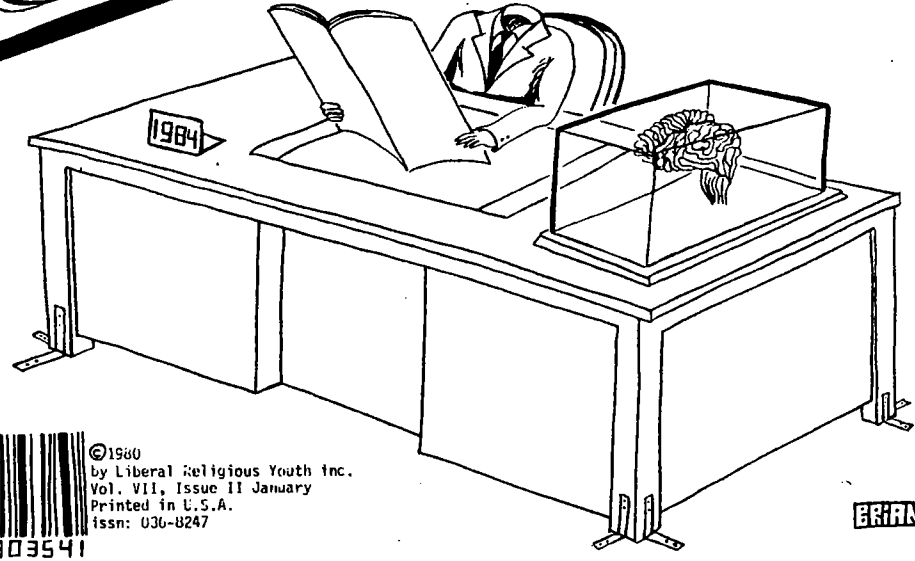


People

CONFORMITY



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BRIAN WEIBERG

CONFORMITY IN HIGH SCHOOL boyd watters

CONFORMITY TO CLASS STATUS

IF someone asked you what the overall purpose of high school is, you would probably reply with something like "to educate." Most people think of education as the knowledge gained from the classes one takes in school, but this is actually only part of our education. The purpose of the modern American high school is not only to teach its curricula, for high schools are at least as concerned with socialization, but to teach what society considers proper, acceptable behavior. It is this socialization part of our education that this article is concerned with.

High schools socialize their students to conform to social norms. Three ideas which students are taught to conform to and to accept are that of the class status system, nationalism, and the blind acceptance of outside authority.

References to high school situations in this article are taken from my own recent high school experiences. I do this because I believe that the large midwestern high school I attended is representative of the average American high school. Obviously, policies and all characteristics of the students, teachers, and school administration vary dramatically in high schools around the country and between those in cities and rural areas, but I contend that all serve the same social function; to teach conformity to class status, nationalism, and blind acceptance of authority. Moreover, it seems from meeting high school students from around the country that the way high school students deal with the socialization they get to conform to is similar. The conclusion we will reach is that despite all the social rejection and harassment which comes with nonconformity, the only real difference between a conformist and a non-conformist is that the nonconformist questions the authority of those who want him or her to conform. Nonconformity is not a preference for different things, but rather the willingness to trust one's own reason. In this way, we should all strive to be nonconformists.

One important thing which high school teaches is conformity to the class status system: that is, the belief that people of some backgrounds are somehow different than others, and that some should enjoy higher status and reward. Students learn first that there are class differences between people, and second that some classes have more power, and moreover, should have more power than others. Students have already been introduced to the idea of class status long before entering high school, for very early in life they learn that they have less power than their parents and older siblings, and probably have more power than their younger siblings. Still, high schools further perpetuate the class status system by putting students of different classes (socio-economic and grade-level) in closer contact, and by further magnifying the class differences between teacher and student.

High school reinforces the students' belief in socio-economic class status by exposing students to others of different socio-economic backgrounds; that is, to people of all levels of wealth and work status -- rich, poor, in-between, children of blue-collar workers, business people, and professionals. This does not happen to nearly such a large extent in earlier school situations since grade schools are usually much more localized than high schools; that is, the "neighborhood school" is smaller and more numerous, and is likely to serve students from a smaller geographical area. Since people in a neighborhood are more likely to share similar levels of wealth and occupational status than people in other neighborhoods, the students in a grade school which serves only a few neighborhoods are more likely to have similar background than students in a larger high school which serves a much larger area. Since public schools are funded largely by

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PERSONALS



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Your contributions are welcomed. It is made possible through your energies, both spiritual and physical. Any contributions of news items, short stories, poetry, editorials, or artwork are welcomed and will be considered. None can be returned. Drawings or other artwork must be in black and white. We cannot pay for contributions as our budget just can't handle the strain. Thank You.

