an even richer description and purpose.

Phenomenology -

> Edmund Husserl is credited with the original formulation (phenomenology), a scientific discipline of description of how the world in constituted and experienced. Husserl's famous dictum "Zu den Sachen" is translated both as "to the things themselves" and "let us return to what truly matters." Through the so-called eidetic reduction, the phenomenological investigator moves underneath the surface of social life to its essences. To specify this sphere of inquiry, Husserl postulated the concept of "Lebenswelt" or lifeworld. Husserl's philosophical successors, most notably Martin Heidegger, have extended this concept--a concept central to the curriculum studies (Aoki, 1988, p. 402).

Dwayne Huebner introduced phenomenology to the field of curriculum studies, and phenomenological contributions have continued through several generations of significant

curriculum theorists since, including Pinar, Grumet, van Manen, Miller, Aoki, and Reynolds, only to mention a few (Pinar & Reynolds, 1992).

Perhaps phenomenology can best be described as the study of essences, although the most popular terminology accompanying phenomenology appears to be the study of "lived experience." The emphasis in phenomenological research is always on the meaning of the lived experiences. According to van Manen (1990), the point of phenomenological research is,

> . . . to "borrow" other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience (p. 62).

It is important to acknowledge that one's lived experience can never be captured in its true essence, since it can never again be exactly replicated. Only in reflection of the experience can we hope to gain a sense of the depth and richness of the experience itself in its original form.

> A phenomenological description is always one interpretation, and no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially 'richer' or

'deeper' description (van Manen, 1990, p. 31).

This relates back to Husserl's notion of "to the things themselves." Further, a good phenomenological description is "collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience--is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience" (p. 27).

> Lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence--in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience (van Manen, p. 36).

van Manen suggests that phenomenological research is such that it always becomes a kind of personal engagement that brings us to how we understand things and further how we understand ourselves.

According to Willis (1991), phenomenological inquiry,

> . . . investigates the distinctively human perceptions of individual people and results in descriptions of such perceptions which appeal directly to the perceptions of other people, and . . . phenomenological inquiry is not about the physiology of perception; it is about the course of primary human consciousness in

individual lives. It investigates such perceptions through whatever methods are appropriate for discerning individual life-world perceptions and for expanding and refining the perceptions of the inquirer" (pp. 174-175).

Hermeneutics -

Hermeneutics is generally described by most as a theory of interpretation. Understanding is an essential element in the act of interpretation. Whereas phenomenology is referred to as the description of a phenomena, hermeneutics provides an interpretation for the description. According to Heidegger, it has been argued that all description is ultimately interpretation.

> The meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation . . . The phenomenology . . . is a hermeneutic in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting (van Manen, 1990, p. 25).

Inquiry becomes more hermeneutical the more we endeavor to interpret a phenomenological description.

A hermeneutical phenomenology research inquiry, then, will use phenomenology to describe the lived experience, while hermeneutics will seek to bring a rich interpretation to that description, or what van Manen refers to as a search for the "fullness of living."

> To do hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal . . . Hermeneutic phenomenological human science is interested in the human world as we find it in all its variegated aspects . . . phenomenological research finds its point of departure in the situation, which for purpose of analysis, description, and interpretation functions as an exemplary nodal point of meanings that are embedded in this situation (van Manen, 1990, p. 18).

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS:

The third methodology used in this research inquiry will be a textual analysis. By this, I am referring to a thorough review of appropriate literature that relates to the various facets of the problematic of this inquiry. The factors to be explored have been named in Chapter II in the "Review of the Literature". Each area will receive careful consideration in an attempt to search for links that correlate between the many theorists and researchers who have significantly contributed to the review of the literature when compared to the life stories of adolescents as voiced in the textual analysis. This analysis will also

include the reading of various case studies that are relevant to the problematic.

Through varied texts, I will seek to gain a richer and deeper understanding of the lived experience of others; first, in order to provide an accurate and clear description, and second, to look for general themes that may emerge from the texts reviewed that will provide some structure for interpretation and understanding. Through multiple readings of these texts, common themes should emerge that are essential to this inquiry.

The term "texts" in this research will be used to refer to those printed forms of narratives to be read and analyzed that directly relate to the research problematic. Many of the texts used will find their purpose in providing the groundwork and framework in which this particular inquiry is situated. More importantly, will be those texts that deal more directly with the aspects of identity formation and the curriculum, with particular emphasis on those persons who comprise the adolescent population. This kind of "textual activity" is what van Manen (1990) refers to as "human science research." In a phenomenological study, the researching of the lived experience is embedded in language. It is possible to experience something, but without language, that experience has no way of expressing itself. The text, therefore, becomes the written or verbalized

expression of a lived experience. It is through these "texts"--the written expressions of lived experience, that one can make some attempt to then determine the significance and meaning that exists within those experiences. Language, then, becomes an absolute necessity as the form of communication to both express the experience, and then as a means of interpreting that experience. Hermeneutics, the act of interpretation, must rely heavily on the text, regardless of the form, whether it be written, verbal, political, social, or any other possible forms, in order to proceed with the interpretive study of those expressions.

Max van Manen (1990) refers to language as a fundamental part of our humanness. In fact, he used Heiddeger's notion that "language, thinking, and being are one" (pp. 38-39) to show how language becomes the tool that allows us to recall and reflect on experiences in such a way as to give them a linguistic expression.

> Lived experience itself seems to have a linguistic structure. Experience and (un)consciousness are structured like a language, and therefore one could speak of all experience, all human interactions, as some kind of text, according to Ricoeur . . . If this metaphor is taken literally, all phenomenological description is text interpretation or hermeneutics. The idea of text introduces the notion of multiple, or

> even conflicting, interpretations . . . If all experience is like text then we need to examine how these texts are socially constructed. Interpretation that aims at explicating the various meanings embedded in a text may then take the form of socially analyzing or deconstructing the text and thus exploding its meanings (p. 39).

Pinar, in Understanding Curriculum (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995), uses two quotes from Hunter McEwen to further explore the meaning of "text" as it relates to contemporary curriculum. In McEwen's "Teaching and the Interpretation of Texts," published in 1992 in Educational Theory, he is quoted by the authors as discussing text as,

> The concept "text" . . . is now understood in a very wide sense: social practices and institutions, cultural products, indeed anything that is created as a result of human action and reflection (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 41).

McEwan's work in reference to interpretation and meaning is again quoted by the authors in Understanding Curriculum (1995),

> . . . it is in texts that meaning resides . . . It is a characteristic of the creations of human communities [cf. curriculum] . . . Meaning is a property of texts,

> and texts are more than just written documents. Human actions and practices, social institutions, cultural artifacts, and the products of artistic creation can also be considered as texts, or text-analogues, that are open to be read (p. 50).

As stated earlier, the second reasoning for using textual analysis, will be to seek general themes that may be embedded in those texts. "Themes" are used here to refer to particular elements found in the texts that occur with some degree of frequency, enough so that is could be determined as common to all the texts reviewed. According to Max van Manen (1990),

> In order to come to grips with the structure of the meaning of the text it is helpful to think of the phenomenon described in the text as approachable in terms of meaning units, structures of meaning, or themes. Reflecting on lived experience then becomes reflectively analyzing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience . . . The term "theme" is often applied to some thesis, doctrine or message that a creative work has been designed to incorporate. "Theme analysis" refers then to the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work (p. 78).

Characteristic of all human science research, the emphasis of the research is found in its meaning--the meaning that the research yields. In using textual analysis as one methodology of this research inquiry, finding the "meaning" in the texts analyzed will provide the focus of the study. As I have suggested earlier, it will be through multiple readings of three specific texts that I hope to see themes emerge. It will be a process of reading the texts, then rereading those same texts many times, in an effort to seek out the true "meaning" that exists within each text, as it relates to the problematic of this inquiry. In other words, what is the recurring element(s) that seem to surface in the narratives that have been read over and over again? As van Manen (1990) has suggested, in the process of theme analysis, the themes that relate to the study of the research can be seen as the descriptions of the aspects of the structure of the lived experiences.

Three texts will be used specifically in this research for the purpose of theme analysis. Common to all three texts, is the fact that each text is a written narrative that is either primary in its source; that is, narrative that is directly recorded from those persons who present a first-hand expression of their own lived experience, or the text is a secondary source, one that provides an ethnographic perspective of one who attempts to describe, by

way of narrative, their observations about the lived experiences of those subjects being studied. The three texts used in this textual analysis will include:

(1) Adolescent Portraits: Identity, Relationships, and Challenges, by Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, and Kilkenny.

This text includes case studies written by first-year college students who reflect primarily on their early adolescent experience and by students who have recently graduated from college and look back on those years as well. These cases represent students from all geographic areas of the United States, from urban, suburban, and rural environments, and from students of various ages and academic levels. Of the sixteen cases, ten students are white, two are African American, one is Native American, two are Asian American, and one is half-East Indian, half-white. Ten are females, while the remaining six are males. These students represent all levels of social class status and a variety of home backgrounds. Their own personal narratives provided individual experiences, that when examined as a whole helped to provide a rich overview of the field of adolescence for the authors conducting this research. The voices of these individual adolescents present a narrative of the issues facing some of today's adolescents.

(2) Gender & Ethnicity in Schools: Ethnographic Accounts, by Woods and Hammersley.

Using ethnography as its methodology, this text focuses on ethnographic work in education with particular attention given to gender and ethnic differences, and the complex issues that they raise. It explores the diversity of experience in the school life of different students. Discrimination and injustice, resistance, achievement in adversity, and the preservation of dignity are among the common themes presented. The text itself, concentrates on the perspectives of the pupils that are the focus of the ethnographic accounts. The attempt is an effort to explore the meanings and understandings reflected in these perspectives, especially in the ways they differ from adult perspectives.

(3) What Can We Do About Violence? A TV Documentary Written Transcript, produced by journalist Bill Moyers.

Bill Moyers, a well-known journalist and news commentator, presented a 4-hour special TV news commentary on the facts of violence and various organizations that are working to confront and prevent violence in the future. This presentation represented a mosaic of documentary reports and personal testimonies from educators, clergy, law enforcement personnel, and more importantly, the youths themselves--those who have become a distinctive part of the violence that pervades our nation. The focus is on America's young people and the growing frequency of violence

against youths, committed by both juveniles and adults, and occurring in homes, schools, and on the streets. In an attempt to confront and combat violence, public and commercial broadcasters, private foundations, community organizations, and corporations have formed a powerful alliance known as the "Act Against Violence" campaign. Their combined efforts for this campaign were launched in this Public Broadcasting Service special TV presentation. A printed transcript from that 4-hour news documentary has been acquired, as well as a video of the actual presentation. These will provide the third source of text used for textual analysis in this research inquiry.

In this textual analysis, interpreted through hermeneutics and based on phenomenological inquiry, I will be looking for actual distinctive ties of the lived experiences of others in relationship to the findings as discussed in Chapter II of the Review of the Literature. I will analyze the texts, not merely for descriptive purposes, but for the deeper understanding of what have been the influencing factors that have brought these adolescents to perceive themselves as they do, and what their life stories reveal about who they really are in this stage of life known as adolescence.

It is my desire that this process will provide an end result of an identification of the influences that impact

the identity formation process of adolescent genders. Perhaps through careful examination of these, some new knowledge may emerge that could help educators in better helping adolescents through the difficult process of acceptance and "fitting in" in today's society in a positive way.

It is important to state here, that I bring certain biases to this research inquiry. I cannot deny that I am a woman, a wife and mother, an educator, a student, and an advocate on behalf of children and youth. To indicate that I would be able to lay aside all biases in the course of this study would be unreasonable and unrealistic. I can only admit that they are so much a part of who I am that I am most likely incapable of completely voiding them from my research perspective. This research inquiry also derives from a deep personal interest--one that drives my pursuit. While engaged in this curriculum research, I will make every endeavor to orient myself in relation to the object of the study for the inquiry as van Manen (1990) describes.

> "Objectivity" means that the researcher remains true to the object. The researcher becomes in a sense a guardian and a defender of the true nature of the object. He or she wants to show it, describe it, interpret it while remaining faithful to it--aware that one is easily misled, side-tracked, or enchanted by

extraneous elements. "Subjectivity" means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and in its greatest depth. Subjectivity means that we are strong in our orientation to the object of study in a unique and personal way--while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or of getting captivated and carried away by our unreflected preconceptions (p. 20).

CHAPTER IV

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS:

WHAT ELSE IS THERE?

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter will focus on the voices of adolescents. Here I will attempt to analyze the three specific texts, as outlined in Chapters I and III. As mentioned before, I seek not merely to describe, but to interpret what these youth are really saying as they recount their life stories. Since two of the three texts used are actual transcripts of case studies and interviews, it is fairly safe to assume that their accounts are accurate descriptions of their own perceptions. However, one must always acknowledge the fact that there is no definite way of knowing if these accounts have been fabricated or manipulated in any way, either knowingly or unknowingly, by the subjects involved. Further, the third text, which consists of ethnographic accounts, will provide a rendering of the primary experiences from the viewpoint of the ethnographer. Although ethnographers are expected to be totally objective in methodology, we must acknowledge the difficulty that any person has in completely casting aside all prejudicial and pre-understandings.

In this textual analysis, I seek to identify common themes that emerge from the multiple readings of these

texts. After such identification, these themes will be compared to my understanding of what has been expressed in the various texts used in Chapter II - Review of the Literature. In keeping with Gadamer's notion of prejudicial preunderstanding, my intent will be to keep my own autobiographical accounts and understandings in focus as an integral part of my phenomenological perspective and hermeneutical interpretation of the lived experiences of others.

To begin, I would like to establish a framework image of the society in which these adolescents live and form their identity. These adolescents are surrounded by a world of popular culture, which must certainly be a strong consideration in any kind of analysis that we may hope to achieve. Grossberg (1992) reminds us,

> Few people would deny the pervasiveness and power of popular culture. It is increasingly visible, not only as an economic force, but as a powerful source of education and socialization and as one of the primary ways in which people make sense of themselves, their lives and the world (p. 69).

He goes further to suggest that the boundaries that frame popular culture are fluid, never a fixed set of objects. The meanings contained in popular culture are constantly shifting in that it is always the site of an ongoing

struggle between its content and its audience, and it is here that popular experience and identity are constructed and framed (Grossberg, 1992, et al.).

In the same sense, Grossberg (1992) claims that the social identity of youth is undefinable--"youth" being a term without its own center.

> It is a signifier of change and transition, caught between the ignorance and innocence of the child, and the perceived dogmatism and inflexibility of the adult. Youth is the last and almost always ignored category in the traditional list of subordinated populations . . . who, in the name of protection, are silenced. But youth cannot be represented, for it is an identity defined solely by and for the adults who, in a variety of ways, invest in it and use it to locate themselves (p. 175).

In the contemporary society in which we live, there is a view that sees the adolescent population as a group of individuals searching for an adult identity. Grossberg (1992, et al.) argues that postmodern youth are,

> . . . impelled to find a faith, a point of rest and defense, a touchstone by which they can accept or reject, love or hate, act or not act. Youth involves not so much an ideological search for identity as an affective search for appropriate maps of daily life,

for appropriate sites of involvement, investment and absorption. This makes it seem to be a period of constant shuttling between extremes. Searching for something worthy of their passion, they have no choice but to talk in extremes; they're being wrenched and buffeted by all the competing (and, in the contemporary world, unworthy) demands of the historical formation (p. 175).

As I have pursued this research inquiry, I have become aware of how much our present day society is bombarded with the negative connotations connected with adolescents and their struggles and tumultuous lifestyles. But I have also become aware of a much broader view of the whole adolescent scene. Based on the current research I have reviewed, as well as time invested in this textual analysis, I have realized that basically adolescents are caught between relatively two distinctive segments of life that constantly vie for their attention and identification. On the one side is the element that represents the adolescent's home life, family relationships, school relationships, education, and peer influence combined with stereotypical gender roles. On the other side, is the powerful and compelling strength of popular culture that tugs at their allegiance. The adolescent stands poised between the two driving forces. It is almost as if he/she must make a choice of which one to

commit to and thus become identified. It is during this period of adolescence, according to Dobson (1995), that youth are called upon to make the most dramatic and permanent changes in life. Their decisions during this time are crucial, for they will establish patterns of thinking, attitudes, values and beliefs, and determine the direction in which their lives will continue in the coming years. It is during this critical stage of development that the individual must make the complicated transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood, a transition that requires one to examine personal values, beliefs, views and perspectives that have been a part of their world for the years leading up to this point. These adolescents must try to understand their own perception of self, as well as the perception of how they feel others view them.

> Adolescents are intensely aware of how they are seen by others . . . It is a time in which the values and perspectives of others become clearer to the developing mind. The adolescent must first attempt to evaluate his or her different opinions--different ethical positions or religious beliefs, acceptance or rejection of societal norms, attitudes toward sexuality, ideological stance in relation to family and friends--before he or she can choose among them. In this sense,

> the search for identity is not only the process of molding an image of oneself--it is also the attempt to understand the fundamental components of the clay that will be used . . . the challenge now for the adolescent is a creative synthesis of past identifications, current skills and abilities, and future hopes--all within the context of the opportunities the society offers. The challenge is made immeasurably harder because of the technological society we live in, in which multiple roles and careers tantalize us with choice . . . Yet the autonomous creation of identity, the redefinition of one's relationships, the crystallization in various domains of a sense of who one is, what one stands for, and how one relates to the world, is the critical task of the developing adolescent (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 1995, p. 8).

It becomes clear that it is in this time of transition that the individual seems to be actively involved in choosing among alternative occupations, beliefs, and values. They must determine what they are willing to commit to and with what they want to be identified, what they want to become, and in which direction their life will proceed.

Consider, if you will, what we offer to the youth growing up in today's world. Grossberg (1992) provides us

with the following statistics to help us clearly see what helps to mold the young person's perception of their world.

> The suicide rate has tripled since 1950, current estimates are that four hundred thousand attempt it each year. Every year, over a million kids run away from home. The teen homicide rate has increased by 232% since 1950. Each year, over a million teenage girls get pregnant, and it is estimated that the rate of substance abuse has doubled in the past decade, including the staggering estimate that over 29% of teenagers are alcoholics (p. 187).

