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**The Conflict**  
**Between Parents and Their Adolescent Children**  
**in the Moslem Syrian Family**

by

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## INTRODUCTION

One of our social problems, in Syria, which has not yet received enough attention, is the widespread conflict between parents and their adolescent children. Some of the reasons why this problem has not yet been fully considered may be the following:

1. Preoccupation of leaders and educated persons with the political problem of achieving independence.

During the early awakening of the Arabs which took place during the second half of the nineteenth century after a long period of cultural stagnation under the Ottoman reign followed by another type of colonization under the French Mandate, the effort of the leaders was mainly directed towards the political aim. Under the Ottoman reign, the political aim was to achieve more self-government and direction, whereas under the French the aim was to achieve a full independence and freedom. The prevailing idea, under the French Mandate, was that: we must, first of all, be politically independent and then we turn to our internal affairs and social problems and deal with them in line with our interests. Internal reform comes after political independence is achieved.

2. The prevailing wrong conception of education as essentially an intellectual process.

There still prevails the idea that education means

stuffing the student with facts and knowledge whether related to life or not. There is still an emphasis upon the pure intellectual side as a result of the transplantation of the French educational system in Syria. Not enough attention is given to other phases of the growth of the individual student, namely; emotional, social.... In other words our effort in the school is not directed to the growth of the student as a whole. When asked whether the teachers take interests in the emotional problems of their students, a director of one of the secondary schools replied that teachers, in general, are only concerned with teaching the subject matters assigned to them.

5. The general belief that education is the affair of the government and not of the community itself.

The parents do not take an interest in the work of the schools, they do not contact teachers to discuss with them the problems of their children. So there is a definite lack of relationships between the home and the school. Not only that but in many instances some parents have hostile attitudes towards the school and what is taught in there as a result of the prevailing ignorance and bigotry among them.

As a result of this gap between the home and the school, the problems that arise in the family are not brought forth to be discussed jointly by those concerned with the education of youth.

4. There is an almost total lack of social workers, educators and psychologists who interest themselves in the problems of youth.

To find out the causes of their problems and help in solving them is not yet taken into consideration either by the government, by the community or by private organizations and individuals.

For these and probably other reasons, this aspect of our social problems, namely, the conflict between parents and their adolescent children is not yet brought to the focus of attention to be investigated and dealt with.

#### The Problem

This problem can be stated as follows:

The parent-adolescent relationships in the Moslem Syrian Family are often characterized by a varying degrees of tension and conflict which is mainly due to two major causes:

- A. Lack of understanding of the psychology of the adolescents by the parents.
- B. The cultural gap between the younger and the older generation in the same family.

This tension within the family has the effect of making home life unsatisfactory and in some instances extremely

trying for both parents and their adolescent children.

Let us consider some of the feelings expressed by some adolescent boys and girls about their life at home: "I became desperate of my life with my father, I can no more bear it.... I made up my mind to run away." or "The best days in my life, at present, are those days in which I do not have any contact with my father whatsoever." or "Since that time, when my mother died, my life has been a continuous persecution, humiliation and sufferings." A girl writes: "I feel always depressed, I do not feel any joy or pleasure, as my class-mates do... I hate my father."

There are also some instances where father and son get into actual fights as two enemies, or the aggression of children, instead of being directed against the father as the direct source of frustration, turns inward and obsesses some adolescents with the idea of committing suicide. Some adolescent actually attempted it. (1) In other instances some adolescents are obsessed with the idea of running away from home to escape continuous frustration and conflict in their family relationships. This idea of running away is expressed by five

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(1) In the study, it is revealed that four girls and eight boys think of committing suicide and getting over with their painful life. Out of the eight boys, two actually attempted it.

In March, 1951, a young girl in the Normal School for Girls in Damascus, and a young man in the Normal School for Boys in Damascus, both of them committed suicide by taking poison because the girl's father did not accept that the girl get married to that young man. (The daily newspaper, Beirut, N: 3905, 14.3.51)

boys but by no girls at all; two boys did actually run away.