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to all those at home - life isn't so hot here and I would really appreciate a little communication from the prairie... I need you, Gretchen

Michael--See you at Germantown, right? Janet

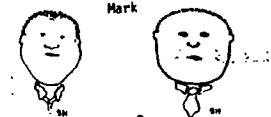
Jack B.- I just realized how long it's been since I've written. Forgive me...and expect a letter soon. Julienne

Laura - Thank for it all...Yes, we're sisters...I miss you...I love you... Pittsburgh and L.A. are too far away. Amy

Anyone knowing how to get in touch with Paul Vail or Liz Humphrey, contact Kati Amazon.

Dear Swanstrom: You may have your ice cream after you eat your green beans, and you better eat them soon, before I knock you off that chair. Your Dad

Tinker- Howd!! How would you like to be kidnapped in July by a big Checker cab? If not see you at Con Con.



Hello, folks, no I did not fall off a cliff and disappear this Summer. I'm alive, sage and sane and living in Philadelphia... about a block from Germantown local. My mailbox is lonely and wonders what has happened to the old friends and correspondents, especially T-Bone, Leslie W., Sparky, Kate B., Julie K., Mike Woodburn, Baba, Richard Gaines and Keith Winston. Also, where are you, Starr?? I wrote, but my letter bounced back; if any of you folks know where Texas Twinkle Starr is hiding out, pleez write me, and you other guys too, anyone who cares to write will get a reply.

Trace DeHaven
 259 W. Johnson St.
 Apt. C-1
 Philadelphia, PA 19144

O.K. KIDS!!!
 From now on please make your personals short and sweet, so we don't have to cut any out... You've been sending in a few lately..... SUZY CREAMCHEESE

Sam, There is a bomb in Kansas. Do not panic!! Calmly walk to the nearest airport... -10+8-12-9-5+1+1-5

Perhaps it might be mentioned that we are all bison on this boat!
 Doug, Doog like a quack? lane

Kali, Happy 16th on Nov. 16th!
 Love you, woman! Kali

To the other Florida Sunshine Girl, I had so much fun in Miami. Pizza ain't bad on Sunday at about 11:30 AM. Honey dew melon (smak smak) We'll have to do our show again in St Pete. I love you alot!
 Your better half (only kidding)

To all those at Con-Con 1979; My phone number is 413-528-0771; and not 538-0771 as was printed on the mailing list...okay? see y'all next year...lane.

To all I may have sung to...Oh baby, little one, you weren't meant to fly but go ahead, fly away, fly away... Now who could this be?
 Jerry!! Tri-Fed is not yet dead. (Hey, maybe that could be a theme!) Julienne

Julienne, Take heart! Tri-Fed will occur. Keep on stomping those hedgehogs! Jerry B.

Bill & Joanna, Where did you move to? Nobody has your address, and your wedding picture negatives are sitting in Pomeroy, Ohio, or they were thrown out! Please write!!!
 Love ya, Jamie

Ed Bell--that means you! I want a letter from you--Pepsi

SPISTO- MARG
 Sorry we missed each other this December and New Years eve. I can not dance the same without you. I miss you greatly.
 Love always,
 Liza.
 p.s. Dont say I never did anything for you. XXXX.

To all- Kati Amazon no longer resides in Golden State...Can now be reached at: Rt. 1, Box 432, Avondale, PA., 19311. Getting phone with next paycheck...write me! Will answer all letters, but refuse absolutely and forevermore to write any more letters to people who never write back. One of you (Brian, you're wonderful!) is presently on my mailing list...out of over 100 I've written in the past 6 months or so. Oops-Andres makes two. Get on it, you thumb-twiddlers!
 Much Love to all,
 Kati Amazon



Mudsi, are we going to see Mr. Deas after, I too, am an old hat? Shadoobee

Hey, Mr. Kevin...WINK!!! gotcha!
 Wanted: a pet male human being. We are now taking applicants from any who meet the following requirements:
 1. Totally insane
 2. Willing to travel between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.
 3. Enjoy writing strangers strange letters.

Send a complete resume to each of the following addresses along with a recent photograph.