He continues by citing the report of the National Commission on the Role of the School and the Community in Improving Adolescent Health with their findings indicating an emergency health crisis among our adolescents. They further conclude that,

> . . . unhealthy teenagers--those who are alienated or depressed, who feel that nobody cares, who are distracted by family or emotional problems, who are drinking or using drugs, who are sick or hungry or abused or feel they have no chance to succeed in this world--are unlikely to attain the high levels of education achievement required for success in the 21st century. And thousands of these young people will experience school failure, which for many will be a

precursor to an adult life of crime, unemployment, or welfare dependency (Grossberg, 1992, et al., p. 187). Unfortunately, the shocking statistics do not end here. Additional evidence is just as frightening to consider. In 1985, there were

> . . . over two million reported cases of child abuse and neglect, and over five thousand deaths. Psychologists have noted that the rate of adolescent depression has been constantly increasing since the 1950s. And children now constitute the large fraction of those living in poverty, both in the United States and around the world (p. 187).

In addition, there is an increasing problem facing schools as related to the maladaptive behavior and disciplinary problems associated with youth. Consider the following comparison of the major perceived disciplinary problems in schools:

> In 1940, the major problems were listed as, in order: talking, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, getting out of turn in line, wearing improper clothing, not putting paper in wastebaskets. And in 1982: rape, robbery, assault, burglary, arson, bombings, murder, suicide, absenteeism, vandalism, extortion, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, gang warfare, pregnancy, abortion and venereal disease . . . Since

1970, youth has been implicated in what seems to be a never-ending series of discursively constructed panics, only some of which have any anchor in reality: Halloween sadists, child sexual abuse, prostitution, pornography, kidnapping, murder and, most recently, satanic cults. The last embodies the ambiguities of the contemporary position of youth, for youth are both the members and the victims of these cults. Increasingly, youth is represented as not the victim of suicide but the perpetrator of homicide, not the user but the seller of drugs, not the delinquent but the criminal, not the member of a subculture but of a gang (Grossberg, 1992, et al., p. 188).

The struggles associated with the behavior of youth are deeply embedded in the media, portraying restless and incoherent ways in which youth are viewed--images that, all too often, paint a rather bleak and disparaging image of the adolescent population. The contradictions in the way in which people perceive youth is perpetuated by the diverse signals these young people send out to the adult public, characterized in such ways as heroes and nerds, jocks and technobrats or burnouts, punks and rednecks, the hippies at Woodstock, valley girls and yuppies--all icons of a very diverse population (Grossberg, 1992, et al.).

So, here we are at this point in our history, with a

large adolescent population that carries an enormous variety of images and perceptions to adults, most of which carry with them some kind of negative connotation. And here are the youth--caught between the world of popular culture and the world of influence from the home, family, school, peers, gender roles, teachers and other adults. We ask them to choose between the two sides--with which group do they want to be identified? It seems we have left them with an "either-or" situation. They must conform or resist in reaction to either option. The problem? What about those youth who feel caught between two worlds, neither of which they choose to identify with? Their obvious choice is resistance, but how? They see no alternative, so they are left to try to decipher, "What else is there?" With no role models, no predefined response or direction in which to move, they are left with literally no choices, except for what responses they are able to create on their own. And for those attempts, the adult world usually casts a disdainful eye towards them, curse them and their behavior, give up on them in hopeless despair, or simply deny they exist as a sore spot in society. Unfortunately, there are those who are easily identified with the notion of "Toilet Assumption," a concept that Philip Slater (1976) uses to express the belief that "unwanted matter, unwanted difficulties, unwanted complexities and obstacles will

disappear if they're removed from our immediate field of vision" (p. 19). Our approach to all too many of our social problems in society is to decrease their visibility, or as the old saying goes, "out of sight--out of mind." Such a notion, false in its assumptions, may be a way of denying the existence of such problems, thus helping some to feel better, but it does nothing to help solve such ills.

According to Forbes (1994), we have reached a point in America in which we have become addicted to false fixes. This addiction seems to be significantly observable in the lifestyles of many adolescents, especially in the light in which society portrays the youth of today. Forbes explains his concept of false fixes as a real part of contemporary society by saying,

> . . . addiction is a troublesome quality of how people try to meet their personal, everyday needs for pleasure and sociability (culture) and which has to do with power and control (politics). Addictions are false fixes, poor substitutes for genuine, mutually satisfying relations. They characterize a culture in which people neither affirm others nor are affirmed themselves as valued beings in their own right. As a consequence, in addictive relations people lose their sensuous, fluid nature and the flexibility to maintain connectedness within shifting contexts and become fixed

> or dependent on one form of expression. These relations are marked by loss of choice and mutuality, with control given over instead to some substance, thing, activity, thought, or other person. In these patterns people need to control themselves and others at the expense of spontaneity or choice. As such they display rigid, all-or-nothing qualities in everyday activities. In order to maintain control, people must deny knowledge of conflicting needs, feelings, or viewpoints . . . These responses have exposed deep moral differences within American society over the politics of pleasure and the nature of relations within the family, school, the workplace, the media, and the society at large (pp. 4-5).

With specific reference to adolescents in the process of identity formation, Forbes (1994) continues,

> During the process of experimenting with different self-objects as part of identity formation, teens experience fragmented, unformed selves which some professionals describe as "piecemeal" and "patchwork." . . . the teenager, in seeking self-objects with whom he or she can interact in order to consolidate a cohesive self, has "an avaricious desire which leads to constantly changing superficial attachments and identifications. Object relations at this stage lead

> automatically to transient identifications." From this perspective teens temporarily choose people or images in forming a self not so much because they are valued in their own right but because they meet the teen's own immediate narcissistic needs . . . A skeptical postmodern perspective not only rejects the stable formation of a self but celebrates the very denial of any unchanging self which holds across time and space. From this standpoint there is no stable, enduring self but multiple representations of alternating appearances; these simulacra may even be nonhuman, commodified objects which stand in for a self. The self has become filled with images and voices from various relationships in which it partakes from everyday life (pp. 148-149).

This dissolution of the self, which has now become meshed with various kinds of disposable commodified images is a concept that Lasch (1984) and Gergen (1991) also refer to in their writings and research.

With this foundational understanding--a glimpse into the world that adolescents experience on a daily basis, the conflicts from contemporary society that confront them, and the dilemmas related to the identity of self--the focus will now turn to the common themes that have emerged from the voices of adolescents themselves.

THEME ANALYSIS:

In focusing on the actual voices of adolescents, three texts have been explored for the purpose of this textual analysis. As stated earlier in this research, both in Chapter I and Chapter III, the texts include:

Adolescent Portraits: Identity, Relationships, and Challenges (1995), by Andrew Garrod, Lisa Smulyan, Sally Powers, and Robert Kilkenny.

Gender and Ethnicity in Schools: Ethnographic Accounts (1993), by Peter Woods and Martyn Hammersley.

What Can We Do About Violence? (1995), TV News Documentary Transcripts, produced by Bill Moyers.

Multiple readings of these texts have allowed the emergence of common themes that characterize many of the life stories of the adolescents whose voices make up the three texts mentioned above. Understanding that these youth represent adolescents from different races, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and social class status, it is assumed that their stories convey a fairly accurate representation of perceptions that are characteristically universal in nature to the adolescent population as a whole.

The textual analysis requires interpretation rather than mere description. van Manen (1990) makes reference to Gadamer's writings when he cites him as saying, that in interpreting a text,

> . . . we cannot separate ourselves from the meaning of a text . . . Understanding is always an interpretation, and an interpretation is always specific, an application (p. 180).

Further, I refer to van Manen (1990 et al.) for the basis of utilizing hermeneutic phenomenology for the purpose of attempting to interpret these texts.

> Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is a 'descriptive' (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an 'interpretive' (hermeneutic) phenomenology because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. The implied contradiction may be resolved if one acknowledges that the (phenomenological) "facts" of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced. Moreover, even the "facts" of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitably an interpretive process (p. 180).

Through the use of theme analysis, I have identified four major categories, or themes, that have emerged from these readings. The four primary categories consist of the following:

(1) Home Environment and Family Relationships, (2) Schooling, Teachers and Other Adults, Role Models, Socialization and Peer Relationships, (3) Popular Culture and Perception of Self, and (4) Role of Race, Class, and Gender. I will follow these with some of the true accounts that show evidence of the ways in which these youth resist and show disclosure of what they are experiencing internally and its expression externally.

Using these major themes, I will attempt to show the apparent relationship between the texts themselves and how these themes would be consistent, or inconsistent, with the current research as expressed in the review of the literature concerning youth and the process of identity formation. It should be noted here, that in each of the three texts used for this textual analysis, it was very clear that the voices of these adolescents were all seeking to be "somebody", to find a place of acceptance, a place where they felt a sense of belongingness. If we assume "identity" as referring to who a person is, how they define the self, then I would argue that each account reveals a very accurate portrayal of young adolescents in search of their identity, and the process involved in the actual formation of that identity.

I must also note here, that in the process of attempting to separate the lived experiences of the

adolescents that comprise the core element of this research, I have found it extremely difficult to try to neatly categorize their experiences into a particular theme that has been identified. In every instance, the case study, the ethnographic account, or the oral recollection of their lived experiences, it is abundantly clear that the themes that I have been able to identify, consistently overlap. There seems to be no set boundaries; they are instead, fluid, easily moving through other experiences. There is an interconnectedness in the events that these youths portray--an interrelatedness that defies the very notion of separation. This supports the concept that adolescence, most certainly, is a complex period of life.

Even though several essential themes have emerged from the texts used, I have found it almost impossible to clearly delineate the lines that separate them into only one thematic unit. These themes are much like threads that weave in and out of various areas of the adolescent's life. They may be a part of the environment of the home and family relationships, as well as tie in as a major component in the area of perceptions of self, self-esteem, peer relationships, or reveal implication of class, race or gender. What seems to run true, is that these themes are so tightly and closely interwoven that it would be impossible to dissect them and force them into any one, or possibly

even two, of the essential themes that have emerged. In this analysis, my attempt will be to try to define the most obvious or observable theme that first captures the reader when encountering the text for the first time. It is imperative, though, that to try to suggest that any one particular experience of these adolescents fits expressly and completely within the boundaries of any thematic category would be pure folly. It is my opinion that, this is very simply, and yet, very profoundly indicative that human beings are a composite of all the various influences of the totality of their life experiences. As suggested early in this research effort, we must acknowledge that these youth are "whole" persons, and must, therefore, be recognized as such if we ever hope to achieve any worthwhile outcomes from this kind of research. By providing only a few examples from the stories of these adolescents, I will place them within one of the essential themes already identified. This will, however, in no way suggest that the boundaries are fixed. There is little doubt that the reader will readily see that there is a definite overlap in the themes themselves, just as there are complexities that frame the experiences of these youth. With this clearly in mind, I will now focus on aspects from a selected few cases from the accounts researched, to support the various themes that have been identified.

THEME #1 - HOME ENVIRONMENT AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The value of a positive home environment and healthy family relationships cannot be discredited. After studying the lives of many young people, it is clearly evident that, in almost a majority of all cases, these youth make some kind of reference to the ways in which early home life and relationships between parents and siblings have influenced their lives. The homes and families are either praised for many of the successes and happy experiences, or blamed for the pain of the difficulties and frustrations that these teens were called upon to deal with and that have impacted their lives. In the accounts given by these young people, there is evidence that supports a positive influence of encouragement, support, sincere praise for the child, a stabilizing force providing appropriate role models, and healthy relationships that young people can lean on when facing the many frustrations and confrontations of growing up. Sadly, however, there are also the cries that can be clearly heard from the voices of those young people who can only recall the hurts, the heartaches, the feelings of failure, the brokenness of the home and family relationships, the lack of support and encouragement, caring, happy childhood experiences, and even the lack of having the basic necessities of life met--love, caring, nurturing relationships, and the feeling that one is

cherished and loved, valued and worthy as a human being. The voices of the young people say it best. The following excerpts have been gleaned from the text, Adolescent Portraits: Identity, Relationships, and Challenges (1995), by Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, and Kilkenny. The majority of this section will be quoting their exact accounts as they have recorded them so that their words are left to speak for themselves. Again, it should be noted that in each of the case studies found in this text, there are usually several themes found in each case. My attempt here, however, is to pull out only those quotes that deal either directly, or indirectly, with the concept of how the home environment and family relationships have impacted the identity formation process from the perspective of the adolescent's own story.

Melanie, a 19-year-old, shares her experience of growing up with feelings of uncertainty, the anxiousness of being torn between compliance with the high standards of her family and the ways in which she managed to stifle her feelings in her effort to "appear" okay in the presence of others. She related that her search for identity was filled with the fear of confronting her intense feelings of self-doubt and low self-esteem. She sought desperately to clarify who she truly was, fighting the entire time to seek for something in herself, other than her scholastic achievements, that was worth valuing. Her story reveals how

she allowed herself to brush rather closely with dangerous consequences, especially with her relationships to men, in her effort to find her identity. Her family appears to have had a profound and significant influence on her mentally, emotionally, and socially during her adolescent years and during her struggle of seeking identity:

> My family has always been stable and permanent in my life. My relationship with my sister Sarah (two years younger) is particularly untroubled. I have always been very fond of, and protective toward her . . . She very much looks up to me and is ever so proud of me . . . I worry about her low self-esteem (it runs in the family . . .) and the fact that it is very difficult for her to live up to what she perceives as my enormous successes . . . Both my parents completed higher education and it was a matter of course that I would do the same. My father is very proud of my academic successes and both my parents nourish and encourage "intelligence." . . . because all four of us are shy--we all find listening so much easier than asserting ourselves . . . My father especially has a fear of emotions and instability, and he copes by being the most centered and unflappable person I know. Life for him is divided into organized, categorized sections . . . I couldn't just compartmentalize people or feelings--

that would be denying their very interconnectedness with other people/feelings--and thus I had to reject my father's philosophy. Nevertheless, I still had to live in a house where emotions were kept very much under control and social interaction was treated as nonessential . . . I was becoming more and more concerned about my ability to relate and communicate with others--particularly those of the opposite sex. I have always been scared of "maleness." I choose that word carefully; I am not afraid of men as individuals, but I am certainly uneasy about the whole concept of masculinity. I find it difficult to pin down this fear, but I suppose it must be at least tenuously connected to many things: my fear of my father's categorizing, the fact that I never had brothers and their friends around the house, my eleven years in an all-girls' school, my father's lack of social interaction with anyone but his family . . . Depressions were deepened by awful feelings of guilt and remorse: What right had I to be feeling this way? I was physically healthy, had a loving family, did very well at school, was treated by all as someone with abundant reasons for having high self-esteem and self-worth. It was plain contrary of me to feel I had a right to suffer. The very fact that I didn't think I

had a right to my depressions made them seem all the more immovable and permanent . . . I would cry monotonously and regularly, both at home and school. My sobs would be silent to the world but huge and deafening to myself. All I could see were the long days stretching effortlessly and emptily to the end of time . . . I was so good at constructing a facade--a semblance--of okayness for the outside world that soon they [my parents] too began to believe that everything was just fine and treated me accordingly. As I became increasingly competent at maintaining this veneer of togetherness, my internal screams shrieked louder and louder, and I felt I must surely be smothered by this dual existence (pp. 16-19).

Melanie's story is one that portrays the ways in which we are apt to put on false faces, masks that hide our true feelings from others in our lives. She obviously felt guilty for even having any feelings that were negative in any way from her perspective, and deeply afraid of failure--not living up to her parents' or her sister's expectations. Melanie found it too uncomfortable to deal with her true feelings or admit to herself or her family that she was not always "okay" with herself. Suppressing those feelings was the easier course to follow, and by so doing, the struggle to find her identity, who she truly was, was made much more

difficult.

Bill, a 20-year-old, shares his story about having to grow up quickly, being expected to act and perform as an adult long before the years of adulthood had arrived. His experiences at a local movie theater provided him with a place to perform responsibly to fulfill the expectations of his parents. His early independence forced him to learn more about the world than what most young persons learn during those adolescent years. Being a model student helped him accept experimentation with drugs and sex without the recognition that any of his behavior was ever questionable. The theater in which he worked became the arena outside the home where Bill gained his sense of self-confidence and responsibility. At 14 years of age, Bill began working at the Palace Theater, handling lots of money, candy, and the late-night craziness that occurs in such a place on the weekends. He begins his story by referring to his home and his parents.

> I was raised to work hard, since hard work is what has kept my family together from the start. I am an only child, the son of parents married at age 18. My mother and father had been dating a few months when my mother became pregnant with me. My parents were high school seniors at the time, and I can imagine the leaden feeling in their stomachs as they faced the reality of

this unplanned pregnancy . . . My mother told me that I wasn't the reason for their marriage--a catalyst, but not the reason. Neither of them would have been comfortable with a forced marriage. Their options were limited: they could get married, and face the tremendous pressures of a young marriage, or my mother could go away and have the baby with relatives, away from the eyes of friends and neighbors. Abortion was not an option due to the limited resources available in my state. So they thought and cried about it and decided to get married and try to make it work. Both sets of parents were extremely disappointed and angry. The extended family's anger did not help the situation any; now my parents were scared and alone. My father's parents . . . had faced a similar problem at age 20 . . . but theirs was not a happy union; there was a lot of bitterness and anger between them, which my father had seen all of his life. [My father] was president of the Honor Society, a scholarship recipient, and the vessel of his parents' dreams . . . There was no emotional support from my father's side of the family. My mother's situation was different . . . her pregnancy confirmed the low expectations that her guidance counselors had for her. As for her family, it appears that they kicked her out. Through their accounts I

have vicariously experienced the coldness and anger that they face from both sides. [Their] marriage required a complete renegotiation of expectations, dreams, and lifestyles . . . Together [they] entered college as married freshmen, with a child on the way. I arrived in February and was an ever-present reminder of the reality of the situation. Despite living in college housing, my parents had to work all of the time. Whoever was not in class or at work was taking care of me. There was never enough money, time, or energy for my parents to relax while our family was young. Never enough of the things which make college fun.

