

The entry and passing-out exams are impartial. There is no nepotism at this stage—that comes later, inside the corps system. But in practice the intake is overwhelmingly middle class and—in the case of ENA—Parisian. This is partly a matter of social convention, partly of teaching. The Ecole Polytechnique's intake is a little more varied and provincial than ENA's. But thereafter, the "x" leads a life every bit as secluded as the *énarque*. The system may be a major factor in the French citizen's regular sense of grievance against the state, and in the sense of alienation felt by the working class and the peasantry.

This is not new. Read Balzac, and you will find the same criticisms of the Polytechnique as are now made of ENA. Visit ENA or the Polytechnique today, and you will find plenty of students ferociously critical of the system they are entering. But they stand to gain too much from it to be prepared, except in a few quixotic cases, to try to transform it by calling its bluff. In 1972 a whole "year" of *énarques* decided bravely, on passing out, to boycott the three grander corps in favour of ministries or prefectures. But their gesture has had no sequel.

Effective reform could take two forms: either basic reform of higher education (bringing ENA and the Grandes Ecoles into the general university structure, for example) or a new government staffing policy for the upper administration, deliberately bringing in outsiders and smashing the closed

shops. Either move would let all hell loose, and would need supreme political courage. It is hard to see Giscard, not only a legatee of the system but a believer in it, fouling his nest in this way.

Would a left-wing government attempt such a reform? This is not certain. The unions and parties of the left are all outspokenly critical but, in power, they might need to lean on it, at least in the shorter term. Mitterrand and his Socialists may well feel that, for France to be politically and economically stable, the left would need the existing structure. There are plenty of talented Socialists and Radicals sitting quietly inside bodies like the Conseil d'Etat, forming a kind of "shadow" administration and ready to take active office when called upon to do so. The left might possibly modify the system a bit. That is all.

On balance, I think, the virtues of the system outweigh its defects, in terms of administrative efficiency and economic progress. The weightiest charge against it is not ineffectiveness, but unfairness. It is perpetuating the role of the state as nanny, in a situation where all citizens enjoy *égalité* but some enjoy more *égalité* than others. The French are becoming less ready to leave their destiny in the hands of technocrats who claim to know best. If there is another, and worse, 1968-style explosion, the tumbrils will be full of short-haired, tidy-suited "x" and *énarques*, clutching their confident slide rules and eloquently argued dossiers.

The life of adolescence

Bernard Davies

Adults often consider adolescence just a phase, of no intrinsic worth. This leads to the adolescent rejecting 'helpers' like teachers or social workers.

Two boys (aged 17-18) waiting at a bus stop, both in school uniform, carrying battered satchels. A tall girl (about the same age) in shin length skirt, skinny sweater, shoulder length hair, stops to talk. She is greeted with warm smiles by both boys; a joke from one: "Where were you today?" She explains why she hasn't been at school; the three laugh together. They talk of a teacher at the school, two friends known to them who are no longer "going together," events at the local disco last Saturday night. At one point, the girl lightly touches the hair of one of the boys, commenting he's had a haircut; his friend makes a sarcastic comment, all three laugh together again. After about five minutes, the girl says casually, "I must go." The boys say, "Yeah," and she walks slowly away.

A group of six 14-15 year old boys outside a chip shop, leaning against the shop window, standing on the edge of the pavement, kicking stones to each other. All but one are dressed in tight, short sweaters and wide-bottomed trousers. Two young girls approach, obviously known (at least by name) to the boys. One boy passes a serious comment about one of the girls, a second boy agrees. A third boy, and then a fourth, call out a comment. Others laugh loudly, pass joking remarks to each other. The chip shop owner calls out to them to make less noise and clear off. One boy calls back, swearing and laughing, then begins to walk slowly away. The others follow him.

Incidents like these are hardly exceptional: each of us may at any time observe something similar, and may even get caught up in them, at a football

match, on the street corner, in a bus shelter. Yet, if too simply, they highlight some key adolescent characteristics: a kind of collective introversion; preoccupation with personal relationships, especially across the sexes; a tendency to act out emotion; and delicately balanced relationships with adults. Moreover, unexceptional though they are, such incidents are always likely to provoke criticism. The sexual overtones of the first encounter, the potential disruptiveness of the second, will almost certainly provoke some hostile adult attitudes and feelings. At its mildest, the comment might be, "Silly kids! They'll grow out of it"; more extremely: "Teenagers! They should all be locked up!"