Amy Shapiro
 6408 Kentucky Ave.
 Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Becca Kovar
 6933 Sherman St.
 Philadelphia, PA 19119

Dear Nina, I told ya so, nyahh, nyahh nyahh. Hit my chin with your forehead and become confused while being careful if you're holding a hot drink at the time. See ya before soup gets there,
 Love, Dave

Paul--You never wrote me back! I miss you!
 JFR

Denise, is your backyard still open in August?
 The Con-Con Committee

Gretchen K. I haven't forgotten you exist. I just haven't had time to write. I wish you'd been at Peoria.
 Love, Reed

Hugh Watson Nimmo: Where are you, you dead head?

HELPIII! I'm in desperate need of places to stay during the summer months. I'll be traveling all over the U.S. If you wouldn't mind having a fellow LRYer in for a night or two, please write me. I promise not to take advantage of your generosity.
 Kimberly Russo
 227 Garnett Street
 Philippi, WV 26416

How long the road is,
 But, for all the time the journey has already taken,
 How you have needed every second of it in order to learn what the road passes by.
 Dag Hammerskjold

Layni Martin
 1503 Montclair St.
 Arlington, Texas 76015

Anne, kissy kissy once again.
 Love you, the shallower wearer (Cathy)

Julie the Angel
 (617) 253-1000 x. 59639
 48 Mass. Ave #309
 Cambridge, MA 02139
 (love to all)

Airheads are more elite than fish brains.
 Laurie Yanis, I love you. Prints
 Jill's my granddaughter? Your my daughter? I'm tooooo young! Your all illegitimate!

Colin, Didja see our picture? Cute, ain't we? Kali
 In memory of Ray Price's farm...
 AE
 Those were the days. Love,
 Gretchen
 Ted Altenberg, How can I contact you? I think of you often. Love, Cheryl

Tracy, stop YER MAM - CLUMP - tap the tip MOO WOO WOO... See you soon & we'll find Mr. Tall, Dark and Handsome
 GRRRRRRRRETCHEN

Friends, Loves and Other Strangers- By the time you read this my van should be inhabitable and the State of New Jersey courteous enough to have awarded me a license to drive it. Come visit scenic Morristown! Don't let meaningless voids of time and space inhibit you! Friendship waits for all persons! If, however, you're feeling painfully real and anchored to one spot, letters are a way to start a new year.
 Steve Woodbridge
 12 Ferndale Ave.
 Morristown, NJ 07960

Steve- I guess I'm just a sniveling sam. I miss you--HA

Joey, Eddie, Danny---see above-MA

To the other people at OPIK 79: Jim Krause, Richard Fuller, Lisa Tomres, Sister Shelley, Sherri Roberts, Debbie Rauens, Mike Reibel, and OPIK board, Marks Heuschele and Huntley, Joan Schiff, Cindy Ferguson, Mike Brisben, Topaz, Lisa Schwartz, Chris Brooks, and Wes Urry: I love you all--nice meeting you.
 Reed Bilgere

Hello out there! Has anybody seen a pair of leather moccasins? They were last seen floating around Belmont conference from November 2-4. They have white leather on the inside and regular light brown on the outside. If you have seen them, or if you are just plain bored, write to:
 Tim Gates
 11-19 148th St.
 Whitestone, N. Y.
 11357

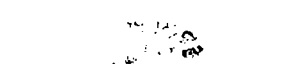
"Hey, Kaitly, Lisa, Chris, Alicia, Peter, and Roger! I'd like to hear from you. And I'd like to see you at IRF! (I will never forget you, I will never forsake you.)
 Matthias
 P.S. You helped me alot. Thanks

To John McShane: LARC is very PRO-VOKED at you. You must establish contact with the other members IMMEDIATELY, and not shirk thy responsibilities anymore, unless thy watcheth thy lovely neck wrung. And no fair calling collect either. The LARC Board

Nada, Eh! ___yu! Dicky Retardo

Bryn, Where did you skate off to? Have been looking for a letter. I'm much better but not back on wheels as yet. Please write me at "25".
 love, Susan

Joe, I LOVE YOU. We'll get Rev. Moon yet. Rainbows and live puppies.
 Laurie



Do you have to wait till 3:30 every day for the mail only to find you didn't get anything? I have that problem too. So please write me at:
 Pepsi Nusbaum
 259 River Road
 BelleMead N.J.
 08502

"GRR! I am getting VERY UPSET! Nobody sends messages to me! (except you Colin, m'love)" I know I have to put a little out before I can receive, but why can't I get a little first? Boo hoo! I'm lonely. radyance
 2619 third st./Santa Monica, CA/ 90405

Michelle--I miss you and hope to see you at Germantown. JFR

Beware the omnipotent Susie-0! It may strike anyone, even you! The cream filled goddess flies thru the air. And with a spat(!) lands smack in your hair! HEEEEEHACK!!!