So long as I can remember, my parents have always placed a lot of confidence in me. Their confidence came with the responsibilities which they gave me. As soon as I was able, I was asked to do my share in our household. Anything that I could contribute lessened the overwhelming amount of work my parents faced. My first responsibility was to take care of myself. I was a latchkey kid during grade school, taking care of myself after school . . . while I was helping my parents out, the confidence they had in me was clear in their choice to leave me alone during the afternoons. . . If there was work to be done, I should do it, without

complaint . . . My responsible nature won my parents' respect and earned me more understanding for my occasional youthful indiscretions . . . By the time I was 12 or 13 years old, my responsible nature had won me a bigger share of independence than that which my friends enjoyed . . . the faith [my parents] had in me gave me a lot of self-confidence . . . Their faith was tested when I was 13, and a friend of the family offered me a job working at his movie theater delivering schedules for upcoming movies and events . . . . my involvement in one of the most important experiences of my life. My parents' decision had opened the door to a whole new set of experiences, and the lessons I had learned in our household had primed me for success . . . for a young adolescent, the Palace had it all. The most important thing that the Palace offered me was an extended family which I didn't have at home. Most of my co-workers were four years older than me, 18 when I was 14. The Palace was the center of their social lives, since they were all close fiends and the Palace was an exciting place. And if we were a family, I was certainly the little brother . . . My coworkers were my role models, both good and bad. By interacting with 18-year olds on a regular basis, it was inevitable that I would use them as a standard, and

reach for their level of maturity . . . For anyone who is growing up, maturity is the goal, a prize to be attained. From early adolescence on, I was thought of as a mature young man. I did all my chores, got good grades in school, and never got into any big trouble. Being a good kid and not causing trouble are the two most important measurements of maturity. I lived up to everyone's expectations, and then some . . . I had learned that if I did a good job I would be trusted with a greater share of freedom. That was the way I considered maturity when I was younger, as a social contract. If you do this, you get that. In my free time, away from adults, I played and acted like a child. I was a silly boy. . . [yet my mature image] made it clear that I was being judged by my appearance and performance, and not some age measurement . . . my 18-year-old friends . . . were my role models and their actions functioned as a subtle encouragement to do the same. They were my standard. Most of my male friends were college freshmen, eager to meet women and explore the realm of sexual activity . . . I had never had a 'big talk' with my dad, but my Palace peers educated me by example . . . my parents and I didn't talk about sexuality . . . the characteristics of my Palace peers' relationships with women influenced my eighth-grade

interaction with girls, by informing my ideas about sexuality and commitment as I became involved in my first relationships . . . I can see how three subtle pressures helped me make the choice to have sex. First of all, all of my male role models at the Palace were openly sexual, and I did want to be like them. Secondly, my girlfriend's willingness and desire to make love were very influential. The third influence was more general--the adolescent desire to explore the mysteries of being adult, and the actions and privileges associated with maturity . . . As I learned to take care of more and more of my needs, the duties of my parents became less and less, and they took on the role of providers and advisors, rather than keepers. Without reprimanding my parents for bad parenting, I am suggesting that I would have benefited from more parental involvement. I can easily understand why they trusted me so, but when the trust became an unquestioning confidence, some of my faults grew into problems. Without the direct supervision/ intervention of adults either at home or at work, I found myself becoming involved with both drugs and sexuality. I became exposed to marijuana at both school and the Palace during my freshman year. At work many of the workers and regular patrons smoked dope,

> and the Palace was a safe, dark, and hassle-free environment to try marijuana. I could hide my pipe and stash it at the Palace, and spend my stoned hours safely inside the movie theater . . . Smoking pot was an activity which linked my Palace existence and my social life at school (pp. 41-47).

The fact that Bill was a latchkey kid and found himself alone so much of the time could be viewed as trust on the part of his parents. In reality, the pressures that the parents were forced to carry were almost more than they could handle. In order to carry on with their own lives, as normally as possible, Bill was given the responsibility of taking care of himself. Without the supervision and interaction of his parents, and the lack of any siblings, the freedom of time and the responsibility for taking care of his own needs, led him through an adolescence filled with more than ample opportunities to explore drinking, drugs, sexual relationships, and smoking. He looked to those young people, with whom he worked and spent so much time, to serve as his role models and teach him the ways of maturing, a task that should have come from parental supervision in the home. The Palace became his place to hide from his parents, play the dual personalities, and his very own classroom on the lessons of life. What he lacked for at home, he was able to find elsewhere, without his parents ever suspecting

any ill-doing. As he reflected, he was careful to not blame his parents, but did acknowledge that his life now would have been different if his role model had been found in the home, if he had been given the opportunity of being a child without so much of the weight of responsibility and work placed on him at such a young age, and if his parents had been an integral part of interacting with him on an intimate level during those early formative years.

Emily is a senior in college. She grew up feeling that her parents' affection for her depended on her academic success. They stressed the importance of getting ahead, and instilled in Emily a strong competitiveness, the ethic of hard work, and the need to maintain a brave face regardless of the circumstances. Although Emily was successful both academically and athletically in high school, she found it difficult to make friends and felt insecure, which was perceived by her peers as arrogance. Fighting depression and attempting to gratify her feelings of insecurity by sexual gratification, she finds herself pregnant while in college, and makes a decision to marry the baby's father, a Native American student. Her family becomes outraged and will no longer support her financially. Emily's reaction and future decisions include breaking away from the domination she feels from her parents and finds herself feeling both a sense of freedom and what she perceives as an

end to her adolescence.

My parents are among the most mutually incompatible married people that I have ever encountered. My husband's parents, who are divorced, are perhaps even more incompatible than my own. Perhaps in some ways this is a good thing. We both got to see bad marriages in action and we are aware of many of the pitfalls that our parents were unable to overcome. We have clear examples of what one ought not to do. But it is difficult because we are both walking into unfamiliar territory in trying to build a lasting, strong, and supportive marriage. My marriage marks the end of my adolescence. It is the beginning of my adult life. Although I was only 20 when I married and 21 when my son Ian was born, youth had passed. The drive to "get ahead" is something that was transmitted to me very strongly throughout my adolescence. I was always told, especially by my parents, that it was very important for me to do well, to get ahead, to carry the family forward on the path to success. I was always praised for doing well in school and criticized, particularly by my father, for oversights, mistakes, or failures. From earliest recollection my mother indoctrinated me with the idea of becoming a doctor and going to Harvard. I'm not sure when I made the association

between parental affection and my continuing success, but I do know that this link was well established by the time I moved to Maine in the eighth grade. It was certainly an effective goad to my working hard, with love and security riding on every test. However, it was around the eighth grade that I began to experience episodic depressions and thoughts of suicide . . . I had no understanding and no control at all over episodes. It was like falling into a pit, or down a well. It hurt to get up in the morning and put on my clothes. It hurt to read or think or do anything. I could not see anything worthwhile enough in my future to struggle any more. Death seemed like a blessed release from the dreadful efforts of living . . . my mother reacted by getting me into psychotherapy . . . I have no doubt that without this help I would not have survived adolescence . . . But it was a long hard battle. There are so many facets to overcoming depression that are all a part of living through being a teenager, developing a strong sense of who you are, learning to live with your emotions comfortably, learning to cope with your sexuality, realizing that it is okay to be different and not being ashamed of your differentness. I don't find it at all surprising that so many teens commit suicide. I find it surprising

that so few do. Adolescence sucks. Oddly enough, when I was going through all that insecurity for the first time, many people who knew me thought me to be the epitome of a well-adjusted, mature teenager who had a firm sense of self, and they tended to treat me accordingly . . . I guess I was too good an actress for my own good . . . I am loath to place blame for my life on my parents, but there is one area in which I feel that my father justly deserves blame. He trained me not to cry. I can remember many occasions when my father would fly into a rage at the sight of my tears, saying things to the effect that I had better just suck it up because no one was going to take care of me, and that if I thought that womanish tears were going to help me in life I was sadly mistaken, that people don't have any use for weak, whimpering women, and so on. Now I think . . . teaching a young child that tears are inappropriate on all occasions is very much a mistake. My father represses so many of his feelings that when he flies into a temper he loses all control. Usually these tempers are short-lived, only long enough to throw something, slam something, or slug someone. For some reason many of his tantrums were directed at me . . . The last explosion occurred when I was 16 . . . my father provoked the conflict. In the course of making

some point he commented on how, as a goaltender in youth, in soccer, years ago, I had looked really stupid on my first penalty kick. I was very hurt by this comment . . . I pointed these things out to him, restraining myself from tears and acting in the rational manner he preferred. He repeated and elaborated on the fact that I had indeed looked stupid in front of all those people . . . I lost control and screamed . . . He lost it completely. He came across the kitchen swinging . . . He beat me on my back very hard, cracking a rib . . . I think the real crime of this episode was not that he beat me or that I seriously considered killing him but rather the fact that I had been unable to make the more healthy response of crying when what he said hurt my feelings. It was not for years afterwards that I learned how to cry in simple grief, hurt, or disappointment . . . My mother and I were always very close until we fell out . . . She was always there to cheer me on if I did well, and nag and carp if I did badly. I think that all of the things that she made it possible for me to do were things she would have liked to do if she had the chance. She had such an emotional investment in my success that she drove me to "be the best" all the time. We fell out when, sometime during high school, I

came to the realization that the thrill of being the best never lasted for more than an instant, and never served to make me feel better about myself. So I began, tentatively to invest myself in things other than competition, like friendships. As a result, my mother felt betrayed and angry . . . [I was led] to a fair amount of sexual experimentation beginning at an early age . . . I never got as much sex as I wanted in high school . . . it seemed like an answer to my isolation . . . I discovered, much to my dismay, that I was pregnant . . . My parents lost all self-control and flew to pieces . . . The decision to have the baby and my parents' reaction to it served to sever forever the ties that still controlled me to a certain extent. It freed me from ever being worried about what my parents think of what I want to do. I am foolish enough to want their love and approval still but never enough now to let myself do something I hate for their benefit . . . their continued animosity makes me question the depth of their capability for love and understanding (pp. 92-104).

According to Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, and Kilkenny (1995), all valued relationships undergo some stress at times, especially those times when the relationship must adapt to some kind of change that occurs within an

individual. During adolescence, the young person is making the transition of separating from their dependence on their parents, separating themselves in order to form their own adult identity. Because of this often difficult transition, many families experience an increase in the number of conflicts that may arise during early adolescence and a decrease when adolescents leave home. These conflicts are usually of mild to moderate intensity and are usually over mundane issues such as family chores, curfews, eating practices, dating, and personal appearance.

> Psychologists' contemporary approach to describing adolescent family relationships emphasizes adolescents' needs for maintaining intimacy and connection with parents and siblings, as well as adolescents' wishes for increased autonomy and independence . . . Results from studies that have observed adolescents' interactions with their parents have indicated the importance of family interaction styles that permit conflict between members in a context of support, acceptance, active understanding from parents, and parental expressions of individuality and connectedness (p. 136).

Living in a family that is characterized by disharmony and a constant threat of divorce, Chlaya attempts to compensate for her parents' unhappiness by being a perfect

child. Regardless of how hard she tries, she is unable to help her parents work through their unhappiness, and instead finds herself fighting anorexia, a serious eating disorder. Devastated by her efforts and sheer will, she is unable to control what is happening around her. During a time of recuperation from her deteriorating health, a result of her obsession about eating as a means of trying to control her life and trying to be perfect, she learns that she must discover her own realistic goals. Learning to give up her drive for perfection, she begins a long and slow recovery.

> Anorexia wasn't something that just "happened" to me--I didn't one day suddenly decide to stop eating. My problems ran much deeper than simply "not eating." The disorder was my desperate attempt to maintain some semblance of control in my life. It was a cry to establish who I was, to pick up the pieces of my shattered identity . . . using the eating disorder as a coping mechanism to deal with the turmoil that surrounded and threatened to suffocate me. I am convinced that my childhood represents the beginning of much of what led to the anorexia. My identity problem goes back as far as the elementary school years, and starts with my ethnic heritage. My parents could not be more opposite in their histories if they tried . . . As for me, I've gone through my entire life not knowing

exactly what I was . . . I'm forever giving what I call my "name spiel," explaining the origin and meaning of my name. Since such an understanding requires knowledge of my background, the subject inevitably leads into a discussion of my family, one of my least favorite conversational topics. Even though my parents' relationship was tenuous (to say the least), they never fought in public. No one would have guessed they were anything other than normal as far as married couples go. At home, though, the masks came off, the farce ended, and the boxing gloves were donned . . . In spite of all the fighting and all the threats of divorce that were made, though, it was always just words . . . I think the instability and uncertainty of their relationship bothered me the most. The dark, intense fear always loomed in my mind--would this be the fight that leads to divorce? . . . I'd be fraught with anxiety after every one of their quarrels. Within a few days, things usually returned to normal, meaning the usual strained relations in the absence of verbal brawls . . . When you're young, you think the world revolves around you. Given my egocentrism, I blamed myself as the cause of my parents' marital strife. I felt it was up to me to salvage their marriage, which I tried desperately to do . . . Harboring intense

feelings of guilt, I lambasted myself for not pleasing them and not living up to their expectations . . . If I could just be good enough, I thought, they'd love each other and, in turn, love me. I erroneously believed I could bring my parents together by the sheer force of my will. Frustration over my inability to positively influence their relationship caused me to feel completely ineffective and inadequate. My solution was to be more perfect than anyone could expect a child to be, to hide all signs of anger and rebellion, in order to deserve and gain their love. Being achievement-oriented in school was my answer to many of the problems I faced. By making the grades, I was sure (or so I thought) to gain the love and attention I so desperately craved, not only from my parents, but from my teachers as well. Because my family life was like an emotional roller coaster ride over which I had no influence, I turned to school for comfort and security. I knew that by working hard, I could do well--in the classroom, I could exert complete control. As the perfect student, people would respect and admire me. Only if others saw worth in me could I be truly assured of my substance and value. Unfortunately, my plan backfired on me. The more A's I received, the more my parents and classmates began to expect I would continue

to do well. I strove endlessly to impress my parents with my good grades . . . I felt I could never win with them. It seemed as though no matter what I did, no matter how hard I tried, there was always something lacking, something else I could and should have done better. I yearned for reassurance and affirmation of my worth but because I felt that I could never be perfect in their eyes I could never be truly convinced of gaining their love. These traits . . . were present throughout my childhood, but no one ever recognized them as potential problems. On the contrary, my drive to be good, to achieve, to live by the rules, and to avoid disappointing or arousing the criticism of others was what made me a model child, even though I never felt like one. The severe misconceptions I held became dramatically apparent with the onset of adolescence, for I was pitifully unprepared to meet the issues of this period. As I entered high school, I became even more rigid in my interpretations. My self-doubt intensified and my self-esteem plunged even lower. I was convinced everyone else was more capable, both socially and intellectually, than I. Never comfortable with myself, I constantly devalued my abilities, thinking I wasn't good enough for anything. Striving for perfection, for being the best became my all-

consuming goal, my purpose in life, to the point where I sacrificed all else. I studied all the time, believing that if I let up in the slightest bit, I would inevitably slip up and fail. All of my flaws would then be revealed, and I would be exposed for the imperfect person and the fraud that I was. To me, failure represented the loss of control, and once that happened, I feared I would never be able to regain it. I became petrified of showing any signs that could possibly be interpreted as imperfection. I felt compelled to live up to and surpass the expectations of my parents, teachers, and peers, in order to avoid arousing criticism, which I took as a personal attack. . . . So driven was I to succeed--or rather, to be seen as a success--that I imposed the strictest of standards on myself. Rather than creating a sense of pride, worth, and accomplishment, however, my role as the good, obedient, successful student--the girl who had it all together (at least on the outside)--caused me to feel increasingly empty inside. Paradoxically, the more "successful" I became, the more inadequate I felt. I began to lose control of my identity more and more as I fell victim to the "Perfect Girl" image in all areas of my life. I had no idea of who I was, only who I was supposed to be. I denied myself pleasure throughout

> high school, never allowing myself to simply have fun. To do something for the sake of enjoyment brought forth incredible feelings of guilt and self-indulgence . . . I had friends throughout high school, but I always kept them at a distance, scared that if I let them get too close, they would see that I wasn't perfect and reject me. Relating to my peers was extremely difficult for me as a result, because rarely could I talk about my inner feelings. I equated the expression of emotion with weakness and vulnerability, so I always remained deadly serious and kept things on a strictly superficial level. To others I must have seemed frigid, removed, and detached. I myself felt lonely and isolated. I desperately wanted to reveal the true me, but my intense fear of exposure silenced me (pp. 152-156).

Chlaya continues to share the two experiences that she feels were the significant turning points in her life that brought about the problem with anorexia. The first was when she met a young man who seemed sincerely interested in her, much to her disbelief. He had managed to sweep her off her feet, and she momentarily let down her guard and he kissed her. A short-lived romantic adventure was abruptly brought to a halt when, in the midst of feeling attractive and valued by another person, she suddenly reverted to what she had lived

with for so long and knew so well. Her feelings of low self-esteem and inadequacy surfaced, and she turned to the only defense mechanism she knew--isolation. Feeling accepted and a part of an experience that felt warm and wonderful was only temporary, for she began to doubt herself and her self-worth.

> I became even more miserable and disgusted with myself. This relationship represented the first time in my life that I had tested the wings of independence and trusted my own feelings, and I had failed. The incident reinforced my belief that I was worthless and incapable of making decisions on my own (p. 159).

The second event that served as a catalyst for Chlaya's eating disorder came when she was informed by the school counselor that she was no longer rated first in her class.

> Becoming valedictorian had become my life; every aspect of my identity was in some way wrapped up in it . . . my guidance counselor assured me that no mistake had been made . . . The walls were closing in on me and I felt as though I was suffocating . . . Afterward I fought desperately to keep up my false image of control and stability, stuffing my pain down further and further inside me in the hopes it would somehow magically disappear. Everyone expected me to be number one--what would they think when they found out I

> wasn't? . . . I felt duplicitous and deceitful, as though I was projecting a false image that was just waiting to be debunked. I was falling from my pedestal, and I knew the fall would be a long and hard one from which I might never recover . . . now, five years later, I am still trying to put back the pieces and recover . . . In my mind, I had imagined people losing respect for me, devaluing my abilities, and seeing me for the incapable fool I felt I was. That didn't happen. The only person to turn her back on me was me. I was truly my own worst enemy, endlessly berating and cursing myself for being so stupid (p. 159).

Chlaya soon became obsessed with shedding a few pounds, thinking that this would help her feel better about herself. Desperately trying to find something in her life that she felt she could control, she poured herself into losing weight, and kept up this task with the same fervor that she had given her grades.

> I based my every mood on my weight, not realizing that in doing so I was setting myself up for failure--though I didn't realize it at the time, self-worth comes from within, and can't be found outside oneself. As I continued my quest for a "wholeness," an identity I thought thinness would provide, I failed to recognize

the self-destructive path I was following. My body became more emaciated, but all I saw in the mirror was excess flab that I had to be rid of . . . When I tightened my grip over the food, I was in control--I was invincible, and no one could touch me. The eating disorder gave me an incredible feeling of power and superiority, a sense of independence, I could prove that I had control, that I could accomplish something on my own . . . Eventually, I had to resign myself to the fact that I alone cannot repair the immense damage that exists within our family . . . I have relinquished my role as the family savior, realizing I am unable to control the behavior of my parents and my brother. I can, however, change my own actions and reactions within the family structure. An important, and difficult, part of the recovery process has been extricating myself from the dynamics of the family in order to develop and accept my own independent sense of self . . . I guess I should have learned by now that life doesn't always follow the plans you make for it . . . after four long years, I have finally beaten this disease . . . and I am finally ready to move ahead with the rest of my life--to "live, laugh, and love," as they say. I'm optimistic about the future, for if there's one thing I've learned, it's that I'm a fighter

. . . and, more importantly, I'm a survivor (pp. 164-167).

Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, and Kilkenny (1995, et al.) provide many other examples of case studies that, in some measure show significant signs of how the influence of the home environment and family relationships have impacted the identity formation process in the lives of these adolescents. The case studies mentioned thus far, serve only as examples to support and provide evidence for the claim that there is a definite link between the home, the family, and the ways in which adolescents confront some of the transitions of moving from childhood to adulthood. These examples are in no way intended to be inclusive, but are only representative of many more, all of which bear significance of the correlation of these intersecting and interconnected factors. Other examples are now provided from the transcripts of the TV News Commentary, What Can We Do About Violence? (1995), a PBS Special Program conducted by Bill Moyers. Rather than attempting to give full accounts in these life stories, I will simply provide excerpts from these lived experiences that these adolescents have used in the interviews. These represent answers given in response to certain questions asked of them, or comments given as part of their explanations of their perceptions of life and the ways in which they experience it. In this

series of responses from the adolescents themselves, Bill Moyers demonstrates how juvenile violence brings us face to face with the crisis of America's inner cities.

In New Orleans, a 9-year-old black boy is shot and killed in a drive-by shooting. As a part of a school project, he had written a letter to President Clinton only a week earlier, asking for his help in stopping the killing. His letter read as follows:

> Dear Mr. Clinton, I want you to stop the killing in the city. I think that somebody might kill me. Would you please stop the people from killing? I'm asking you nicely to stop it. I know you can do it. Your friend, James (Moyers, 1995, p. 2).

Nine days later, James Darby was dead, shot by a 19-year-old black male who lived in the neighborhood. Earlier that day, several boys had been playing in the park. Suddenly a fight broke out during an impromptu football game. Joseph, the 19-year-old charged for the death of James Darby, reacted to seeing his younger sister, Karen, and his younger brother, Michael, getting beaten up. When asked what happened, Michael, the younger brother stated, "And he [Joseph] got the gun and got in the car and I was forced to get in the car and we went riding out and that's when he shot the gun" (Moyers, 1995, p. 2). Joseph's mother did not even realize that he owned a gun. She asked her son if he was

responsible for the death of James in the park, to which Joseph responded, "Mama, I really don't know what I hit, I just went out of here angry and I was drunk" (p. 2). A TV news reporter offered the following:

> You can't begin to understand what happened here, why 9-year-old James Darby died without understanding something about the world he grew up in, and the world that not only he grew up in but the two teenagers suspected of killing him grew up in as well. It was a world where violence was an accepted part of life. Children see it all the time and they have to find their own way to survive in this environment (Moyers, 1995, et al., p. 2).

Neither Joseph, nor his brother, Michael, had ever been considered to be violent or involved in any crimes prior to this shooting incident. In fact, Joseph had been known to be a quiet kid most of his life. When he had been taunted by other kids at school, he was known to back away and refuse to fight, even when provoked. The TV reporter stated,

> But as he got older, I guess he realized that just to survive he had to be tough. He had to find it somewhere inside himself to be a little bit tougher, to be more of a man (p. 3).

Joseph's teacher is quoted as saying,

> He acted as though he was reaching out and not only to me but to his mother and seems as though he was trying to make his mother understand that he needs that male image in the home and he wanted it from his father and only his father (p. 3).

Other young children standing around after the shooting made other comments such as, "I'm frightened that I might get shot or something, in a drive-by shooting, or kidnapped or something. That's why I stay inside." And another, "When I go somewhere I might get killed. There's too much violence in the world. . . We'll all be dead by the year 2000. Most everybody in the world gonna be just swept away." A small boy adds, "I'm scared. It's like my mama tell me, 'Go in the house,' because she wants me to ignore that stuff. But it's not going to never stop" (pp. 3-4).

These voices of young children speak strongly of their fears. In reading their stories, it is easy to see that they are afraid to go to parties or sporting events, play outside, and often just afraid to walk to and from school. Angela Blackwell, director of the Black Community Crusade for children speaks about the fear that captivates children:

> We have learned that young people are afraid . . . we hear young people, particularly children who live in areas of concentrated poverty but it is not limited to our poor communities . . . And so what they're afraid

> of may be death in some dramatic way. One of the things it does to children that I think is really horrible is they fail to develop close relationships with multiple people. So they fail to learn to trust . . . if we look at the statistics of young people who are in trouble, they are likely going to come from single homes. Because those homes are often going to be very poor. That that single parent is going to be very stretched, in terms of trying to provide financially for the children . . . think about not living in a community where you have diverse role models. Almost everybody else is poor, and all the houses are the same. You do not have access to all of the kinds of cultural things that expose young people to different options in life (pp. 4-5).

Bill Moyers (1995 et al.) interviewed several young people who are now incarcerated in prisons for violent crimes. In pursuing what happened in the lives of these youth that brought them to this point, he discovered what they had to say about violence.

> [Violence] in my neighborhood, it was just part of the lifestyle . . . you did what you had to do to survive . . . when you're committing crimes, you don't think that you gonna get caught when you're doing it. Little crimes started with shoplifting, you know, and then

maybe stealing a bike, or then a car. You know, going on a joy-ride. Robbing somebody. And I never got caught. Never got caught for any of the crimes that I was doing. Until this, the one that I'm locked up for now, and that's murder . . . In essence, I was in a real bad mood that day. And someone was in the wrong place at the wrong time. It could have been anyone at the time. Someone just said something to me--and I have no idea what the person said. I just unleashed every--all the anger I had inside me . . . It, it, it was years of violence, years of being violent just built up. And anger, resentment, just aggression . . . mad at the world, everything. It started when I was a little kid, when my parents got divorced. And then, the choices I made . . . I was 11 when my parents got divorced. I thought that my whole world had just gone to hell. Just, everything, everything fell apart because before my parents got divorced, I thought we had the perfect family, you know. I had everything I wanted, and I was real happy. But, they got divorced, and it was like somebody dropped a bomb (pp. 2-3).

Another inmate was quoted as saying,

By 14, I was deep into the gangs. And my mother lived in a rival gang neighborhood. And I had been jumped a few times, so I had the gun for protection, from the

rival gang members. And so, you know, I had already got into a confrontation once before, with the boyfriend that she was involved with at the time. So, I figured, well I'm not going to fight him again, so I'm gonna scare him out of the house. I figured, you know, I put this gun in his face and more than likely, I tell him to leave he gonna leave . . . I called him. I said, 'Raymond', and he turned around and looked at me and then he like turned back around and started walking towards my mother with both his fists balled. That's when I fired the gun (p. 3).

Another inmate reported,

> There was no plan, we had no plan in the first place. It was just to go get them. And it went from a drive-by shooting to a--and what they actually did was walk up to the house, knock on the door and shoot (p. 3).

Still another inmate shared his feelings about his crime,

> There was another rival gang member, and we were going back and forth, you know, shooting at each other and so forth. So, one day it ended up I was involved in a drive-by shooting. Which, um, killed--which resulted in a death and an attempted murder. It just seemed fun. It felt--it gave me that acceptance. It gave me the feeling that I never found at home, that nobody else ever gave me in my family . . . it was love . . .

> [the gang] gave me everything: love, praise. Whatever I needed. When I did, when I did a crime or whatever they praised me: Hey! Right, good job, homey, know what I'm saying? Let's go buy some drinks or something. Let's get budded out . . . I don't think you live--you live in some fear, but, at the same time, you live in it for the excitement of what fear gives you. Fear actually gives you some excitement, some rush. And that's why you end up carrying a gun and, you know, hanging around with the gang, and doing drive-by shootings or, you know, stealing, robbing and so forth, jacking people you know . . . that's one thing that we could never fail at. Because we would always accomplish what we wanted to do, which was crime . . . I didn't even think ahead to the next day. It was all about living in the moment, being impulsive and irresponsible . . . It's, hard for a youngster coming up, especially without a male role model in the house--I had older brothers, who were all involved in gangs and the whole dope life. So, I didn't have that positive male role model . . . I never even met my father, you know. I don't have a fath--my mother's my father (pp. 3-4).

Moyers (1995, et al.) reminds us that violent offenders are not limited to males. In fact, the percentage of female

offenders is increasing daily. Young women, ages 13 to 24 comprise the major number of females in prisons. Moyers claims that for many of them, being locked up in prison for murder, or other violent crimes, is the end of a journey that often began when they were childhood victims of violence. One female inmate shares,

> My parents, they were separated when I was 8. Both of them worked, so my brother and I were home all day by ourselves, you know. The only thing to do was to get into trouble. That's the only thing we could find, because there was nothing else, really, to do . . . I started drinking when I was 8, 8 and a half. And I was, like, a full grown alcoholic by the time I was 9. I was abused as a child--sexually abused. I was approximately 6, 7. But it happened like several different times and there were several different people. And it's like, not dealing with that, it just, it just builds up and builds up inside of you and just makes you like hate the world, hate the entire world. I didn't understand that from the age of 3 to 12 I was being molested. I felt it was my fault. And this was, like multiple people. But I was never told that, 'It's OK for you to talk about it, you're not to blame'. . . you can't, you don't talk about that. As a child, you think it's your fault. There's no way that you're

> going to bring that to your parents' attention, or your uncle--my uncle, your brother, your nephew is abusing me (pp. 4-5).

Another female inmate talks about her association with gangs.

> When I was 23, I met this guy, you know, I got pregnant, I ran away with him. I had a baby at 13. And I don't know, just . . . think how I got involved with gangs makes me cry . . . He used to always, um, hit me. All the time. He always used to hit me, put me down. And I used to keep all of that inside of me. And just, I think that was one of the reasons I was involved in a gang. Because the homies showed me they really cared about me . . . So violence and crimes were just normal. It was acceptable . . . my family was my neighborhood (p. 5).

Deborah Prothrow-Smith, MD, Harvard School of Public Safety, speaks to the issue of violence and youth. She believes it is deeply rooted in the environment of the home and the relationships between parents and their children during their early years.

> The role of parents, I think is an extremely important one. Men have to be examples to boys of manhood without violence. To counter some of that super-hero junk. Women have to be examples to young girls of

> womanhood without violence. Parents have to talk to their children about the cultural issues, watch television with children, explain what has just been seen, watch the movies . . . draw attention to the fact that violence and death have consequences (Moyers, 1995, p. 29).

During the October 20, 1994, Mark Taper Forum, California Assembly Select Committee on Gun Violence, James Wilson summed up, what was in essence to him, some of the major contributors to the extensive and overwhelming statistics concerning the violence of our youth, as connected to the home and family.

> I think in the long run, the most troubling problem in this nation we may face is not crime and not drugs or certainly not them simply. It is the fact that we are increasingly raising our children in isolation from human contact. We are turning over to electronic devices, ranging from television programs to VCRs to electronic games and computer games the task of occupying ourselves. And in particular, our children, during all or most of their free time. The social isolation produced by this may, in the long run, turn out to be one of this country's greatest blunders. People acquire morality as a consequence of human interaction. We teach each other by our expectations

> and our actions what is good and what is expected and we conform to those expectations partly because we want to, partly because it's useful for us to. To the extent that we eliminate those interactions and isolate ourselves in whatever way, we are reducing the chances that we will learn what it means to be fully human. This change, if it occurs, will occur so slowly that we will not notice it. But at some time, we will look back and say to ourselves, 'What did we do wrong?' (Moyers, 1995, et al., pp. 29-30).

Many other examples of correlations supporting the influence of the home environment and family relationships among adolescents are available. However, this sampling should confirm that this area is extremely significant in this transition period when the youth is searching for an adult identity. He/she looks first to the home for role models, for acceptance, for a sense of belonging, and for guidance and support from individuals from whom they seek love and caring. Inevitably, when the home environment and the family structure fails to provide a positive atmosphere and support for these young people, they turn elsewhere to find a way to meet these basic needs. They find substitutes in many and varied places and through many different people. It may be the peers at school, teachers, gangs, people of the streets, unhealthy notions that one must be the best,

the brightest, the most worthy, the most capable or responsible, or independent--these may be where the adolescent finds fulfillment for their needs. Others may even turn inward, withdrawing to themselves, and emerging as violent persons who are out of control. When the homes and parents fail the child, the child turns elsewhere. Haven't we really set these young people up for lives of failure, heartache, and destruction? What should we expect from them, when they've been given so little to work with so that their time is filled with ways of "making do with what they have?"

The focus now turns to the second theme analysis, that of schooling, teachers and other adults, and role models that exist in these areas.

THEME #2 - SCHOOLING, TEACHERS AND OTHER ADULTS, AND ROLE MODELS, SOCIALIZATION AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS

This thematic category, once again, presents difficulty in an effort to place examples. As Bill Moyers (1995) clearly states, outside of the home and family, the school becomes the primary institution in the lives of children. These children carry their experiences from the home environment and their place within family relationships into the school. They are confronted in the schools with new adult caregivers and role models that will influence their identity formation. Even more importantly, though, it is

during the time that children and young people spend in the schools that they experience the significant influence of socialization and they will experience an environment that fosters a healthy self-esteem, or one that belittles them and lowers their self-esteem. Strongly tied into the environment of the school, is the notion of success or failure, which becomes much more important because of their peer relationships.

> Peer relationships may include close friendships, cliques, peer groups and crowds, and romantic relationships . . . Close friendships in adolescence may have many facets and functions, such as providing companionship, stimulation, social comparison, and intimacy or affection . . . Peer cliques and groups may also have a variety of functions in adolescent growth and development. Peers provide a means of social comparison, as well as a source of information outside the family . . . The role of popularity, fitting in with desired cliques, or being rejected or neglected by peers is acutely felt by all adolescents . . . Current theory and research emphasizes the connectedness between the quality of family relationships and the quality of close peer relationships (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 1995, pp. 137-138).

Acknowledging the need for all youth to feel acceptance, a

place of belonging, and the desire to be a part of the larger youth culture, the school becomes an important site for meeting the social needs of all young people. It is in the school where many will have the greatest opportunity to learn the social skills necessary to negotiate interactions with their peers in all walks of life. In the text of the case studies, Adolescent Portraits: Identity, Relationships, and Challenges (1995), the following accounts help to show the importance of the school, socialization skills, and peer relationships. Betsy shares the importance that the school and her teachers played in her life story:

> . . . because I didn't know how to fit in, I stayed on the fringes of the crowd in my ninth- and tenth-grade years . . . I have always been concerned about approval . . . Almost all the compliments that I can remember from the early part of high school were from adults . . . . I didn't want to look like everyone else, but I didn't feel attractive around people my own age. Adults approved of me. I was quiet and polite, I made good grades in school, and I didn't adopt the current teenage fads like listening to rock music or talking on the telephone for hours on end. I sought approval from adults as a substitute for popularity among my peers. I was always conscious of how other people saw my reactions. It was as though there were two of me. One

> part was living my life--feeling happy and sad, excited and disappointed. The other part was outside of me watching and noting my effect on others. The outside part enjoyed getting sympathy, attention, and praise . . . . The inside of me did the feelings . . . Having older friends who weren't relatives was important to me. No matter how much I loved and confided in my parents, it was good to be listened to by someone else. They sympathized when I got into arguments at home, but they also had more perspective on how my parents felt than my loyal same-age friends. They would be supportive of me, but also helped me to see my parents' side of things. I could take suggestions from them without the resentment that I would have shown my parents . . . There was a cozy, relaxed feeling of belonging.

Betsy found a teacher who began to correspond with her through her written assignments. It became an avenue through which Betsy could express herself openly and privately, while still having insight and help in understanding herself, her frustrations and problems--all this attention from a trusted teacher who kept the lines of communication open and demonstrating genuine caring towards Betsy's problems in growing up. Becoming involved in school drama was the beginning of the end of Betsy's shyness and

lack of involvement in school and friends.

> The other students in drama became good friends. It was a place for people who didn't quite fit into the mainstream. They were a little more liberal, and a lot more accepting of differences than the other students at school. I found a niche with them, and by the time I graduated I felt at home with them and like a leader instead of a follower (p. 144).

Betsy takes the opportunity to reflect on her early years in school and the feelings she experienced then. It is evident she felt a real responsibility toward her teachers and how they were treated by other students. She describes those early school years:

> When I was in first grade, I came home from school with headaches because the other kids were so noisy and bad. I hated seeing others misbehave and I even felt responsible for them. I would try to be extra good and cooperative so that the teachers wouldn't think that it was their fault that things were out of control . . . I would try to comply with whichever behavior was valued. Luckily, over the years I had enough of the encouraging, creative teachers to overcome my shyness and by tenth grade I was no longer embarrassed to speak out in class and express my ideas. I still felt a responsibility towards my teachers, though . . . I

wanted them to know that their efforts were appreciated . . . I wasn't a brown-noser, although it may have looked to some like I was . . . The people who didn't know me so well wrote me off as a brain and a bookworm, but they weren't people I cared about impressing . . . since I was capable of making good grades and generally succeeding in what I did, these things became very important to me. I liked the approval I got from my family and other adult friends when I did well. So I followed the rules, studied hard, and did what was expected of me . . . I can see the change that I went through [in high school] as I struggled to find friendship and support without compromising myself and my values. I was different from my classmates . . . many of my basic values were contrary to those of the people that I went to school with. This made relationships difficult because I often felt that I had to choose between getting along with others and being honest about my real feelings . . . concentrating on similarities was better than worrying about differences. I think that I came out of high school with a stronger sense of myself because I had been exposed to such a variety of attitudes different than my own . . . at graduation, I felt comfortable with who I was, and who they were (pp. 150-151).

Betsy's story shows how she relied on the adult role models and adult acceptance during her school years when she felt somewhat hesitant and apprehensive about her relationships with her peers. She shows the anxiety that accompanies the desire and the need to fit in and find a place that feels safe and comfortable. She talks about the differences she sees and feels between herself and her peers and the ways in which they influenced her actions, attitudes and values. It seems that she managed to negotiate through those differences and emerge from high school feeling good about who she was, a success story in the life of this young lady.

A successful high school student academically, Ann speaks openly about the friendships that helped her to deal with issues of control, identity, and sexuality during her early adolescence.