Nor should such comments be treated merely as throwaway. Underlying them are two common but largely unquestioned assumptions. The first is that adolescence is a problem because, *in itself*, it represents deviance from normal adult behaviour. And the second, that adolescence is *essentially* a phase, a mere passing moment in an individual's development. Thus adolescence ends up meaning little more than rebellion and change.

Both of these assumptions can be found in much of the literature on adolescence. Sometimes they are expressed quite specifically. Derek Miller, the psychiatrist, in a book revealingly entitled *The Age Between*, has described adolescence as "the last of a series of stations on the way to adulthood," which he saw as demonstrated "by a capacity to love and by the attainment of full potential both mentally and physically." D. W. Winnicott, writing in *NEW*

SOCIETY ("Adolescent morals: struggling through the doldrums," 25 April 1963), acknowledged that "adolescence is a time which must be lived . . . each individual is engaged in a living experience." Nonetheless, he asserted: "There exists only one real cure for adolescence: maturation . . . The process [my italics] cannot be hurried up." More recently, the American Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry talked of adolescence coming to an end "when the psychological disequilibrium of the second phase [my italics again] is replaced by a relatively stable equilibrium."

However, the clearest statement of this view came from members of the British Medical Association in 1960: "The adolescent is neither an adult nor a child, and he is struggling to make the change from dependence to independence." His condition "is physiologically advertised by considerable changes and unruly psychological adjustments." Adolescence in fact "is not a step, but an incline . . . the time when the growing individual becomes aware of adult problems and lasts until he or she has come to terms with the adult realities."

Yet need adolescence be thought of largely as a time of turmoil, with adulthood representing attainment and resolution? We certainly now define childhood very differently, considering it as a time to *be*, in its own right. In public and social policy, and in much private child-rearing, children are no longer judged as miniature adults. The measuring rod for what they do and say is: does it represent good *childhood* behaviour? And if they act too much like their elders, they are liable to be called "little old men" or "too old for their years."

This has some very important practical consequences. Play in childhood is not seen as a distraction from more serious (that is, adult-like) pursuits,

nor even as mere "recreation" (that is, useful to help the individual make new efforts at work). It is regarded as the child's "work"; and valuable because, through it, the child expresses himself *now*.

Such attitudes support some key approaches in education, social work and elsewhere. It justifies child-centred education, which has produced some very sensitive and relevant teaching. And it is leading to child-care policies, which recognise that children are not mere appendages of adults, but have rights of their own which require us to treat them specifically as children.

All this is in striking contrast to our public attitudes and dealings with adolescents. Here, we mainly respond to the adolescent as if the most important task he faces is to become adult as rapidly and painlessly as possible. The years taken up by adolescence apparently have no intrinsic worth: all that can be hoped for is that they will not inconvenience adults too much, or lead to the adolescent himself having a breakdown. And yet, when people talk about their *own* adolescence, they rarely suggest that they were totally preoccupied with how they were changing, or how quickly they could become adults. Adolescence seems to have had some important and immediate meaning. The significance of an event—getting to know someone of the opposite sex, starting work, ordering one's first drink and so on—seems to stem, not so much from how it helps the individual's *development*, but from how it feels at the time.

This concept of adolescence merits close attention, especially by those working with adolescents. For, during adolescence, there are tasks to be accomplished which give it great inherent meaning. Some of them are psychological: defining a clear self-image, a concept of oneself (including



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one's sexual self). Then there are social tasks, such as becoming independent from one's family. This means for example, broadening one's social network; joining clubs and other activities; moving to another place; or changing one's job or status (which today, for some, may mean being a "commune member" or "drop-out"). Philosophical tasks, too, have to be tackled, and so do personal beliefs. And this happens even if the values and beliefs are never articulated, and end up closely resembling those of parents and other influential adults.

As the adolescent has these tasks to accomplish, he inevitably experiences adolescence as if it has to be lived and not just negotiated. Yet the adult view inevitably has its effects. In particular, it leaves the adolescent dependent on anyone willing to treat him and his experience on their merits, here and now. This very largely means his contemporaries. He feels, rightly, that adults stereotype and judge him, rather than understand him. Therefore it is important to be accepted by his contemporaries, and conform to their standards. Only with them, can the adolescent rely on being taken for what he is, rather than for what he may become.

Yet this oversimplifies the nature and function of the adolescent's contemporaries. In the first place, in our society, this has become mixed up with commercial interests—which have moved in with great vigour. The outcome is "teenage culture," epitomised for adults by strange forms of dress, music and dancing. What is significant here, however, is that commercial interests have not created this adolescent group and its way of life. Rather, they have recognised that it exists and has needs which can be exploited.