### The Importance of the Problem

The importance of this problem is due to the fact that in many cases the family relationships are unfavorable and that the adolescents are faced with severe conflicts and heightened negative feelings. We know that at the root of behavior disorders and severe maladjustments there must be some kind of conflict that is not yet solved.

Severe conflicts, it is agreed, make for a distorted personality and precipitate psychoneurotic behavior. Thus, it becomes the concern of educator, teacher and counselor to guide and help the student to deal effectively with his problems and to establish a better balance between his conflicting needs. Because, in our opinion as teachers, we are fully convinced that the true education is that one which takes into consideration the student as a whole, not emphasizing some aspects of growth at the expense of others. Teachers, as well as any person interested with educating youth, must concern themselves with all aspects of the student's life since his well-being is dependent upon a good balance and integration among these different aspects. Thus the job of the teacher does not end in the class-room, or the school, it extends farther to the home and the community at large. Full cooperation

between the home and the school is very much needed if we desire to achieve good results, i.e. a wholesome development and growth. Good and satisfactory home relationships are the key to good adjustment; and the influences of the home are life long.

Owing to the great importance of this problem this paper is devoted to its investigation. The purpose here is to discover what are the causes of conflict between the parents and their adolescent children, and to consider also what can be done about it.

The method followed in dealing with this problem is that of preparing a questionnaire for this purpose, and giving it to a number of adolescent students to answer it. The results or the answers were classified into different categories of causes of conflict and different types of advice for reducing or avoiding conflicts. Then the results are interpreted in the light of adolescent psychology.

Thus the work here in this paper is twofold: On the one hand it is practical based upon the results of the questionnaire and on the other hand it is a library work or theoretical.

Let us now turn to consider the study itself.

An Abstract  
of  
The Conflict between Parents  
and  
Their Adolescent Children in The Moslem Syrian Family

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One of our social problems in Syria is the widespread conflict between parents and their adolescent children. This problem has not yet been investigated though it is of major importance.

This problem can be stated as follows:

The parent-adolescent relationships in the Moslem Syrian Family are often characterized by varying degrees of conflict and tension due to lack of understanding of the psychology of adolescence by parents and the cultural gap between parents and their adolescent children i.e. between the younger and the older generation. These conflicts have the effect of making the family life unsatisfactory and in many instances very much trying to both the adolescent and his parents.

It is our concern, as teachers and educators, to give this problem more and more attention and care because true education, in our belief, must treat the student as a whole and must concern itself with his total growth and because severe conflicts make for distorted personality development. In fact adjustment at any period of life reflects the periods which preceded it, i.e., well adjusted adolescents are likely to develop into well adjusted adults and parents. Thus our conception of education, the principles of mental hygiene and the welfare of the individual and the nation as a whole make it imperative to investigate this problem carefully and extensively.

A study was made in Aleppo, the subjects are 124 adolescent boys and 56 adolescent girls all of them are from some



of the secondary schools there. They were given a questionnaire especially prepared to investigate the causes of conflict and what suggestions can be given to avoid or minimize these conflicts. This study is a prelude which must be followed by extensive research in the near future. It has many limitations such as: it is one sided because it is from the point of view of adolescents only, and the subjects are not widely representative of the Syrian Moslem adolescent group as a whole. Any how this study yielded some important results.

According to the adolescents reports the results can be classified into two major causes:

A: Parents lack an insight in the psychology of their adolescent children.

B: The cultural gap between these two groups.

Let us consider the first major cause. Here we find that conflicts take place around such questions as: financial matters, parents treat their adolescent children as small children, too much restriction placed upon adolescents, dominance of parents, going to movies, inequality in treating children i.e. parents prefer some of their children to others, the existence of a step-mother, and many others.....