> We wanted to do excitingly forbidden activities like going out to dance clubs and drinking whiskey sours. Liz, Dana, and I wanted to do these forbidden things in order to feel: to have intense emotional and sensual experiences that removed us from the suburban sameness we shared with each other and everyone else we knew. We were tired of the repetitive experiences that our town, our siblings, our parents, and our school offered to us. The realization that our world was actually a

> very small part of the world hit us when we were 15. The real world looked bigger, brighter, and much more fun. The friendship between Dana, Liz, and myself was born out of another emotional need: the need for trust. The three of us had reached a point in our lives when we realized how unstable relationships can be, and we all craved safety and acceptance. Friendships all around us were often uncertain. We wanted and needed to be able to like and trust each other . . . Although I was "good" underneath the surface I felt wicked, or at least hypocritical at times. I smoked in the bathroom, but I made sure I did not get caught. I had a fake ID, but when I went to bars I did not get drunk or into trouble. I had a few drinks and laughed with my friends and looked at boys. I was a pretty cautious teenager. I was also responsible, partly out of caution, and partly because I really wanted to get things done the right way and not fool around with failing or losing out on an opportunity: I have a pretty competitive streak, which pushes me to do things even when I'm not that inspired to do them . . . I think the other reason for my responsibleness is that I was brought up to be aware of other people's needs (pp. 184-186).

Ann relates that she is extremely close to her family, and

while being the oldest, she feels responsible to help with the younger siblings. Her family does not have a lot of money, and she recalls wearing clothing from the thrift store long before it was popular to do so. But her family never conformed to the preoccupation with money and material things that was characteristic of others in the community in which they lived. Ann continues her story:

> I was the editor of the newspaper, the valedictorian, friends with all the teachers, and on basketball, volleyball, and softball. So I was cool for basically unexciting reasons . . . So people usually trusted me, telling me things about themselves and their lives and other people because I either gave good advice or could keep a secret. I was always pretty insecure with the "cool people" though. I saw so much back-biting and lying and name-calling and dropping of friends that somewhere inside I was always nervous that I would be pushed out; maybe people would stop calling me or inviting me to parties. When I entered high school, my preoccupation with the "cool people" heightened . . . In the first two years of high school I was quite popular--mostly for the same reasons I was popular in junior high school. I was cool enough not to be a geek, nice to lots of people, and was also productive . . . . I guess I felt like an outsider because my

> popularity always seemed quite precarious--it seemed so connected to external factors. I remember feeling that others were inherently popular--while I had to work at it . . . Popularity was not always fun; it was often unsettling--or boring . . . I was afraid that I would be labeled uncool and idiotic and blacklisted from parties and lunch tables and weekend plans . . . The popular crowd believed in coolness by association. By the end of tenth grade the three of us knit together in an effort to be "real" friends for each other. The "popular crowd" became less and less important as we became more important to each other, depending on each other for support and social life . . . I got along well with my parents overtly, but I spent much of ninth and tenth grade lying to them about where I was going and what I was doing. My days were full of fantasies. I wanted to get out of my town, my family, and my life. They were all so boring and safe (pp. 186-190).

Ann continues her story by sharing all the "I wanted's" that seemed to consume her. Everything she did seemed to remind her of how boring her life appeared to be. She longed for excitement and the thrills that apparently were just beyond her reach. In addition, she became obsessed with her body and physical features, which included the fact that she was unusually tall for her age.

Sexually I always felt out of place. I was the size of a woman, but not the age of a woman. I had the life of an adolescent without the right physique or mentality. I remember intense waves of desire as early as seventh grade--sexual feelings I didn't know what to do with . . . Sexiness and sleaziness were completely interwoven to me--as indoctrinated as I was by my religious instruction classes . . . It was during seventh grade that I became a part of a dirty book swap . . . The pictures, and more than the pictures, the stories, sexually excited me . . . The magazines were an unending source of fascination . . . I had these incredible contradictions in my life about who I appeared to be, and how I actually felt inside . . . The manifestation of my confusion was perhaps more internally directed. I desperately wanted someone to help me break out of my boring life. I wanted someone to fall in love with me. I realize now I wanted a boyfriend during early high school so badly because his presence would somehow validate the sexual urges I was having. I know I felt my appearance would be validated if someone else appreciated it--I felt that if someone liked my face and my body, perhaps I could too . . . I wanted to be an adult, to divorce myself from my parents, to not care about what they thought or said .

. . Being with Dana made me want to be more desirable and made me actively confront the importance of appearance. She was so much more sexually appealing than I was . . . We went to bars and got propositioned by old men. It was simultaneously gross and exciting . . . We lied to our parents regularly . . . we used fake proof to drink . . . We smoked pot in the bathroom of the movie theater . . . We drank beer, smoked cigarettes and pot . . . the images thrust upon us by Seventeen Magazine made us all think a lot about how we looked . . . my "rebellion" was actually a period of intense internal confusion. On one level I felt good about my school work and social life and friends, and on another level, I knew I was an unattractive loser doomed to be controlled by my parents forever. I wanted so many things: to have fun, to be smart, to be free, and to be desired. It was a dramatic time of life--it was difficult to feel and want so much and to actually be so limited . . . I see my relationships with women as continuing to be places where I develop and define myself, where through interaction and shared experience I become more and more comfortable with who I am, where I have come from, and where my life is going. I am supported in these relationships; in them I feel comfortable and safe and loved. In eleventh

> grade, I started really dating guys . . . I feel as though I have grown a lot since high school, and I'm sure my growth has a lot to do with leaving home and making my life at college my own. Moving away from home has helped me to make decisions without needing my parents' approval. I have learned that they love me even if they don't agree with my decisions . . . I have also learned about myself, my identity, through the actual process of making decisions. Because I have graduated from college this year, I am at another extended moment of indecision and anxiety about who I am and what I am going to do with my life . . . I am still in the process of defining myself as my own person. However, I now see this "self definition" more as a lifetime process that involves what I will do more than who I am. I feel confident that my life will straighten out (pp. 184-195).

In another youth's story, a teacher is described as being the central figure in helping this adolescent work her way through the difficult experiences that this period of development brings. This student refers to her teacher, Ms. Madeleine Tremayne, as being very down-to-earth and honest. In fact, her authenticity appears to be the essential characteristic that speaks so loudly to this adolescent, and to which she turns a listening ear. Madeleine is an art

teacher, and the informal setting of her art class provides her with the space to interact with her students in ways that are not as easily available for teachers in the traditional classroom settings. Her student, at age 14, refers to her art teacher in the following way:

> To me, Madeliene is quite unforgettable. I don't quite know where to start--she is still such an important element of my life that I find it difficult to see her objectively, and I feel a strong obligation to portray her as well as she deserves to be presented. Every moment she is alive--questioning us, herself, events, imaginings--and I think it is this constant searching for some kind of ultimate truth or faith that makes her so exciting. It is almost possible to feel the zone of her impact and influence; to my unformed mind this "magnetic field" was fascinating and mesmerizing. She drew people towards her--they would come with love and hate but never with indifference . . . I would turn and look--trying to identify what on earth made this woman special . . . I think that ultimately her great strength was both her integrity and her sense of risk-taking inherent in her teaching style . . . We would sit enraptured by this woman who actually considered us worthy enough both to share her life experiences and to nurture her in crisis. She would listen limitlessly to

our own tales of conflict and confusion and seemed to possess infinite quantities of compassion, empathy, and suggestions. She forced us to look at what we were creating for ourselves, and pushed us into a new state of awareness and responsibility for our actions. "It's no good thinking that it's always the other person's fault when things so wrong for you," she would say . . . "You're always going to be part of the equation when other people are involved, and so you have to work out what you're doing to cause this response." I would look at her feeling peeled and exposed. How did she always know exactly what was happening for us? "You're still being a victim of your fate instead of an instigator. You do have the means to control rather than to be manipulated . . . Madeleine was the one member of staff who acknowledged passion, insecurity, and sexuality--both in herself and in her pupils. She recognized our adolescent turmoils as healthy, joined in with our wildness, rejoiced at our unpredictable inflammability, and treated us as sexual beings. Other teachers denied us the right to be disruptive, sexual, and confused; she loved us for what and who we were and knew that all our "madness" could be harnessed to improve our art . . . My instinct believed that in the chaotic art room my battered soul could be rebuilt, and

> that here what I had to give would be valued. For those brief months during my last two years, Ms. Tremayne and the other three members of the art class provided in abundance all the love, frustration, inspiration, and despair that I needed. For good or bad, everyone else--parents, other friends--faded into the background. Although I had always managed to be fairly popular with my peers, I had never before felt a sense of belonging or connecting (pp. 21-27).

Ms. Madeleine Tremayne, the art teacher, obviously held a special place in the heart of this student. Perhaps it was her honest, genuine authenticity and caring that made such an impact on this young student. She allowed these adolescents to "be" who they really were, and did not try to judge or change them. We have no way of knowing if Ms. Tremayne knew exactly what she was doing and the tremendous impact it was having on her students, but she certainly used the art room to teach more than just art. Accepting these young people as they were, allowing them to express themselves openly and interact much more deeply in personal levels, captivated these students. Providing unconditional love and caring was paramount, and her students were well aware of this fact. Her contribution to their lives was much more significant than merely teaching art. She had invested of herself in the very day-to-day lives of her

students and they were changed forever because of it.

Students interviewed by Bill Moyers (1995) also share life stories of how special teachers and special school environments are significant indicators in helping them to turn their lives around. Alternative schools, set up to help those students who are at risk of failure and dropping out, provide special places for these needy students to come and have their needs met--needs that move beyond just those of academics, and include their emotional, mental, and physical needs as well.

These students, for the most part, represent adolescents who come from lives of poverty, violence, abuse, and/or neglect. They are usually considered to be hopeless cases, many beyond help or repair. In smaller class settings that provide more personal attention for these students, they begin to feel valued and worthy. Caring adults are helping to fill the voids left by difficult life experiences. Young adolescents express how this kind of setting and relationship with caring adults reaches out to them. A female inmate has perhaps best described the way many of these youth feel:

> I think because I didn't have anyone care about me, I didn't think that I was good. I didn't think that I was important. So since nobody showed me that I was important and I didn't have, like, self-esteem, I

> didn't care about anybody else. I wanted everybody else to be as low as I was (Moyers, 1995, p. 6).

The special school environments that have been created to reach out to just this very kind of young adolescent elicit responses from the students who attend such as: "If it wasn't for this school, I'd be gone," and another who remarks, "I want to be somebody--I want to live." Yet another young female claims that, "We're not just numbers here, we have faces and names and feelings" (Moyers, 1995, et al., p. 2). A young black female remarks,

> I don't want to be another statistic, I want to be different. They believed in me enough that caused me to believe that I can actually be what I want to be and not what somebody else would classify me to be. There's always someone out there who's been through what I've been through, so I've learned to listen to their advice (p. 9).

Another student in a special alternative school states, "It's like a family here. The teachers believe in us. Every day is like a new challenge" (p. 18).

Teens like this one are indicative of the changes that are possible through intervention in schools and in having positive adult role models. Through such interactions these youth are able to gain self-esteem and respect as a result of their work and efforts to change. The principal of one

such school reminds us that,

> We try to remember that we teach the whole child--it's not only about academics. It's about responsibility and respect, and how you get along with others in a variety of situations. We have a phrase here, "conversation not confrontation." The curriculum is not so much conflict resolution as it is setting the stage for conflict resolution (p. 19).

Special programs such as these are making a tremendous difference in the lives and the success in schools for youths who otherwise would miss out on the opportunities that education provides for them. One such educational setting provides for students who would not finish school otherwise, built to accommodate the special needs of youths who have been participants in crime and violence, abuse in the home, drinking and drugs, and teenagers with children, those of poverty and extreme low socioeconomic status, and those who are considered to be "products of the streets," boasts of having more than 170 students in their program who have graduated since 1992, and have full-time jobs awaiting them (Moyers, 1995). This is a real success story!

Although it would be ideal to think that all environments in our schools offered positive influence in the lives of young people today, it simply is not so. All too often, young people share instances from their school

lives that become one more negative element in the already troubled lives of teens. For example, one young man remarked, "My teacher told me I was gonna be dead by the time I was 21, so that's what I thought" (Moyers, 1995, p. 11). Other students make claims that schools fail to provide them with the skills necessary for learning how to confront the dilemmas of everyday life--the skills needed to solve problems and make good decisions. They say that schools don't teach them how to live and survive in their present environment (Moyers, 1995, et al.).

Schools are crucial sites for the socialization process of young people. Here, students interact with peers and seek their place in this environment. The schools become the testing grounds for students to take risks and try to discover who they are and just where they belong. They learn acceptance or rejection, success or failure, ways to conform or ways to resist. Teachers and other adults provide role models for these teens that will be either a positive or negative influence. Realizing the amount of time that adolescents spend in schools, it is vital to acknowledge the significance of how schools and educators impact these students, their decisions and their behavior.

THEME #3 - POPULAR CULTURE AND PERCEPTIONS OF SELF

The influence of popular culture in today's society of young people would be difficult to measure, although it

would no doubt be immense. Popular culture defines the world in which these youth grow up and find their own identities. Adolescent's learn to see themselves--they form perceptions of self within the confines of popular culture and the relationships connected with it. There are endless questions and confrontations with which adolescents must learn to deal with on a day-to-day basis in everyday life. The effects of popular culture on youth span a wide spectrum of visible and observable behaviors and attitudes. For example, one young female refers to the pressures of popular culture in the perceived physical images that practically engulf many teenage girls.

> Trapped in a world of school girls where physical beauty was the prime standard by which to judge and compare peers and where the most complimentary adjectives were fashionable, trendy, and slim, I longed to exist in some dark cupboard where my vulnerability would be invisible . . . I hated my hair, detested my glasses, and was ashamed of the braces on my teeth. For several months, much of my energy was devoted to feelings of physical inadequacy. I defined myself by how others would regard me--and since I was sure that to others I was ugly, awkward, and gawky, I didn't end up with a very strong self-image . . . I would curse the inane values against which I was powerless to

resist: I knew most of the standards set amongst my peers were insubstantial and trivial, but I was caught up in them all the same--I wanted, and needed, to belong . . . I was desperately trying to define my own identity but was failing so miserably that I turned to others to help me unify my sense of self. My time of conformity was dark indeed, since I had no real core to my being and all was fragmented and amorphous (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 1995, pp. 16-19).

Popular culture calls out to young people to participate in the commodification of goods and the objectification of women. It provides the images that young people desire and seek to become identified with. The struggle in the contradiction of popular culture is extremely powerful in its pull. To combat the pressure, we have had programs like the "Just Say No to Drugs" Campaign, but yet we fail to give young people something to say "yes" to in its place. What do you know what to say "yes" to, when all you see are the obstacles in the way of accomplishing what you set in your mind to do? (Moyers, 1995).

Moyers (1995 et al.) presents some thoughts on the dilemma: While children learn about violence in their real-life families and on real-life streets, they also grow up today surrounded by ghastly simulated reality.

> Streams of mass-produced images pour into their social environment and inner lives, all for profit. Those violent movies, and gangster rappers glorifying violence, and TV crime shows and local news show replaying every ghoulish promo over and over, and the brutal video games--they're all responding to the bottom line. It's not a question to me of whether Beavis and Butthead provoke some kid to burn his house down. The question is what happens to our children when the marketplace is their most powerful mentor, the arbiter of their values, inculcating in them this one lesson: If you want juice, power, money, ratings, respect . . . use violence. Because in the media suites and on the streets, violence sells (p. 27).

Moyers claims that the marketplace of popular culture turns violence into pleasure and profit. Our country has become infatuated with the violence that fills the world of media. We allow ourselves to be entertained by violence on the TV and at the movie theaters. It carries the message to our children and our youth that it is fun and enjoyable. They are only exposed to the supposed pleasure that it brings, and yet rarely do they see the suffering that follows in its aftermath. In an interview with Bill Moyers (1995), David Walsh gives us a frightening glimpse of how popular culture and the media gain such a powerful stronghold on young

people, beginning in their childhood years.

> The average child in the United States, if he or she watches the average amount of television, will witness 200,000 acts of violence by the time they're 18 years old. A major way that kids learn is by the simple process of observation and imitation . . . I mean, that's the way children learn how to throw a baseball. That's the way children learn how to write their alphabet. That's the way children learn how to dance. That's the way children learn how to talk. That screen becomes a window through which they learn about the world, through which they pick up values, through which they learn about how to handle different situations. If I'm in the television business, and my goal is to get people to pay attention, so that I can sell my messages, then I'm going to do the things that are going to get people to pay attention . . . And three very, very effective ways of doing it are violence, sexuality, and humor . . . If, . . . we were walking down a busy street, and then, if, all of a sudden, you and I broke into a heated argument, and that heated argument escalated . . . and all of a sudden we started hitting each other . . . people would stop and they'd watch . . . they'd come down the block to see what's going on. It grabs our attention and the reason it

grabs our attention is that we have an emotional response to it. It literally stimulates kind of an adrenaline rush. And so, things that stimulate an adrenaline rush get us to pay attention. Let's take Mortal Kombat, for example. Mortal Kombat, the video game, best-selling video game in history. Very, very violent as a theme. In Mortal Kombat, as you get proficient at the game, you can literally deal lethal blows to your opponent. Not just lethal blows, but lethal blows in the form of being able to rip out vital organs and snap the spine of your opponent. I'm sure it was a very creative and talented group of people that put that together. And I would be willing to bet than many of those people--individually are people just like you and me. And if they have kids, they're probably concerned about their kids. They probably want their kids to grow up to be healthy, happy people. But when they step into the realm of putting together that game and bringing it to market, the operative question is no longer, "Is this good for my kid?" The operative question is: Will it make money? There's nothing wrong with that. It's just that what we have to be able to do is balance our desire to make profits with a sense of responsibility to our children. One of the first things that hits me in viewing those images,

> Bill, is the smiles that accompany the violence . . . Even though kids, on an intellectual level, might be able to say, yes, that's fake. That's not real. That they are constantly incorporating a set of images which kind of make connections, that aren't on an intellectual or a cognitive level, but more on an emotional level. And a lot of times in promos of movies that are coming out, all we'll get are the violent images. It's like that's the attraction. I talked before about three things that are--that can often stimulate some kind of emotional response: violence, sex, and humor. And oftentimes, those three things are combined either in twos or all three to get maximum effect. And so we get violence and sex together. In, for example, slasher movies. And women are by and large the target . . . We are sacrificing our children at the altar of financial profit (pp. 28-29).