A further complication is that an adolescent's friends are not so dominant or permanent an influence in his life as it might seem. In fact, evidence is accumulating that their impact on the individual adolescent is superficial and transient. They may govern whether he wears a skinny sweater and blue jeans, or frilly shirt and flared trousers; whether he wears his hair straggling down to his shoulders, or permed and carefully set; and whether he listens to rock, pop or "underground" music. But they rarely determine what job he (or she) takes; whether he goes to church, votes Labour or hates "the wogs"; or even whom he marries. In other words, on major decisions and choices, adults (especially parents) still have a big influence.

Contemporaries, then are not the only, or even the predominant influence on what adolescents do and think. Their views are felt in only limited and passing areas of the adolescent's life. And yet within the areas they affect, their influence is significant and obvious because, for the adolescent, these areas are important. That is why "helpers" like teachers and social workers, who ignore or actively reject the group to which the adolescent belongs (even if they feel sympathetic to him individually), are liable themselves to be rejected.

The fact that our society prefers to define adolescence as transient and rebellious has one further consequence: it lets adults emphasise what adolescents have in common and conclude they all experience the period in fundamentally the same way. Clearly, they do have a great deal in common. Yet there are also important differences between individuals and between different sections of adolescents. In particular, the well-established relationship between social class and educational opportunity and performance, and jobs and economic rewards, has major implications for the adolescent. When the psychological repercussions of these social and

economic factors—such as their long-term effect on self-image—are examined more closely, adolescence must mean very different things to different individuals and groups.

The adult emphasis on adolescent change and turmoil may not, however, be entirely accidental. It may subtly ensure that adults continue their very powerful control over the young. For to say, in effect, that adolescence has no real value implies that only the end product of the adolescent's development—adulthood, maturity—matters. The sole purpose of adolescence then becomes early entry into the perfect final state. Thus there is no incentive or opportunity to ask: but is this state so perfect? Sceptical responses to this are therefore muted, or by careful labelling ("irresponsible," "unrealistic," "immature") made unacceptable.

In a fast-changing society like ours, such pressures cannot entirely succeed. However, the only way for many adolescents to resist them seem to be what their society calls anti-social and deviant. Legitimately rejecting the handed-down customs, while tackling the tasks of adolescence, is becoming more and more difficult. And anyway, the majority find it simpler to accept those customs.

What all this means of course, is that the generation gap is much narrower than most adults assume. Indeed it may only be significant because so many believe it exists. In fact, the gap may not be wide enough—the young might have too few opportunities to distance themselves from their seniors. For the sake of reinvigorating our society, and allowing the adolescent to define a distinctive self-image, it may need to become considerably wider.

However, this would call for policies and practices—in education, social work and youth work—for which our current services are very little prepared. Their instinct is to respond to adolescence as change. Behaviour which expresses an individual and group response to being adolescent is ignored, dismissed as embarrassing or irrelevant, or condemned simply as deviant. Like the exchanges between those three young people at that bus stop: who could ever treat such introverted small talk seriously? Or take the group outside the chip shop: what more is there to do but kick their arses and make sure they make no more noise? Or all those adolescent couples caught up in intense, self-absorbing love affairs: they'll have forgotten about each other next week, so why listen to their drivel now? Or those adolescent ambitions to be air hostesses and pop stars: they are all unattainable, so why bother to respond to the yearning to be free from present mediocrity and monotony which may prompt them? Adolescence, after all, is about what you will be in the future—so there's hardly any point, even if you are a teacher, a probation officer or a scout leader, in treating the underlying current feelings and ideas as important.

I exaggerate, of course. Many individuals and, in particular, many "helping" practitioners, do respond to the here-and-now meanings adolescents give to their experience. But not all—probably not the majority. And our society as a whole certainly does not. I have of course, assumed that adolescence is partly about change, partly about development: so is all human life and adolescents certainly realise this. But can we afford to proceed as if it were about nothing else?

"I feel so different," Anne Frank wrote. "I wish they would tell me what I can expect to feel rather than put me off with explanations that I am in a phase of change." Very many of her counterparts today would, without doubt, echo those words.

The slandered slum

Janice Perlman

Shantytown dwellers in a city like Rio play a big part in urban life. As this study shows, they are oppressed, but they are not "marginal" to society.