Jacqui--I bet it's a girl with curly brown hair and blue-brown eyes, right? Can't wait to see her. Expect me around the middle of February. With all my love and good wishes, Kim
 Colin, you never answered me at Con-Con. Can I join your harem? Nan
 Danny, Danny, Danny...Whatever am I going to do with you? Julie

Sail
 Soul - because of I love you-I always will!

Black Flutterin Wings:
 There is a mad poet running around who still and always will love you. Please write.
 Jefferson Airplane

Anyone who wishes to converse with a lonely LRYer who doesn't have all their marbles - write me - I promise to write back.
 Janet Rosada 6618 Fisher Ave
 Falls Church, VA 22046
 Lori.

Hi! I miss you bunches! I hope you will call soon. See you at the next YAK conference.
 Love ya lots, Jamie

Hey, Wait for the frog. love ya.
 S. Bernard

Tom--Evermore is not always
 When February willows weep
 And I will touch you in my heart
 When dark storms call me.
 Kim

wot's up mon? Getting into college? Quinci misses you and so do I. Come home soon!

HEY ANIMAL - I LOVE YOU! - PRINCE
 Hey Danny M. BAA!!

Little brother!
 Little brother? Where are you? You never gave me an address, and I still have your "paper". I've known you 15 years - let's not lose touch now. I get on yer case, but ...I ain't perfect. I just love you! Write, or send a postcard, or a phone no., or anything! I wish you all the best.
 Love and warm fuzzies,
 Kati Amazon

Colin McDougal--Stacey Rutzel and I are waiting to see you! I did write back!

Note to Myself
 In four years of LRY not once have you gotten a personal. After an unsuccessful suicide attempt and 30 days in a psychiatric hospital, you deserve to be told--Beverly Mauer you are one helluva strong lady and I love you.
 Beverly

Crunchy: expect a surprise within the next 3 months.

Le anne--remember you always have a friend. Next time you're down, grab that warm fuzzy and smile. Things will get better!!! I love you. Kim





Attention: All Gurus (and other LRYers)

Do you ever get GRAND INSIGHTS, or even small, somewhat abstract, farfetched, confusing IDEAS? Well, we need, want, desire and crave ANY and ALL ideas you may have about LRY, youth programming, workshops, packets, by-laws, workcamps, spirituality, activities. . . and the list goes on and on and on and on and on.

We of the LRY Executive Committee are not here in Boston to do only what we please. Our jobs are to HELP you and your LOCAL GROUP! The problem, though, is that we can't do much for you, unless we know what it is that you want!

LRY BELONGS TO US! It is up to all of us to get involved. Please send all ideas, questions, programs, and People Soup contributions to:

LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108



Photo by G. S. CARPENTER



Conformity in LRY

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

3

By David Williams



Liberal Religious Youth, at first glance, might seem to be one of the least conforming groups known to the world. Each individual in it is generally one who does what he or she believes in, and the rest of the world can forget it! In the same way, different groups consider different activities the true meaning of LRY, they don't conform to one set of ideals or programs.

But is this truly the case? When I first came into LRY, I felt pressured to be something I wasn't. I was, and still am, a relatively straight, ordinary, suburban-type person. But people kept telling me "Be yourself!", which to them meant something on the order of compromising my moral standards. In this way, they were asking me to "conform to non-conformity".

Think about how you have changed since you have become involved in LRY. Are you conforming to non-conformity, being truly individualistic or have you changed at all? Think of how your group is viewed in the eyes of the adults in your congregation. Are the adults expecting you to conform to their set of values and expectations? Think about your group. Is there much pressure put on new members to conform to the groups values and way of doing things? All of these questions would be an excellent opener for a local-group discussion on conformity in LRY.

I have spoken to many people in LRY about conformity in LRY, and what I have determined is this: There is a great need in youth to feel that they belong to something and feel socially accepted. Anytime you have an organization which is larger than 1 person, you must have a set of guidelines for the organization to work. In other words, members of a local group all "being who they are", doing as they please and going in opposite directions won't get much done. In this way, LRY needs conformity.

However, conformity in LRY is not as bad as, say, being in the Marines. In LRY there truly is the potential for someone to be who they really are, the only time this is not the case is when it interferes with the rest of the group.