Some youth who were interviewed said they looked to the gangsters, those who portrayed the luxuries associated with a life of crime and violence, and pleasure-seekers (without showing evidence of the consequences), that they saw on TV and in the movies, as their role models. Here, they said, were those who appeared to be successful in accumulating material possessions and experiencing the thrills and

excitement that life has to offer. It was the images portrayed through the electronic media that lured them into becoming active participants in the type of lifestyles that enticed them into crime and violence, alcohol and drugs, sex and pleasure. One young black male told how he was bringing in $7,000 to $10,000 a day just by dealing in drugs. He reached the point, however, that living in the fear of sleeping with one hand on the trigger and never knowing if he would be alive from one day to the next, gave him the desire and incentive to participate in a youth work program, designed to help young people like him. Entering the real work force for the first time presented a unique challenge to him. Required to wear a suit and tie for the first time in his life, and appear to look professional in order to enter the job market, he stated that, "Coming from the streets and going into that kind of environment will make you resist" (Moyers, 1995, p. 26). Deciding to take the risk, however, changed his life dramatically. He has a good job, has received his diploma, and is now pursuing a degree in law at a university because of the intervention in his life that helped him to change the destructive direction in which his life had been moving.

Moyers (1995 et al.) goes further to share other examples of the role that popular culture plays in the developing minds of young people. He shares that young

people want to "live on the edge," and those youth who try to rehabilitate after years of drugs and crime and violence, experience difficulty in letting go of the rush and excitement that this kind of lifestyle had provided for them. Change, especially such dramatic changes as those young people Moyers interviewed, was long and difficult, and so profound that it required real commitment on the part of those who wanted something different--something better. Many of the young people shared that it was hard to be a part of the youth culture in which they must grow up and function in today's society.

An employee of the juvenile justice system made the following remarks concerning the young man he was working with at the time:

> A 14-year-old kid who grows up in a community where even going to the store--the corner store is a hostile experience and a threatening experience--and he comes from a dysfunctional home and has a lousy opportunity in school--lives day to day--minute to minute--drama to drama--consequence, however swift, however severe, is meaningless because he doesn't know he has a future--or worse, he knows he has none (Moyers, 1995, p. 10).

Dealing on a daily basis with kids like this one, with parents lost to drugs, and unable to cope with the lure of the streets, these young people end up in juvenile courts.

In reaction to his work, one judge in the juvenile justice center states,

> There has to be meaningful consequence for wrongdoing as well as meaningful treatment--in other words you have to educate children; you have to improve their personal skills, you have to address some of their damage--you have to address some of the trauma that's led up to them acting the way they're acting . . . Ninety-five percent of the kids and families who come through here are living in poverty and are living in dysfunctional neighborhoods, dysfunctional families, failing in school to a remarkable extent. The high school dropout rate of the kids who come through my court, who are arrested three or more times is 92 percent . . . The runaway rate is something like 90 percent . . . We are now seeing the crack babies come through the judicial system. We're now seeing kids coming through the system who have actually seen their parents use drugs . . . If we're going to solve our problems by locking up these youth rather than trying to educate them, train them, find alternatives to the lifestyle they're leading, that's going to have tremendous impact on the economy of this country, on unemployment, on welfare, and generally on the quality of life in our cities. And what you're seeing in the

> juvenile justice system really is a preview of the breakdown of the quality of life in urban America beyond the year 2000 (Moyers, 1995, pp. 9-11).

A female director of a special help program for troubled youth speaks to how we treat these young people. "Locking people up is the wrong way to prevent violence . . . . When you think about young people, it's important to remember that you can always make a difference in the life of a child" (p. 14).

Another director for community projects designed to help children and youth in adjusting to the conflicts they encounter in just day-to-day living and surviving, places extreme importance on the ways that communities perceive and work to help these youth.

> The ways to reach them are to figure out as many ways as possible to put caring adults in their lives. Everybody uses the phrase, "It takes an entire village to raise a child." But what does that really mean in terms of our actions? It means that we have to create environments in which the adults in that community can create a system of redundancy. So that if a child needs an adult, and that adult is not in the home, we have multiple places in the community where the child can connect. The church can do it. The school can do it. The neighborhood organization can do it. Find a

house in the neighborhood where adults are willing to gather and young people can come there. Make a school become a real community asset, open up that building at night and on the weekends. What we have to do is bring young people together to talk to each other about how they feel, about the fears they have, about what they need, and then adults can get behind what it is they say they need and help them to make that first step. It brings the adults and the young people together but it also makes the young people feel valued and it makes them feel powerful (Moyers, 1995, p. 5).

A black male tells what his life is like walking the streets in today's society. The picture is a bleak one to anyone who is genuinely concerned with the adolescent culture.

> The streets provide my role models. You freelance as you go. You make do with what you got! You walk the street with your pride--right on your shoulder--that's all you really own. So being a man--it's all about whoever got the best. I can fight better than you--I got a bigger gun than you--I got more gold chains than you. If you don't see what a man's like, you're picking up whoever that man is out there in the street. You're looking at the drug dealer--you know, cause he's a better father than your own father . . . Most of the

> kids is getting raised on the streets--the streets are their father (Moyers, 1995, et al., p. 11).

This 25-year old black male, we're told, thrived on the streets as an apprentice to a drug dealer during his adolescent years. He later started his own drug operation and ended up being imprisoned for crimes of armed robbery and selling guns. He has experienced first-hand life in the streets and the consequences that follow living such a lifestyle. After his release from prison, he sought for some caring adult to help him learn how to cope with life in the everyday world. He turned to a black minister, who had begun a special program to reach out to street kids like this one, and had committed himself to helping these kids learn the skills necessary to successfully negotiate the dilemmas that were such a vital part of the contradictory popular culture in which they were growing up. Reverend Eugene Rivers suggests what these youth need:

> If they're not taught, they're going to be violent. They're going to be destructive. They're going to be confused . . . There's an obvious vacuum in the lives of these young people who are caught up in the mix. Our job is to be willing to practice what we preach and to speak faith, hope, meaning, direction, and purpose, and fill that vacuum with those essential dimensions of life. That's what we gotta do. We must own these

> children as our own. They're looking for a direction which will help them deal with challenges in their lives, in a way which is real, not grounded in mysticism or voodoo, but rooted in a faith, which is itself rooted in the realities of day-to-day existence, in a world of much brokenness (p. 13).

This particular young adult claims that what attracted him to Reverend Rivers was his honesty in helping him to open his eyes and see where his life was headed. He claims that this minister proved himself to be "real" and that was the motivation for making him want to turn his life around and do what is right. This young man began to see that too many of his friends were getting shot and killed, many killing each other, and his future began to look rather dim, not knowing if he would even live to see the next day. Not claiming to have arrived yet at where he wants to see himself in the years to come, he does admit to having begun a journey toward turning his life around. He can openly say that he wants "to be somebody" and he wants to live. He still acknowledges, though, that it is hard to change, and hard to live in the culture from which he emerged, where the accumulation of possessions, material wealth, and money were seen as the most important things in life (Moyers, 1995, et al.).

Another adult working with adolescents in today's

society suggests what is needed:

> Our society is very complex now, and our society is very high-tech now. But what kids need--what they really need in order to be successful in life, is very, very old fashioned and simple things. They need a value system. They need morals in their lives. They need goals. They need an education. They need a sense of belonging and power over their lives, and they need to be affiliated with something. That's, you know, gangs is just a form of that--it's kids reaching out, wanting to be a part of something. And what we try to do here is give them the opportunity to be in, you know, involved in the right gang . . . but what changes kids, what makes them different, what makes them act the right way . . . is that I love them, and they know that I love them, and they know that I care about them. If those kids can respect me and respect my set of values, and my morals, and adopt those values as their own, then they're going to do what's right when nobody's around (Moyers, 1995, pp. 13-14).

All of the adults interviewed by Moyers ultimately express that the lives of troubled youth can be changed and they can become positive contributing members of society if given the right opportunities and guidance to do so. There is no quick fix for the ills that plague our young people

and the culture in which they exist. There are, however, ways to help them cope with the confrontations and conflicts that come their way, and they can be taught the skills necessary for living in today's world. There is hope for those who are willing to commit to making the change a reality.

THEME #4 - ROLE OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

There is no question that race, class, and gender play a significant role in the identity formation process of adolescents growing up in today's society. Because we live in a patriarchal society in which the white middle-class male is predominantly what we use to base all experiences, people of color, ethnicity, and different genders are expected to either move to the margins or accept their status and role without question.

The stories of the adolescents in Adolescent Portraits: Identity, Relationships, and Challenges (1995), provide us with a glimpse into their life experiences that supports the theme role of race, class, and gender.

A young Native American girl says,

> I remember feeling that I didn't fit in, and being apprehensive . . . It wasn't race that made me an outsider, though there were undercurrents of it . . . I'd say that poverty made me an outsider . . . I think I learned that I couldn't be myself at school. I had

> to be like the other students to be happy there . . . I had to put on airs, or have a dramatic life that people would be interested in, otherwise I was a lonely person. I needed to find a niche somehow, somewhere . . . I started stealing from stores and from lockers at school . . . I ended up crying, and talking about how people called me names, looked at me funny, and that I couldn't take feeling bad about myself anymore. I hadn't realized that those things preyed on my mind, that they hurt, and that's why I was stealing . . . I think that high school for Bill (her brother) and me was a time where we numbed ourselves to being poor and to forgetting the Cheyenne and Blackfoot ways. It was easier that way. It seemed that we had to learn to be one way at school, and another at home; but it was hard, how are kids supposed to do that? (pp. 70-73).

After graduating from high school, Jean began to work in a high school for Indians. She described the people who attended this school.

> Most of us are poor, lots of alcoholics, and many come from dysfunctional families. What smacked me in the face was seeing that abuse was a way of life, the only way of life they knew and accepted. Their education: poverty, alcohol, drugs, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse . . . Everyone needs something . . .

> there's an incredible lack of compassion or understanding that there are people who live hard, hard lives (p. 77).

An adolescent male felt the loneliness that being marginalized brings with it. Although he was a white middle-class male, he gained an unusual status that made adolescence difficult for him.

> I was always a very lonely and morbid child, in spite of (or should I say because of) the academic success I had in grade school. Everyone knows the class brain is no fun, and boy was I no fun. I swear I used to wear three-piece suits to the second grade (there are pictures!), and my hair was always combed and parted so severely you'd think I was from Transylvania. And I was too mature for my own good, excited not by the things little boys should be excited by (mud, frogs, and cars) but by fun things like what the last chapter in our math book was about and could the teacher promise we would get to it? Once . . . I had proved my teacher wrong . . . I got booed. I think even the teacher booed me. From then on, I was labeled as the geek. Because of my geek status, I had no friends until the sixth grade, when I befriended the other weirdest kid in the class, Richard. We spent our recesses walking around the playground singing songs

> and everyone called us fags. When I wasn't with him, I was at home making up some math problems to solve or watching television. On Friday nights, instead of sleeping over at friends' houses or playing moonlight football in the neighborhood, I would sit up with my mother and watch soap operas . . . I remember feeling very sad and sorry for myself, sure that I had some kind of disease that made me an outcast and a weirdo . . . I was convinced that there was something wrong with me, that there was some reason why no one talked to me in school and I spent my recesses helping the teacher clean the classroom, but what was it? I concluded that, fundamentally, I was an awful person . . . I was plagued with self-doubt and self-loathing, the fear that I was a freak . . . convinced deep down that . . . I wasn't good enough . . . I still resent the fact that even today it is very difficult for me to trust people. Even today it takes a lot for me to be convinced that my friends are really my friends (pp. 171-172).

Rob is a 20-year old African American. His father's death, when he was only 8 years of age, and his mother's concern about the lack of a male influence in her son's life, led her to relocate the family. Rob learned a great deal about how it felt to be black in a white man's world. His education in various schools provided him with much more

than merely academics. He learned first-hand about race and class status, and the great inequities that are a very real part of our society. One of his earliest memories was that of his father proudly teaching Rob how to spell their last name. He recalls how his father had made that name sound so important.

> My last name held a fascination for me. It is sufficiently rare so that I have never met a Danforth who was not in my family. I also was struck by the way that my family used our name; when they spoke it they always changed their tone, as if it was the most special word in the English language. Members of my family have always carried themselves with a certain sense of arrogance, and I do not mean this in a bad light. I have found that America's most successful blacks are rarely modest. Arrogance or cockiness is used as a sort of a drug to combat the sense of inherent inferiority that America places upon blacks. In my experience as a black person who deals in the white world, all of my peers who have demonstrated the so-called virtues of modesty and humility have, in almost every case, failed to achieve their desired goals . . . When I was 8 my father died at age 41 . . . my father had been gone for so long in the hospital that the situation seemed somewhat removed from me. I

do remember my mother's grief, but I was so young that my emotions were not developed enough to understand anything more than the concrete changes in everyday routine. My mother graduated from medical school and decided to pursue her residency in North Carolina where her mother and younger brother lived, and where she had grown up. I felt indifferent to the move except for the fact that I had just recently learned that North Carolina was a slave state, and I was wary that there would be racists down there. I was 9 years old . . . I did not see much of my mother since she was completing her residency as a pediatrician. We lived in a suburban home in a predominantly white neighborhood that had a few blacks . . . I attended the public schools but didn't like them at all. They were large and impersonal, and it seemed the teachers really didn't care about the development of students . . . During my time in public school in North Carolina, I felt awkward and out of place. There were no other kids in the school who had a similar background. My earlier exposure to white kids in Connecticut contrasted with the starkly segregated world of my North Carolina town. The other black students teased me for not speaking in the Black-English dialect. The middle-class white students did not really associate

that much with the blacks. Maybe once a year I would hear an insult of "black boy" or an occasional "nigger." By the end of seventh grade my marks in school were dropping and I felt as if I was learning nothing. When my mother offered me the chance to go to private school, I jumped at it. My mother was always afraid that my development would be adversely affected by having lost my father at such a young age, so she was determined to provide other strong male influences in my life. Partially as a result, I have always been exposed to institutions that were predominantly or entirely male. These include my attendance at a military academy's summer camp, the Boy Scouts, prep school, and my college fraternity . . . When the decision came to send me to prep school, the fact that it was an all-male school did not matter. The school was undoubtedly the best college preparatory school in central North Carolina. The surroundings at St. Andrews School were so much nicer than public school that I was too dazzled to worry about the lack of women. Also the work was so much harder that I spent much more of my time studying than socializing. The structure and atmosphere of the St. Andrews program appealed particularly to the male psyche. Almost all of the teachers and administrators at the school were male,

athletics were mandatory, and success in sports was heavily stressed. Time and again it was emphasized that we were the future leaders of our community.

Since there was not a woman among us, this message also carried other connotations. As we entered the ninth and tenth grades, girls from our sister school, St. Anne's, began to attend classes with us. They came to St. Andrews to take math, science, and English, although we were not allowed to take such courses at St. Anne's, since it was generally thought that the girls' curriculum was watered down. There were only two or three black girls at St. Anne's, and my contact with any of them was rare. After five years of this situation, I became used to functioning in an all-male academic environment. It seemed perfectly normal to me to attend meetings or plan activities that were entirely devoid of any female participation . . .

In class, I was struck by how much control teachers had over their students, who simply didn't act up as much. Out of my eighth-grade class of sixty-five, four of us were black. Three of us were new students and the other one, Jonathan, had been at the school since fourth grade . . . Though he seemed pleased that there finally was another black person in his class, his attitude toward me was somewhat

patronizing . . . One day not long after I had started at St. Andrews, the teacher arranged the seating. I ended up sitting next to a boy named Scott . . . I noticed that he stared at me constantly. I got the feeling he was staring because he didn't think I belonged there; he did not stare at the new white student in the class who also sat near us. Another incident also clued me in to the way that things worked at that school. Members of the class had to give an oral presentation. One student named Ben gave his talk and he stuttered very badly. No one laughed or even flinched, and at the end he was congratulated as if he had given a flawless presentation. Next, a student named Louis went up to give his speech and he also stuttered badly. This time the members of the class chuckled and made faces. After the class most of the boys, including Ben, made fun of Louis. I questioned Jonathan about the double standard, and he explained to me that it was "not cool" to make fun of Ben because he came from a very wealthy and prestigious family, and his father was a respected alumnus. Louis, on the other hand, was Jewish, and his family owned a discount furniture store. Also, Louis had only been at the school for three years, whereas Ben had been at the school since kindergarten.

I soon came to understand that the boys of St. Andrews were taught that there was an ideal best exemplified by members of the community's elite society. These men were always white, always wealthy, and always Protestant. There was only one black teacher at the entire school, and he was too immersed in his religion to worry about social concerns. The only other blacks at the school were the kitchen and janitorial staff; not just particular members of the support staff were black, but the entire crew. The only white who worked for the school in this capacity was the supervisor. The students would always call these maintenance employees by their first names, no matter how old they were. The janitors would simply nod their heads in response. To call any other member of the staff by their first name would be grounds for severe punishment.

At first the students in my class did not know exactly what to make of the black students, but by the end of our first year opinions about us had begun to gel. Al was the most popular black member of our class. He was a gifted athlete and this immediately gained him considerable respect from our classmates. He was middle class and did not live in a very fancy neighborhood but every weekend a different white guy

would invite him to spend the night. I was treated quite differently. In English and history classes I was beginning to show a remarkable amount of verbal ability. This shocked the other students in class; they had expected me to be slightly below par, at best. Another thing that shocked them was my accent. Within a year I had so immersed myself into the life of St. Andrews that I had donned a near flawless southern gentleman's accent. On the other hand, my athletic skills left something to be desired. The other boys dealt with this by coating me in humor. I began to notice that many of my habits were being ridiculed. This would continue in earnest until the tenth grade. I was constantly questioned as to why I did not possess greater athletic skill. When I showed skill in the classroom they said the only reason I did well was that I had somehow been able to shirk the curse of ignorance placed upon my race.

Early in ninth grade I was confronted with overt racism for the first time at St. Andrews. A student named Tim came up to me and for no reason said, "Nigger, nigger, why so tall? Nigger, where's your basketball?" He then proceeded to laugh and walk away. When I told another classmate about this incident he dismissed it as not being so much a racial attack as a

personal one . . . When I went to my faculty advisor to explain my problem to him, he asked that I not tell anyone else and said that he would handle the problem himself. I never got any sort of an apology from Tim.