Many who write about those who migrate in ever greater numbers to the shantytowns of the developing world, claim that migration is a disruptive and traumatic experience, which creates a large "marginal" population, never fully integrated into urban society, economy and politics. But in 1968-69, I carried out a study in three slum areas of metropolitan Rio de Janeiro and found these characterisations to be false, and their policy implications to be invidious. I call them the "myths of marginality." My conclusion was these people are not economically and politically marginal, but exploited and repressed; not socially and culturally marginal, but rejected and stigmatised.

For the purpose of the study, three different types of communities were chosen: (1) a *favela* (squatter settlement on a hillside) in the midst of an upper-class residential and commercial area; (2) a *favela* in the industrial periphery of the city; and (3) a *suburbio*—a group of neighbourhoods in an outlying satellite or dormitory city. In each of these communities, I interviewed 250 people (*favelados*), of whom 200 were chosen at random from men and women of 16 to 65 years of age. Fifty were community leaders.

At the time this study was conducted, the *favelas* of Greater Rio numbered close to 300, and held a population of about one million—one seventh of the total population of the metropolitan area. While the city of Rio itself was growing at 2.7 per cent a year, these *favelas*—and the surrounding *suburbios*—were growing at 7.5 per cent a year.

It is said the *favela* lacks internal social cohesion and that *favelados* are isolated from other people in larger cities. The result is: few residents participate in voluntary associations; friendship and kinship networks are weak; trust and mutual help are low or absent; and crime and personal violence are common. My data show all four of these propositions to be untrue.

First, the rate of participation in voluntary associations is astoundingly high. There are a multitude of political organisations (such as the residents' associations established to fight removal and improve urban services), a great many social organisations (recreation clubs, samba schools and soccer clubs), as well as religious groups. Over two thirds (68 per cent) belonged to at least one community group, many belonged to two or more. This is impressive in itself, but it becomes even more so in light of a study of residents in 100 poor neighbourhoods in the United States of America, which showed the comparable figure (for membership in one or more voluntary associations) to be about one person in five.

Second, as for informal friendship and kinship networks, when *favelados* were asked where their relatives and best friends lived, well over half of them replied "within the same community." Two thirds had frequent (daily or weekly) social contact with these persons. This is consistent with my finding that contrary to the stereotype of the rootless migrant, 84 per cent of migrants had friends, relatives or both in Rio when they came; and that

73 per cent arrived in the city accompanied by family or friends. In fact, those individuals who came to the city unaccompanied, and in addition knew no one already there, totalled only 3 per cent.

Third, eight out of ten people said their neighbourhood was more or less united, and the same proportion said they could count on at least a few friends and neighbours when they were needed. Most striking of all is that, despite the myth of the rural village as a paradise of mutual help, 70 per cent felt that there was as much or more help in the *favelas* as there was in the countryside.

Fourth, as for crime and violence, an excerpt from *Time*, published some time ago, sums up the general fears and images: "Squeezed by belt-tightening inflation and an influx of some 3,700 newcomers a month, the *favela* gangsters have moved into the city streets, boosting the crime rate alarmingly. In a previously safe lovers' lane, girls were raped and their boyfriends robbed, beaten or murdered." The evidence does not bear out this description. Of all the *favelados* in the sample, only 16 per cent even mentioned violence or immorality among objections to life in the city, and only 3 per cent said that ending crime would be among their priorities if they were mayor, governor or president of the country. In the year and a half I lived in Rio, I saw very little evidence of crime or violence and felt a good deal safer than I ever had in the streets of New York City or Boston.

But what about the widespread view that *favelados* are not integrated into the city; they do not take advantage of the wider urban context, they never feel fully at home in it, and they yearn to return to the countryside? In fact, the *favelado* does not yearn to return to the countryside. Although half had gone back to visit, 85 per cent said they would not want to live there. Two specific points of comparison—social and economic—help to explain why. Seventy per cent found as much or more mutual help among neighbours in their Rio communities as in their own home towns; and 71 per cent said they were better off economically than their friends and relatives who stayed at home. When asked directly if they were satisfied with their lives in the city and liked living in Rio, our respondents answered almost unanimously that they did.

On close examination, the "isolated enclaves" and nostalgia for country life, do not exist. The majority of *favelados* make considerable use of the city. This is due in part to the fact that so many of their daily activities—shopping, work and having fun—are carried on within the larger city. Medical care and schooling, for example, were mostly sought outside the *favela*.

But though *favelados* cultivate contacts with the larger society and try to participate in the services it offers, they are rarely successful in attaining their goals. They often have to lie about their address to get jobs or even make a date. They are "outcasts" in the social system. The following excerpt from the diary of one *favelado* is not uncommon: "I had carried a lot of scrap iron and got pains in my kidneys. So as not to see my children hungry,

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