In summing up, I'd like to say that LRY, to me, is a truly confusing organization. We conform, yet we do not conform. We are a corporation, we have bylaws, yet rigid guidelines are the least thing on people's minds when they think, "What is LRY?". And to answer that question, all I can say is LRY is a paradox.

youth day~ is here to stay

This year's Continental Youth Day, to be held on Sunday, April 27, will be a success, but only if you make it happen. There is now a packet available from LRY to help you plan your Youth Day. It is chock full of ideas to help with worship, theme and presentation, meals, and inter-generational activities. The packet is free to anyone desiring it, and you needn't be an LRY group to enjoy a Youth Day.

Last year's Youth Day was such a success that the UUA has endorsed the last Sunday of April in every year as the "official" Youth Day. Youth Day is an attempt by both LRY and the UUA to involve youth more fully in the life of your church.

After your Youth Day, we'd like to hear about what you did, so we can print it in the "Youth Groups" issue of People Soup. Please write to us and request your Youth Day packets at:

Youth Day/LRY
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

GO AWAY!

Are you interested in going away with a group of new friends to enjoy yourselves, and help others while you're at it? One way to do this is by getting involved in a workcamp.

Unitarian and Universalist youth used to attend workcamps in the 1940's and 1950's. New workcamps are now starting for us.

There is a packet for people who are interested in planning and implementing a workcamp anywhere in the world. This packet is available from the LRY office.

If you are interested in attending, planning, or otherwise helping to implement a workcamp, please contact:

Workcamps/LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108

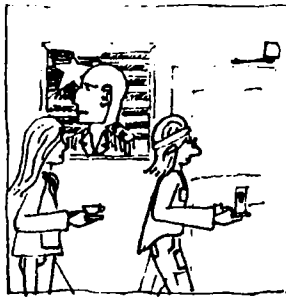
DEADLINES for "SOUP!"

Creativity March 1st

Send us your poetry, artwork, photographs, short stories, personals, quotations, drawings, sketches, doodles, novels, and anything else you can think of to put in an issue of CREATIVITY. This issue is FOR you BY you!

Youth Groups April 15th

This issue will center around YOUTH GROUPS, LRY and non-LRY, who they are, where they are, what they do, all across this great continent of ours. But we need your help! Please let us know what you're doing, and what would help you to do even more!



Get People Soup Late?

If People Soup takes more than one week from the day it was mailed to reach you, then maybe we can change it.

Just send us your name, address and the date that you received it, you can help us get People Soup to you quicker... Send it to:
People Soup
c/o LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA
02108

Thank You,
The Mailroom

4 Have You Ever Considered Suicide?

cheryl markoff

It is not uncommon for a person to think about and consider suicide. Unfortunately, it is also not uncommon for a person to attempt suicide.

Suicide is a very real thing. It happens every day. Youth between the ages of six and eleven have been committing suicide more and more. The suicide in this age range usually occurs after a family death, separation, or argument.

It is estimated that approximately 5000 people from the ages of 14 to 24 commit suicide every year and it is suspected that 5 people attempt suicide to every one that completes the suicide.

There is no accurate way to find the correct number of suicides and attempted suicides. This is because 1) Many attempts never come to the knowledge of "officials" 2) Many suicides are written off as accidents because of the embarrassment for families of suicide victims, and 3) Many true accidents (ie, car accidents etc.) are hypothesized to be suicides by way of deep rooted death wishes.

Suicide is the number two killer of young people today. Accidents are number one, if in fact the accidents are truly accidents and not suicide carried out in a less harsh way. (ie, committing suicide is seen as an angry, frustrating way to die compared to a car wreck.)

Statistics show that male victims will outnumber females by three to one in suicide deaths, but that more females will attempt it. These again, are only REPORTED figures. Who knows what really happens?

We've all heard that suicide is not a laughing matter. We've all heard that no suicide threat should be taken lightly...but, when suicide becomes a real thought within us and to our friends...it seems so different and distant, and can easily be frustrating, angering, and taken lightly.

Many times I have heard, "Life sucks. I wish I were dead...". How seriously should this be taken? I

find myself correcting the individuals I hear this from by saying that life really doesn't suck, it just has its hard times for each of us. I continue on to share my beliefs that each of these hard times will eventually turn good and even educational for us and others. I don't usually carry my concern much farther, yet I often wonder...should I? How?