During my freshman and sophomore years I was a target for racial harassment. Guys would say things to me just to get a reaction, and often I supplied them with it. During this period my grades, particularly in math and science, began to fall. I failed two terms of chemistry and one term of trigonometry . . . In the spring of my junior year I found out that I was accepted by the AFS intercultural program and went to Israel to stay with a family for the summer. The group with which I traveled was a diverse mix of people from around the United States. About half of the students in the group were Jewish, and I was the only black. This was the first time I had come into close contact with people from all over the country, and I felt as if I had been living in a closet; the closed-mindedness of North Carolina had left its mark. We arrived in Israel and were taken to a youth hostel in Tel Aviv where we underwent further orientation. As we traveled around Tel Aviv, I remember feeling self-conscious because I was black, though this feeling left when I saw that there were actually a fair number of black Israelis.

After I had been in the country for several days, my host brother, David, came to pick me up with a female friend of his. As I talked with them, I began to notice the differences between them and my peers at home; these people seemed to be a lot more mature and less materialistic. I also felt that they did not notice that I was black, or that if they did notice, it made no difference.

In all my travels around Israel, I never felt that my race was an issue or a problem. I was referred to simply as an American. I remember only one conversation that concerned race. My host father had heard that things were pretty bad for black people in the United States and he asked me what my experiences had been. I told him that in my hometown there were still many problems that revolved around race. However, I explained that things were much improved since the days when my parents were my age. He replied that to his people, race itself meant nothing. He noted that when distinctions were made, they had more to do with religion than race. But what he told me and what I observed were two different things. The family that I stayed with were of European descent, and every once in a while they would make derogatory comments about Jews of Middle Eastern descent. I also saw the

way Arabs were treated within Israel. Their neighborhoods were some of the most impoverished places that I had ever seen. And the Israelis to whom I spoke believed that if the Arabs wanted to live better they should go to another country. My eyes were opened to the fact that people could oppress others for reasons unrelated to race. I had heard that this happened around the world, but I had not seen it up close. I left Israel feeling that I understood much more that people had different perspectives on life, and that no one perspective was necessarily better than any other.

My associations with whites are a result of the institutions and experiences that I have been exposed to. I never set out with the purpose of associating myself with the wealthiest, "whitest" people that I could find. I do, however show great discretion in choosing the educational and social institutions in which I become involved. Blacks have traditionally been excluded from such organizations, but in the late 1960s a conscious decision was made to allow blacks access to these places. This is the situation into which I was born. The earliest decisions about whom I would associate with were made by my parents. They decided to settle in a predominantly white neighborhood because of certain perceived advantages. These reasons

further led them to place me in a white nursery school. As a result, I learned from earliest childhood to be most comfortable in a predominantly white environment. My parents saw no harm in this, since they understood that the recognition of racial differences would come with age.

The motivation for associating with whites was not a desire to stay away from blacks. The minute number of blacks at traditionally prestigious schools and organizations forced me to modify my patterns of association and socialization. I had to associate with whites in order to have any social life at all. There are very few blacks who have shared my set of experiences, and to find someone similar to me who is black is rare. I guess that these shared contradictions and experiences form the basis of my friendship with Jonathan. Most of the time we spend together is consumed with the discussion of race and class . . . . and women. My relationships with women, or the lack thereof, are a result of my unique situation. Just as I am hampered by the lack of other black males who have shared my experiences, there are even fewer black females that I have come into contact with. This is not to say that I haven't met a few, but the field is very small. It is unrealistic to believe that I

will be compatible with every upper-middle class black female that I meet. To limit my relationships with women to one race is therefore foolish for me. In dealing with white women, another set of factors comes into play. Even in the 1990s it is not fully acceptable to have interracial relationships, especially for those women who are conscious of their class and position. They care about what their peers will think, as well as their parents. This is especially true in a conservative town like the one I grew up in, or the small, sheltered community of my college. When I have tried to initiate such relationships, I have encountered the barriers that society has erected.

As I look beyond my upcoming final year at college (with an eye on the presidency of the student body) I feel I have a good idea of what it is that I have to overcome. I must be sure that I have reconciled within myself these seemingly contradictory experiences and paradoxes of race and privilege, disadvantage and advantage. I am a young black man, socialized by elite white institutions, very aware of the racism that surrounds me; yet my perspective on life is one of empowerment and unfettered opportunity. If I do not reconcile these contradictions, then those goals that I

have set for myself shall be much harder, if not impossible, to reach (pp. 80-91).

Rob's lived experiences, as he has shared them, are absolutely fascinating. There are several different aspects about his unique story that are significant for this thematic analysis. First of all, Rob is a black man living in a white man's world, which adds powerful evidence to how strongly racial prejudice affects our world. Secondly, I found it interesting that in Rob's story, there are concrete examples and evidence that portrays the role of class status and gender as they powerfully influence everyday life. He shared about the lack of women at the all-male schools and the apparent accepted fact that females were considered to be less intelligent and less capable of success in many academic areas. Also evident in this story is how one's class status can completely alter the way people behave. It was obvious that if you were a wealthy white man from the community's elite society, and Protestant as well, you could count on being treated differently than those less fortunate. Rob's experience in Israel extended the concept that prejudice is not confined to the immediate society in which we live--prejudice is spread around the world. Perhaps Rob said it best when he referred to the fact that people could oppress others for any number of reasons. Here are good examples of the ways in which our society

successfully marginalizes certain groups of people, especially those of minorities. There is a tremendous amount of oppression in the whole of society.

This case study, in my opinion, speaks to each of the issues of this thematic analysis of race, class, and gender. It speaks loudly about the ways in which the color of your skin, where you live, and whether you are a male or a female determines so much of what life will offer you and what it will not. Rob's story is filled with the kinds of contradictions that are so characteristic of popular culture. The portrayal of injustice and inequity and the prejudice that shapes our society and what is considered to be acceptable within its bounds is all too real in our world. In his closing remarks, Rob stirs a whole new set of issues that are indicative of what confronts us in this postmodern society. Rob entitled his life story, "I Reconcile the Irreconcilable." He even speaks to the fact that this is exactly what he must deal with in his current life situation. There may be a question here for all those in our society--how will each of us deal with the myriad of contradictions and with reconciling the irreconcilable in the contemporary world in which we live?

Up to this point, I have used primarily only two of the texts identified for this textual analysis. The third text, Gender and Ethnicity in Schools: Ethnographic Accounts

(1993), deals almost solely with issues regarding gender and ethnicity, just as the title suggests. For this reason, it is appropriate to focus on its contents at this point in the research. Although the setting for these ethnographic accounts takes place in the context of British schools, the accounts are such that could be applied to schools elsewhere. The excerpts that will follow are provided to serve as further examples and illustrations of the powerful influence of gender and ethnicity in the process of identity formation. The socialization of young people is especially significant in these accounts. Issues concerning gender are clearly obvious and overt in the pages of this text. The quotes used, then, will serve to reinforce the notion that there is an inequality of treatment and opportunities in reference to gender, and further, that the stereotypical gender roles are highly influential in the ways in which children and youth socialize. It is important to keep in mind that this text contains ethnographic accounts, and the quotes given here will be those of the ethnographers who are observing the behavior patterns of those children involved. Their purpose is to note the role of gender and ethnicity in the socialization process.

> While the culture of childhood is contextualized by the adult world, it is also the context within which children socialize one another as well as with each

other. The playground is the site for the rehearsal and exploration of adult roles. Observation on playgrounds also suggests that the process of entering the culture may be different for girls and boys. A brief glance at any infant or lower school playground will usually reveal that boys and girls are not playing together and may also show different kinds of grouping, the girls in small inward-looking groups often sitting down, the boys running about . . . Girls' play seemed to be characterized by a physical closeness and intimacy. They played in 'little or big circles or knots,' always facing into the center . . . In all these games the girls are completely absorbed. It is clear that they have a well-developed communication system.

Another characteristic of the girls' play that was observed was the universality of their sociability and friendliness. They all seemed happy and well integrated with their friends and I was never aware of any disharmony, quarrelling, or competitiveness between them . . . In contrast, a dominant feature of the boys' play was its competitiveness and 'a combative or confrontational tendency which can easily flare up into a fight'. Boys' play seemed to lack the sociability which was such a marked feature with the girls' (pp.

11-12).

When the bell rings for playtime, schoolchildren move into a different domain; the playground is the site of a thriving oral culture. Listening carefully to the rhymes and songs which accompany their games reveals the extent to which their interests and concerns are at variance with the dominant culture of the classroom they have just left. These concerns reflect and challenge their powerlessness in the school system. Teachers are in the front line of attack:

On top of a mountain all covered in sand,
I once shot my teacher with an elastic band.
I shot him with pleasure, I shot him with pride,
I shot my poor teacher right on his backside.
He fell down the mountain, he fell on his head,
And then my poor teacher,
He dropped right down dead.
I went to the funeral, I went to his grave,
I didn't throw flowers, I threw a grenade.

Many rhymes . . . deal with aspects of their lives that are beyond their control: [examples given here deal with various foods that children find distasteful and disgusting] . . . The issues they touch extend beyond the playground . . . [these deal with popular political figures] . . . They deal with the taboos of sex and

death, drawing on the culture that they are exposed to both inside and outside school:

Jesus Christ super star,
Went round the corner on a Yamaha.
Did a skid, killed a kid,
Caught his balls on a dustbin lid. . . And,

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water,
I don't know what they did up there
But now they've got a daughter (pp. 11-16).

Woods and Hammersley (1993) have used these rhymes that were taken from actual recordings made on the school playground during recess to illustrate that even very young children, not only have been exposed to much more in popular culture that we would sometimes like to acknowledge, but further, that their rhymes are indicative of the kinds of issues they think about and center their play around. The authors suggest that much can be learned by listening and observing children at play.

> It seems to be a child-mediated culture, a kind of socialization which is very different from the adult-mediated construct that attempts to constitute them as social beings in their homes and the classroom . . . Becoming socialized is a carefully monitored process. However, the playground is a place where children have

sway and can maintain an alternative culture, largely unobserved. This includes naughty and exciting language which is learnt, recited and performed to, with vitality (p. 19).

With reference to stereotypical gender roles and their relation to childhood play, Woods and Hammersley suggest,

> They [the children] have arrived at school with preconceived ideas about their sex roles . . . and may well be aware of the requirement to conform to certain expectations in the culture of the school or their homes. I suppose its tradition, I mean a girl grows up and gets shoved a load of toys and dolls and a boy gets shoved an action man . . . Even before they go to school . . . children are forming generalizable rules with which they can explore the complexities of gender relationships in the future. By the time they reach the gender segregation of the playground during the first year at school it may be argued that these meanings are no longer in the future but embedded in the cultural practices of childhood itself and it is these that they are passing on to one another (pp. 22-23).

The authors further claim that the playground is the site for cultural transmission and socialization where children work out rules of behavior and ways of accepting or

resisting these rules. Children find a purpose in creating shared meanings in their play that provide a way for them to connect outside the constraints of the classroom. Friendships become very important to these young children.

> Friends are a source of meaning-making in this new situation . . . they can by their presence and shared meaning, render the world a sensible and manageable place. Their particular mode of viewing the world with its accompanying language, taboos, rituals and sanctions which function to maintain this meaning world, are developed in interaction with each other.

For this reason,

> . . . the playground can be seen as the environmental determinant of the texts which have taken place on it and these texts or linguistic structures are a realization of the social structure, capable not only of transmitting the social order but also of maintaining and even modifying it (p. 25).

There is a perception that girls and boys show considerable differences in their performance in certain academic areas. This suggests that certain subjects are more appropriate for girls, while others, those usually considered to require more intelligence and higher order thinking skills, are more appropriate for boys. One young male student remarks, "Physics is a boys' subject, biology's

a girls' subject, and chemistry is a mixture . . . everyone likes that" (p. 44). Another example illustrating accepted gender roles in reference to school and academics suggests,

> It is significant that here . . . when girls were on their own, they had shown themselves to be capable of using equipment and understanding the theory--as they continued to do in home economics, and business subjects such as typewriting. Yet, when they got together in a mixed class, instead of taking advantage of their prior progress to remain ahead of the boys, they responded to the masculine signals they were receiving, and permitted the boys to dominate the lessons . . . science is male-orientated through textbook coverage--all about things not people, including guns, cars, football, etc.--and the emphasis on science as "power". Boys, who are participatory and enthusiastic, and bring into lessons a "conception of masculinity which includes toughness, aggression, activity and disdain for girls", therefore tend to prefer science. Girls, on the other hand are socially conditioned into "timidity, conscientiousness, deference, personal orientation and a concern for appearance" and therefore tend to be "less interested" in science (p. 62).

This suggests that there is a certain passivity that is

characteristic of girls. Their quietness is often misinterpreted to suggest they are less capable, less interested, and less bright in certain content areas. In reference to boys, teachers made such comments as,

> Rank order was very important to the boys and a number of them aimed at position rather than performance. For some, competitive behavior was endemic, manifested as continuous power play, and now that they were in mixed classes, they wanted to get better marks than the girls (p. 63).

Ethnographic accounts indicate that in many of the settings observed, both pupils and teachers had stereotypical images of boys' and girls' capabilities with school subjects and of their future directions. One of the factors behind the traditional choice of particular subjects for girls seemed to be their quietness, and a failure to communicate with teachers. This quiet characteristic, however, is not considered to be an inherent trait associated with females or a product of varying developmental rates between the sexes.

> It is an adaptation to social circumstances, a highly successful one since it deals with the stressful demands imposed on them at school, and symbolizes resistance to any assumptions of their inferiority. It is not so much "quiet and weak", therefore, as "silent

and strong" (p. 3).

Woods and Hammersley (1993) stress that of great importance for consideration is the way in which males work to dominate the females. When two schools merged, previously being populated by a single gender, one a boy's school, the other a girl's school, one of the teachers remarked,

> The culture of the boys' school had been strongly patriarchal in the sense that there was a general (rather than explicit) acceptance that in society males were dominant and females subordinate. I suppose we were rather old-fashioned in some of our ideas. We believed in loyalty and honour in manhood, and the protection of women and children (p. 53).

The interaction of the males and females in the school setting presented a highly "gendered" demonstration:

> Girls were barked at in corridors, and received verbal abuse. They were jeered and taunted by boys if they spoke up in class with sighs and groans and such phrases as "Shut up", "Turn it off" and "Oh God not again"; and called "stiffs" or "squares", or "boffins". This may have been the reaction of some boys who felt academically threatened by girls, but was seen by girls as a personal insult . . . Girls across the whole ability range had to put up with verbal abuse

containing direct anatomical references, particularly to "tits" and "bums", and were constantly humiliated through sexual taunts and insults. Some of the most commonly used words were "slag" and "dog". The majority of girls in the upper band did not respond to the treatment, tending to "retreat into passivity" in the face of the boys' name-calling, referring to the boys as "stupid". [For other girls], such pejorative treatment caused loss of self-esteem among the girls concerned, and indicated to all the girls the social role that the boys were endeavouring to impose upon them (pp. 54-55).

Clearly, school gender was a prominent issue. Highly specific examples are provided by these authors to suggest the sexual implications that were involved in specific gender settings. However, due to the vivid and explicit language used in these descriptions, I choose not to cite any specific examples given in this text. One thing that appears to be stated clearly throughout this text, however, is the fact that gender differences play a significant role in the socialization process of children and adolescents. It is perpetuated in the schools at all levels. Predefined stereotypical gender roles exist quite prominently in the school classrooms, the cafeterias, and the playgrounds. Obviously, the extreme to which these are emphasized causes

a real tension in the social atmosphere of the school. One explanation given, concerning the importance of recognizing and dealing with gender issues, and relevant to the focus of this research is,

> One reason why differences between the sexes come to be spot-lighted in secondary school is that the different rate of puberty is especially noticeable in the middle years. [Students in one classroom] . . . were very concerned about real or supposed differences arising from the girls' more rapid development: both sexes believed that girls were "moodier" than boys, pointing out that this could be put down to the effect of hormones being felt earlier in girls, while the full onslaught of adolescence does not hit boys until they are at least halfway through secondary school . . . Even if it is true that teenage girls are moodier than boys, this ought not to be elevated to the status of a guiding principle. Nobody has ever seriously suggested that normally shy children for example, are fundamentally different from less inhibited types. The preferred tactic is to teach them to get along (pp. 38-39).

These excerpts have been presented in an effort to show the strong relevance that gender plays in the socialization of children and youth. The sample accounts used in this

text are quite long and very detailed, making it difficult to extract small portions that could be included in this research effort. Dissecting the full sample tends to weaken the emphasis, and the lengthy accounts could not be shared in their entirety simply due to lack of time and space. What has been cited here, however, does support, by the evidence of ethnographic accounts, the important role of gender that must be acknowledged and considered when seeking to understand its role in the identity formation process of adolescent youth. These accounts help to establish evidence that supports what the research literature claims to be true concerning stereotypical gender and identity roles, its strong implications for schools and learning, and the power struggles and issues that accompany the inequities that are associated with gender identification.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, I have attempted to identify the essential common themes that have emerged from multiple readings of the three texts used in this textual analysis. After identifying four major categorical themes, I have endeavored to cite actual scripts from these texts that were representative narratives of the themes that were established. What I hope to be evident at this point, is that the statement made in the initial phase of the textual analysis has been made clear: the themes must be recognized

as having fluid boundaries, allowing for the various representative experiences to flow into more than just one fixed categorical identification. If we understand anything about the complexities of youth and the difficulties experienced by adolescents who are trying to negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood, this should be logical in its assumption. I have tried to demonstrate how the categories overlapped in the descriptions given. This suggests very strongly that the influences on developing human, social beings, affect them deeply and the effects of their influence reach to various aspects of their identity, unable to be contained to just one fragmented segment of their lives. We are talking about "whole" human beings, with cognitive, emotional, mental, social, psychological, and physical attributes and needs. The various components blend together to make the whole person, and it is this whole person, dealing with the complexities of each of the components interacting internally in this young person, that help us to understand the difficulties that our youth deal with in seeking to find their identity, their accepted place of belonging, a clear perception of self.

The textual analysis, in my opinion, has supported the Review of the Literature that comprises Chapter II. There seem to be distinctive links that confirm a correlation between the research and the actual lived experiences of the

subjects involved. My interpretation of these lived experiences provides substantial evidence that suggests the validity of current research literature concerning identity formation in adolescence.

CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS ON IDENTITY FORMATION IN ADOLESCENTS AND THE CURRICULUM

THE JOURNEY BEGINS:

When I began this venture some time ago, I embarked on a journey that would lead me through new territorial boundaries. The autobiographical understanding of my own lived experiences as an adolescent in search of identity was all I could bring to this venture into the great expanse of what was then, the unknown. Becoming vulnerable to the insights that I might encounter on the way was an adventure in taking risks--what would I find? How would it make me feel? Would my present perceptions and perspectives be challenged, requiring my honest response and reaction, and the willingness to change them if it became necessary to do so? I was desperately seeking answers to some very complicated questions and situations. This determination to find those answers became my motivation and the driving force behind this endeavor.