I reflect on my own past and very easily remember my own suicidal attempts and tendencies. I used to be very suicidal in my earlier teens. If it had not been for a couple of special people who didn't take my pleas lightly, and who didn't listen to me as I demanded they leave me alone...I would be dead today. I would never have lived to find out that I am a good, worthwhile person. I would never have lived to discover the beauty of life. I would not have experienced the tremendous growth, love and fun that I have. I wouldn't have known any of it was possible. I have grown, I have changed, I have enjoyed, I have become happier, I have lost and cried, but I have been better able to handle it.

I AM GLAD I AM ALIVE!!! There are numerous agencies across the nations. There are hot lines, drop-in centers and counselors working around the clock to help you, your family, and your friends with feelings of depression and despair. Call the operator and ask, s/he will know how to contact a local agency.

If you ever feel like committing suicide, or someone you know does, TAKE IT SERIOUSLY! Each one of us are good, worthwhile people...whether we recognize that now or not. Each of us are capable of extraordinary things. It will take a lot of encouragement and loving support to help ourselves and others through hard times.

Every person is a counselor in undefined terms. Every person has a responsibility for others.

**DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP!
DON'T BE AFRAID TO DISCUSS THE TABOO OF SUICIDE WITH OTHERS.**

Suicide is a real thing.

binding myself up
Liza Updike

Sometimes I realize I am conforming. It throbs inside me, capturing my individuality, losing it and bringing out the worst of my resentment.

When I conform, it is usually because I am scared to be different, I am uncomfortable or in a new environment. These are the times my self hatred starts to grow. It is this intense feeling to follow others, to be passive, and to be a close-to-unlikeable-person. It's a feeling of being trapped within myself.

I am walking in an alley and I have six inches on each side. The alley is straight, the walls are tall on each side.

There is not much room to move or grow. There is no one. Besides feeling isolated, I apply strong pressure to myself to change. "Be creative, be unique. No one will ever like you if you are a copy-cat." The pressure I put on myself to be a socialite, brings out self hatred. "Change you idiot!", "Adapt, be comfortable!" So far nothing has come of that approach.

Many times I get stuck in that long straight alley, the small, worthless, close to unlikeable person, role. I have broken it in new situations. Before I needed someone to say "Hey you seem special." and save me from my isolation. Support from others, my self-consciousness is lifted. Slowly I can show myself.

I have just begun breaking my own walls, but I still need to be reminded from others, while I am freeing myself, that I Liza Updike, am a terrific person.



THE PRICE OF CREATIVITY

Stephen Woodbridge

Conforming is making yourself blend, fitting yourself into the majority, being average. Often the reason for conforming is fear of alienation. Popularity, style and fear of rejection all enforce conformity.

Students are dependent on their classmates' acceptance. There is strong pressure to conform to standards of behavior, opinion, dress, financial and social status. Conforming has its benefits: friends, parties, feeling comfortable in school, and help with schoolwork. Many non-conformist students are alienated and ostracized. Some withdraw, become cynical or pessimistic about themselves and the world. Some quit school, others live with the feeling of failure, sticking it out for the diploma. Creativity and individuality have a price to pay in junior and senior high school.

People earn, borrow, steal, and dream of money which will help them gain status. Folks who have money often buy items to represent their ability to purchase mink coats, "Cadillacs", diamonds, big homes, etc. when something becomes "un-stylish" it is disregarded and wasted. Society dictates what we buy and when we dispose of it.

In a country where individuality is supposedly encouraged, there certainly is a need to conform. By conforming we lose part of the beauty of democracy. Apathy and conformity block out views and ideas which make for a strong and valuable nation.



THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES TO SUICIDE

what would you do ?

Think of situations you or a friend have been involved in with suicide. How did you or your friend feel at the time? Afterward? How about now? Do you think you or your friend should have acted differently? Has this affected your life at all? How?

Just what are some of the reasons that make people want to commit suicide? Make a list (either in your local group or on your own) of possibilities. Take this list and for each reason stated, think of a counter reason. For example:

REASON	COUNTER REASON
family hassles	--- can move out when 18
failed math	--- can work on math skills
no friends	--- go on vacation to meet others

Think of things that you can do to help another person with these problems (reasons). For example:

REASON	HELP TO OFFER
family hassles	--- listen to attentively help person clarify his/her feelings
failed math	--- tutor in this subject find another subject he/she is good in and encourage this
no friends	--- befriend, invite out, make something for her/him

You will find that LISTENING can be one of your best gifts, especially to someone in need. Many "suicidal people" feel misunderstood, unloved and unlistened to.



if....

1) You are taking an evening stroll and your eyes focus on what seems to be a person ready to jump off of a bridge. As you move closer, the person screams out "Stop or I'll jump!"...

2) You get an unusual call from a friend who confesses to have just swallowed a bottle of barbituates. When you suggest that you can call the poison control or police, your friend becomes frantic and demands that you do no such thing...

3) A friend comes up to you in school and swears you to secrecy, stating that s/he'll be committing suicide within the next week. S/he'll be doing it by hanging or slashing her/his wrists. The knife and/or rope are in her/his locker...

Should you go to your friends' parents? Your parents? A school counselor? A teacher? The police? Call a hotline? Take action yourself? Tell some other friends?

Would you feel as if you were betraying your friends if you solicited help and support from someone else? What is more "important"; to preserve a life or a friendship?

CONFORMITY IN HIGH SCHOOL

CONT.

property taxes, students who live in more wealthy neighborhoods are more likely to attend grade schools with better facilities and a lower student-to-teacher ration, and thus are likely to have had a better quality primary education than students from less advantageous neighborhoods and schools. When the students reach high school, it becomes apparent to all that the more advantaged students are better adjusted to school and perform more effectively. This socio-economic difference in the quality of earlier education is often seen in high school as greater intelligence, quickness, and innate ability, and thus reinforces students' beliefs in innate differences between people of different socio-economic classes, rather than artificial, human-built wealth stratification systems. High school is probably the only situation in American society which requires people from such radically different backgrounds to mingle closely and work together, and the differences in people brought on by advantage come to be seen in high school as innate and deserved, rather than artificial and acquired.

Similarly, high schools teach class status by exposing students to others of different grade levels and giving privileges to those of higher status. In earlier grade levels, students are around others of different grade levels, but not until high school are they as likely to have classes together, mingle in the lunchroom, library or extra-curricular club or activity. Older students in high school often get the privilege of driving to school, leaving early, choosing their own classes, and other desirable privileges. Students learn that the higher class of older students will get and should get the more desirable resources.

A final way in which high school teaches class status is by magnifying the class difference between students and teachers. Again, early in school a student learns of the teacher's greater power, but high schools are more likely to have strict attendance policies and hall pass regulations which constantly remind the student that he or she must account for him - herself to those with greater power--the school administration. Further, teachers are likely to have special privileges such as smoking in school, having a teachers' lounge, being first in lunch lines, etc. Again, students learn that they must and should account for their actions to the higher class of administrators and teachers, and that members of this higher class deserve preferential treatment.

The critical word in each of these three examples of ways that high school teaches class status is "should". For students to conform to the concept of class status, they must first be convinced not only that there are real differences between classes, but also that some classes should have higher status than others.

CONFORMITY TO NATIONALISM

High schools also teach conformity to nationalism (or "patriotism," to use a more common, but emotively loaded word). Nationalism is that feeling of superiority which predisposes us to condemn other countries or cultures which operate on economic, political, or cultural systems different from our own, without an adequate knowledge of them. The main vehicle which high schools use to teach nationalism is spectator sports programs such as the football and basketball programs.

To see how a school sports program can teach nationalism, let us look at a typical high school football program. The players are only a relative few compared to all who participate -- there are far more who cheerlead, play in the band, and simply attend games and pep rallies. When all involved are considered, probably most students participate in the program, at least sometime during the season. Most students, then, learn to have "school spirit" -- that is, they learn that their school is somehow different than the others, and is somehow better. They learn to see their environment in terms of "us" and "them".

The acquisition of a sense of "us" and "them" is probably harmless in and of itself, since everyone will surely agree that there is not real difference between high schools large enough to actually justify the feeling of superiority to members of another school which is so emotionally displayed at a football game. The problem is that this sense of "us" and "them", or the ability to differentiate and rank on the basis of irrelevant characteristics, is not forgotten after high school. Rather, it becomes the basis for a similar feeling of superiority to people who live under different political or economic systems or who have different cultural values. The "us" of the high school becomes the "us" of the United States, and the "them" of other schools becomes the "them" of other countries. Just as students cheered their own football team on to victory, so they later will "cheer on" their country, without stopping to think about whether or not what they are supporting is actually consistent with their own ethical values.