As I look about me, it is easy to see that everyday existence in this postmodern society is not always attractive or appealing. Visible are the multitude of people who seem to be aimlessly wandering around, without any sense of direction, without people who really care in their lives, and often without hope for a brighter future.

Looking back to the years that have already passed, I stand in the present and look ahead to the years that lie before me. The commercial advertisement that states, "We've come a long way baby!" is no doubt true. But I can't help asking whether the destination was worth the journey. Are we better now, or worse than before? Are there signs that indicate that the years to come will be better because of where we've come from, where we are now, and where we are moving toward in this present direction? What will tomorrow hold? And does this image entice me to want to go along for the ride? Is it the destination that is appealing, or the journey itself? Or is it possibly neither one?

There are daily reminders that these are tumultuous times in the lives of many people. To reflect on life a decade ago, or two decades ago, and see life as it is today, it becomes obvious that dramatic changes have occurred--some good, some bad. Living itself can be a difficult task for many. We are called on, day after day, to deal with new confrontations and complexities that help to shape our world and define who we are. These are the very essential core elements I was seeking to explore. Although I am not surprised by the research findings, I can honestly say that I have viewed life from a new perspective--a new set of lenses. This venture has made me view adolescents and their lifestyles completely different than I had before. And,

although some questions have been answered, I find that there are so many more that are yet to be answered.

THE SEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING:

As I shared in my autobiography, my life has been a desperate search--a search to find my identity, who I really am deep inside. It has been a process of peeling away the masks of the various identities I had accumulated over the years. It is a process that I still experience even today. Stripping away the layers of self has often been painful, discovering parts of my life that had been neatly stored away--stuffed into the depths of my unconsciousness. Cleansing old wounds and seeking answers for all the "why" questions in my life has been a journey that continues still. With the tearing away of the identity masks I have molded to my external appearance, there has also been the experience of cleaning out the closets of my internal being. Each step of the journey has brought me face to face with myself. Working through each confrontation, I have emerged a little lighter in spirit, and a little closer to understanding who the person is hiding beneath the layers of masks. Peering into the mirror and recognizing the reflection as yourself can be an insightful experience.

The question that has framed this research endeavor was my quest to find out if others have experienced life in the same ways that I have. Have other people struggled with so

many conflicts the way that I have? Are my life experiences unique only to me--am I the only one who has felt the frustrations and apprehension that growing up has brought? I suppose that, if I were truly open and honest, I would have to admit that I wanted to think that I wasn't some kind of weirdo, set off in a class all my own. There has been a need for me to know if there has been any measure of normalcy in my life as I have grown through the years. In looking to the lived experiences of others--adolescents facing the same kinds of dilemmas (only more in number and more difficult) that I had faced, I longed to gain an understanding of why this whole process of forming an identity was so difficult and so complex. Since my struggle has always been silent to those around me, this effort brings into the open what I have worked for years to suppress. For the sake of my family--my husband and my children, and for my own sake, I needed to find out who was the real me. The journey has brought me a long way from where I first started, but the road still winds ahead. For now, I will seek only to glean from what I have learned thus far. It is my hope that by understanding myself more thoroughly, I can better understand others--those especially whose lives I touch as a parent, an educator, a woman, and a wife. I have found it to be true in my life, that growth can only occur as it experiences a little pain. Like a seed

that is planted, watered and nourished, the bud must break through the outer shell that contains it, and forcefully push its way up through the soil to reach the sunlight. And once it has broken free, it is then able to grow and flourish, and add beauty to life. My seed has been struggling to break through, blossom and flourish, adding a sweet fragrance for all those who pass my way.

MAKING CONNECTIONS:

Self-understanding is one of the more important aspects of emerging adolescent abilities for overcoming serious challenges. Prior to adolescence, childhood is characterized by the embeddedness of the child in his or her family and the strong tendency, whether for better or worse, to identify with persons and norms within the family. The increasing importance of the peer world and the simultaneously evolving capacity to see parents as less powerful and more fallible are conducive to a loosening and diversification of earlier identifications. This capacity facilitates the healing that can occur through important substitute relationships such as teachers, mentors, peers, and families of friends. Such healing may be necessary when families have not been sufficiently nurturant, protective, or enhancing of self-esteem. While these family relationships may be important at earlier

periods, the adolescent can now, through the eyes of those important others, see new possibilities for himself or herself and adjust his or her persona and behavior accordingly. There has been recognition that this emergent ability to gain self-knowledge through interactions with others--this "looking glass self"--helps explain why positive relationships can have such a restorative effect on the damage of earlier events. This "mirroring" becomes especially salient in peer and romantic relationships during this time as the adolescent learns to take a perspective on himself or herself by gradually modifying the self-image he or she sees reflected in the eyes of peers. Self-understanding has been shown to be an important "protective factor" in ameliorating the risk to healthy psychological development from serious life stressors. Ideally, self-understanding should lead to action that transforms one's adaptation to circumstances, or changes the circumstances themselves. It is only when insight leads to new and better means of coping with life's challenges that we can say the individual is rising to the challenge. Indeed, insight without action can reflect a profound sense of hopelessness (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 1995, p. 210).

THE IMPORTANCE OF ESSENTIAL THEMES: FINDINGS

In the textual analysis presented here in Chapter IV, I have identified four essential themes that emerged from the multiple readings of the lived experiences of others. Through hermeneutical and phenomenological perspectives, I attempted to support those themes with actual experiences in the lives of contemporary youth. There is little doubt that the world in which they are growing up and forming identities is much different, much more difficult than the challenges that confronted me during my adolescence. Our society has undergone such powerful and dramatic changes during the last two decades. We now live in a different world--a culture that constantly confronts our young people with yet new and more complicated challenges than what I experienced as an adolescent.

The emerging themes included: (1) Home Environment and Family Relationships, (2) Schooling, Teachers and Other Adults, Role Models, Socialization and Peer Relationships, (3) Popular Culture and Perceptions of Self, and (4) Role of Race, Class, and Gender. As indicated in Chapter IV, the boundaries of these thematic units are by necessity, fluid and movable, as they tend to show signs of overlap in the interpretation of the lived experiences of the adolescents studied. The only constant in these lives and their experiences, is change itself. I was clearly able to see

how complexly these defined areas are interwoven and interconnected in all aspects of the adolescent's life. As if it were a weaving, the colors from each theme, merged together with those of other themes to create a mosaic tapestry of the young adolescent as a whole being, comprised of many parts. The influences identified were strong and the adolescent was often seen as constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing the defining aspects that helped to shape and mold them during the awkward transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood. There were extremes in both directions--traumatic and difficult transitions and smooth, subtle transitions, and everything in between the two. Their stories show two different extremes in the ways in which adolescents have responded to the contradictions of popular culture. There are those young people who have been resilient, despite difficult and painful influences in their lives. And there are those, as well, that have been extremely vulnerable to the conflicts they have encountered. Each life, though, is unique in its own right--and rightfully deserving of value and worth.

> Among factors shown to place children at risk are: serious mental illness of a parent, physical or sexual abuse, serious marital discord, poverty, emotionally unsupportive relationships with parents, foster-home

placement, and parental alcoholism. While different studies find differing degrees of relative risk for each of these and other factors, it does appear no single risk factor is determinate . . . It would seem that most children can cope with a certain amount of stress stemming from these risks, but when overloaded with multiple stresses, they become exponentially more likely to succumb. Many children and adolescents, however, do not succumb even under such stress. And therein lies a hopeful avenue for understanding how some children are protected, or protect themselves, against the vicissitudes of serious stress. And we might speculate that, whatever these protective coping mechanisms are, they are promotive of good mental health in general and could be helpful even in low-risk individuals. Three of the most important protective factors appear to be (1) personality features such as self-esteem, (2) family cohesion and lack of discord, and (3) external support systems that encourage and reinforce the child's efforts to cope. Protective factors are not fixed attributes; they are subject to development or reduction over time within the same individuals, and those that may aid in coping at one time may not work at another. Thus these factors should be seen as dynamic; the resilient individual is

> one who can adapt his or her coping strategies to changing situations. In this sense, protective factors should not be seen as fixed traits of the individual or circumstance, but rather as interpersonal and interactive (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 1995, et al., p. 211).

There is a lack of security that exists in so many areas of life. As Gergen (1991) has suggested, the definition of the personal has declined in this postmodern society, allowing persons to change their identities in an ever-changing and ever-shifting incoherent network of relationships. We have learned how to change to adapt to the environment in which we find ourselves at any given point in time.

The story of one adolescent, sharing in his own words, perhaps best expresses the way that many young people feel today, with reference, in particular, to how they are dealing with the negotiations required in the process of identity formation. No doubt there are surely many others who share his dilemma--many who are living behind the masks and images of what who they feel they should be, not necessarily who they really are.

> Today, it is disturbing to me that I am still wearing the same masks I have worn since the first grade. The stakes have risen, though, now that I am about to

graduate from college and begin to make my way in the world. There is a lot that's expected of me, and the overwhelming feeling that I have as I think about the future is guilt: guilt for the lies I've told and the people I've betrayed into a false hope. I know that what I want to do with my life--write--won't be enough for my parents. I know they are expecting more than I will ever be able to deliver, from the amount of my paycheck to the structure of my lifestyle. Scarier than how well I know that I can't keep all the pretending up for long is how much keeping my perfect image intact matters to me. I won't let myself disappoint them--I can't--because with every chink in my armor a little love will be lost, a little respect taken away. I won't settle for anything less than the hyperbolic love I've received from them throughout my life. I knew it as a child and I know it now: There is no one else out there who will love me the way my family has loved me. Unlike my family, others are not blinded by any happiness or hope or expectations that they have invested in me over these many years; therefore, others see my mistakes and faults and realize that I am nothing special.

I do consider myself lucky for the love I have received from my family. There are some people out

there reading this who have never felt or will never feel the strength of such a love. But it has been a mixed blessing: It has given me support and protection and many happy memories, but has also stifled me from being all that I could be. To fit into a popular cliche', the love of my family has given me roots, but no wings. For now I am desperately holding on to my roots scared to shake things up any further, playing the role of the perfect son with however much pain and deceit it takes (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 1995, p. 183).

THE WORLD IS NOT A PRETTY SIGHT:

The world in which we live, the place we call home, and for some, the experience of having no home--is not a pretty sight. We look around to see the hurt, the heartache, the brokenness, the desperate, the impoverished, the scars left by a life filled with stress and unhappiness, challenges that have confused and clouded the days in the lives of so many.

There is a beautiful picture hanging on the wall of my study. I can see it from where I now sit. The full moon is majestically reaching low to the large expanse of water that lays beneath it. The moonlight spreads its beauty across the water, reaching to what appears to be infinity. It is a stunning and captivating image. At the bottom of the

picture the word "RESPECT" has been written, and below it appears the words of an ancient proverb:

> "We have not inherited the earth from our ancestors; we have only borrowed it from our children."

I am saddened to think that this image, although beautiful to behold, is all too unrealistic to so many people living today. I have to wonder how we will leave it to the generations that will follow. How different would society be if this picture captured the true essence of what is "the real world" to those who have been the focus of this research.

Bill Moyers (1995) paints a different picture, one that is very familiar to so many, especially our nation's youth.

> Although criminal violence affects every segment of society, it falls most heavily on minorities living in our inner cities. African-Americans comprise only 12 percent of our population but they are victims of nearly 50 percent of the murders committed every year. Black teenagers are ten times more likely to be shot to death than white teens. Young African-Americans are incarcerated at a rate three to four times that of young whites, and the rate for young Hispanic men is 60 percent greater than for whites. What is happening in our inner cities to put a youngster more at risk of delinquency and violence? Poverty, for one thing.

Almost 40 percent of black children are raised in poverty compared to five percent of white children. And unemployment for black and Latino youngsters in urban areas is more than twice that for whites. Several studies point to economic hardship as the single most important predictor of criminal violence. One recent study found the majority of street crimes committed by young men who are out of school and out of work. Poor minorities are much more likely than poor whites to be isolated by their poverty. So it shouldn't surprise us that the highest rate of violence occurs in neighborhoods marked by a concentration of adolescents reared in extreme poverty by single mothers; poor access to prenatal and pediatric care; low infant birthweight; a shortage of legitimate jobs; substandard schools; civic isolation; and practically none of the social capital that offers people security, economic opportunity, and hope for the future. Throw in a competitive and vicious drug trade and a flourishing arms race, and you have a social war zone where crime is both adventure and employment, members of the same family wind up in jail, gangs offer community and status, and young people are being killed in record numbers. Those who do survive are stalked by fear (p. 4).

Moyers (1995 et al.) shares other statistics that are astonishing and frightening to consider:

Statistic: In one study of students ages 10-19, three out of four had witnessed a robbery, stabbing, or shooting. One in four had seen someone killed (p. 4).

Statistic: In 1993, 3,284 juveniles were arrested for murder and more than 116,000 for other violent crimes (p. 7).

Statistic: Juvenile courts handled 1,471,200 cases in 1992. Juvenile Courts handled nearly 1,340,000 cases in 1991 (p. 8).

Statistic: By one account three million children ages 3-17 are exposed to parental violence every year. There are some four million reported incidents of domestic violence against women every year. The testimony of battered mothers reveals that children usually witness the abuse. And studies show those children to be at greater risk for problems later on (p. 17).

Statistic: Homicide is the leading cause of death among young African-American males (p. 22).

Statistic: There are more gun dealers in America than gas stations (p. 24).

Statistic: Gunshot wounds to young people under 16 nearly doubled in major urban areas over a three-year

period (p. 26).

Statistic: In one year, 4,940 Americans under the age of 19 died from gunshot wounds; 538 of them were shot accidentally (p. 27).

Statistic: On any given day, there are more than 90,000 youngsters being held in juvenile facilities (p. 1).

These statistics, unfortunately do not paint a pretty picture. They are, however, very real. They represent what life is like for many young people growing up today. It seems obvious that drastic changes are needed if we hope to stop the rise of statistics such as these. Sources indicate that there is a steady increase in statistics such as these each year. Action must be taken now, before it is too late to make a difference in the lives of these adolescents. Is there a need for compassion in this picture of despair?

> Compassion is something we do . . . It is strong, in the sense that it will take responsibility for the world and for the children and act to alleviate problems that burrow down to the heart of human existence . . . [Schools] should be places where we will care for our children instead of molding our children . . . This compassionate responsibility leaves us no choice but to create an atmosphere of care and concern . . . [for] real human beings who have

> thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Not names and numbers on seating charts, test scores and behavior modification plans--people who hurt, who care, who are connected to all of us (Reynolds, 1994/1995, p. 13-15).

This is not apt to solve all the problems, but could it at least, be a place to start? Caring and compassion are themes in much of the research done by Nel Noddings (1992) and represents an area that many educators and theorists note as an element that is essential in schools and other institutions that work with children and young adolescents. Caring and compassion speaks to the needs of these students as human beings. I remember hearing a wise professor once say that, "Children must know we care, before they care what we know!" It seems the world could use a little more care and compassion--where is there a better place to begin than with the youth and children with whom we have contact?

IMPLICATIONS:

This research has provided a glimpse of reality from the lives of adolescents. Theirs is a world filled with contradictions, conflicts, and confrontations. Clearly the evidence of the stories told here, and the statistics provided, are indicative that we face a problem that cannot be ignored or denied. The youth in today's world are crying out to adults to make the world a better place in which to grow, develop, and form stable identities. It presents us

with many questions that will have to be answered. It suggests that we need to turn our attention to focus on these matters while there is time to make a difference.

The findings presented here are not suggested to be complete. These serve only as examples of how adolescents experience life and how they perceive their world. Further research is suggested in an effort to find ways of confronting these problems. What are some ways in which we can help to prevent these tragedies? Are there more effective ways of dealing with troubled youth? What can be done about the conditions in which many young people must live and grow up? How can I personally contribute to being a part of the solution, rather than further adding to the problem?

What can schools do to make a difference? What should educators know and understand in order to positively impact these young persons who are in the process of forming identities? What should be the components that form the curriculum in light of this research, that will help educators better help young people during this difficult transitional stage in development? Is there a need for change in the ways in which future educators should be educated in order to deal more effectively with the serious issues that young people grapple with on a daily basis?

This research supports the idea that teachers have the

opportunities to interact with students in educational settings during the years that are some of the most influential and most critical in the process of identity formation in youth. How can these opportunities and time be better used to provide for more positive outcomes in the lives of many who so desperately need guidance from caring adults in learning how to deal with the complexities of growing up in today's world and becoming healthy, "whole" adults? The implications of the relationship between identity formation and the curriculum could be researched even further.

How can churches and community centers help? What can be done about the lack of jobs and ways of providing for the needs of families? There are indications that many experience the lack of a sense of community. Is this an essential element in the day-to-day life experiences of children and youth? How can we better provide a sense of community--in the classrooms, schools, neighborhoods, and other areas that are a part of the external influences on youth?

FURTHER SUGGESTED RESEARCH:

Further study is recommended on the relationship that gender plays in the process of identity formation. This is such a broad area, that one could, no doubt, constitute an entire research project on the gender issue alone.

Additional indepth research could include areas concerning the role of race and class status as it relates to the process of identity formation and adolescence. The list could continue endlessly.

My journey continues as I move forward in looking internally to the identification of this self, and externally, as to how I might be a part of positive change in the lives of others. My research will continue. It is my hope that there are others who will join with me. Simply learning about the statistics and problems, listening to the voices of the adolescents themselves, and identifying emergent themes are only the first steps in making connections to youth that will impact their lives in a positive way. Where do we go from here? Now that we know, what are we going to do about helping to change it? We must not close our eyes--our children and youth need us. Knowing some of the influencing factors that impact adolescents during the time in their lives that requires so many changes and transitions--knowing, at least, gives us a place to begin. The more we know, the more we can learn, and the better will be our efforts on their behalf. The impacts and influences that have been identified in this research effort on identity formation in adolescence becomes the curriculum in which we learn and grow together. It is the curriculum that requires our focus and attention as we work with and

alongside children and youth and touch their lives on a daily basis. What will the years ahead hold for the youth of our nation, and what will be the role that we, as educators, play in their growth and development?

There is a bumper sticker that reads, "I'm a teacher-I touch the future!" How will our touch make a difference?

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