That students are willing to "cheer on" their own nationalistic interests without understanding the issues involved

was demonstrated recently by the crisis in the American embassy in Teheran. Thousands of university (former high school) students staged "pro-American" rallies in several places across the country, and many were quoted as having such ideas as bombing Teheran, taking revenge on Iranian students in the U.S., and other such acts of violence which they would not normally condone were it not for the fact that this situation was seen in terms of "us" and "them". The "us" had been wronged by the "them", therefore, "they" had to be punished. An understanding of the events leading up to the taking of the hostages, or even of the basic issues involved (cultural and economic imperialism vs. the right to national self-d destiny) was not considered important. World War III is always the ultimate threat inherent in military intervention, and yet many students were willing to go to war to protect the honor of the "us", as if wars were fought with footballs and shoulder pads, like the earlier football games were.

BLIND ACCEPTANCE OF AUTHORITY

High schools, then, teach conformity to nationalistic spirit as well as conformity to a belief in class status. A final important lesson which high schools teach is one of conformity to and blind acceptance of authority.

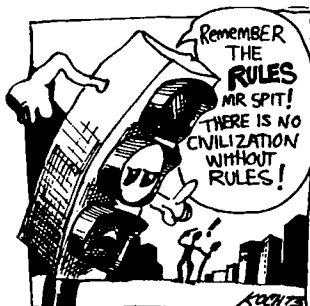
All schools have the responsibility of preparing students for future work situations. High schools especially must fulfill this role, since high school is the highest and last level of education which most students complete. Since industrialized American society has an enormous need for unskilled and semi-skilled laborers, and since these workers must be willing to accept unquestioningly the duties and conditions of employment dictated by their superiors in order to achieve maximum efficiency and profit for those in power, the high schools are charged with the responsibility of turning out large numbers of workers willing to unquestioningly do what they are told.

Industrialized American society has an enormous demand for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Seventeen percent of males and twelve percent of females in the labor force are unskilled or semi-skilled operatives with no supervisory duties. (These and the following 1977 statistics are from *Employment and Earnings*, January 1978, page 152). Another 8% of men and 1% of women in the labor force are unskilled laborers; 12% and 42% respectively are clerical or lower-level sales workers; 9% and 21% respectively are service workers (restaurant workers, janitors, private household workers, etc.) and 2% and 1% respectively are farm workers. Forty-eight percent of men and seventy-seven percent of women in the labor force, or almost half of the men and over three-fourths of the women, then, hold jobs which require little or no training, other than on-the-job. Almost none of these have supervisory duties. In order to fill these positions, high schools must teach the students to unquestioningly accept school policies and programs. This blind acceptance of authority will later be generalized to employers.

The sheer size of the typical American high school sets the stage for the suppression of individualism necessary to produce unquestioning workers. Large numbers of students in one school requires that curricula be highly standardized and unbendable. The more students are involved, the less power each one individually can have to select courses or programs. Thus, students come to accept that they must take the courses dictated by the school.

Furthermore, the more students a teacher has, the less individualized attention she or he can give to each one. A teacher with a large number of students cannot help each one individually, and like the school must standardize her or his teaching methods in order to accommodate so many. Students learn that they must not question the system, for fear of demanding the individualized attention which a large high school cannot afford to give, and also that their original ideas are "wrong" -- for in a large class it is logistically impossible to investigate the ideas of all of the students.

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Be Born Again Find Out
What's Happening With
Your Denomination

It's time already to make plans for going to the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly to be held from June 13-18 this year in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Youth Caucus, a group of youth interested in the activities and policies of the UUA will meet during that time. Youth Caucus is open to all persons between the ages of 12 and 20, and we meet daily to discuss resolutions and actions affecting youth and the rest of our Denomination. It is a chance for youth to participate in the democratic functioning of the organization.

Last year, Youth Caucus supported the controversial Business Resolution in Support of Youth Programs, whose passage made it possible for LRY to continue existing in its current state. This year, Youth Caucus will again support resolutions which it believes are in the best interest of youth and the entire denomination.

Sounds interesting? If you would like to go, send us your name and address and we'll send you more information and put you on our mailing list so that you may receive information as it is given. Find out about becoming a delegate from your church or fellowship which will enable you to cast a vote on GA resolutions, and speak for or against a resolution on the floor of the Assembly.

We are expecting to be able to disburse up to \$2,000.00 in Youth Caucus scholarship money. This money will be awarded in a first come first served basis, and on the basis of need. Be sure to exhaust all other funding sources, your church, parents, district, yourself, etc. before you come to us. More information will be printed in the next issue of *People Soup*. For information and a scholarship application, write:

Youth Caucus
c/o LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA
02108