In the interpretation of these results we find that the adolescent is undergoing many changes one of which is the important change in the concept of his self. He feels that he is no longer a child, that he has become a man and that he wants to be recognized by his parents as equal. We find that the adolescent has many tasks to meet. He has the important task of emancipating himself from the supervision and control of his parents. This process of eman-

existence of two modes of thought and life, or two cultures competing with each other. These conflicts reflect the ongoing struggle between the old and the new. Here we witness the major problem of Syria as well as the Arab World namely the problem of Westernization which came about as a result of the infiltration of Western ideas, concepts and way of life into the Arab Lands. In this respect the conflict between parents and their adolescent children may be understood in terms of a larger and more widespread conflict over the country: the conflict between two cultures; Parents in general represent the old and adolescents generally represent the new.

The effects of the West appear in the reports of adolescents along the following lines:

A: Questioning the place of religion.

The tendency to substitute reason for religion, the trends to separate religion from the State and to attack sectarianism as an obstacle to achieve understanding and national solidarity; all these trends are revealed in their reports.

B: Emancipation of women from the strong hold of religion and traditions. Women strive to achieve equality and recognition, this can only be achieved through attacking and abolishing the veil, the symbol of their slavery.

C: National movement and consciousness and the strong desire for independence. Students come to realize that their first obligation is towards their nation; their duty consists of awakening the people to the dangers that threaten Syria from outside and from inside. In this way students strive to assume the role of leadership in the nationalistic movement.

In their suggestions to avoid or minimize conflicts students reveal also their major problem of being recognized by adults as adults, i.e., of achieving status. Students give very good and constructive thoughts in this respect. In addition we feel that the school has to assume a great role in this respect. The important thing is to help students release their feelings and emotions and gain insight into their psychological make up on the one hand and to change the attitudes of parents and children towards each other on the other hand.

We believe that this problem is one among many others which are closely connected and interdependent to the extent that it is hardly possible to deal with one problem by itself without taking into consideration the whole pattern of the other problems. The conflicts between parents and their adolescent children may be considered as a manifestation of a general unrest and insecurity prevailing all over the country. This insecurity reveals itself in a general feeling of being lost, in pretentiousness, in cynicism and in despair, this insecurity is very much prominent in the political economic and cultural phases of life.

The problems of Syria are many: moral, cultural, social, economic, political, educational,.....all are interdependent and are reflected in the conflicts between parents and their adolescent children.

Since life is characterized by continuous change therefore there will be always some kind<sup>of</sup> Conflict between the old and the new. This imposes upon us the necessity to consider and reconsider always this problem in the light of changing circumstances and here comes the role of education in helping people to adjust to and meet their difficulties and problems.

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Since life is characterized by continuous change therefore there will be always some kind<sup>of</sup> Conflict between the old and the new. This imposes upon us the necessity to consider and reconsider always this problem in the light of changing circumstances and here comes the role of education in helping people to adjust to and meet their difficulties and problems.

We need an overall reform in every aspect of life.  
We must start in society in the school and at home simultaneously.

CHAPTER I

Section I

The Study

Place:

Aleppo was chosen as a place for the study. Aleppo is a large city mainly populated by Moslems, situated in the northern part of Syria. It is an industrial, commercial and agricultural center where one can witness the on-going struggle between the old and the new in every way of life, the non-veiled stylished young Moslem woman in contrast to the strictly veiled one, the modern means of transport competing with horses and camels in the same street, new factories where the machine is taking the place of human hands in contrast to the small shop where manual work is still the means of production.

Subjects:

The subjects are drawn from four governmental secondary schools for boys and for girls. 158 boys from grade IV through VI whose range of age is between 15-20 years were given the questionnaire. <sup>(1)</sup> 16 of them did not answer at all, or they failed to answer what was required, or their answers

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(1) See page 3

were not taken into consideration because they are Christian. 18 more students stated that they had no conflict with their parents, some of them had lost both their parents. And the remaining 124 students answered the questionnaire.

The same questionnaire was given to 73 girls from grade IV and VI and grade III in the teacher training school for girls. The range of age is between 13-20 years. Five did not answer at all, 12 more stated that they did not have any conflict with their parents, the remaining 56 answered. Thus the answers of 124 boys and 56 girls were taken into consideration. Most of them are from the middle and lower middle class <sup>(1)</sup> as it is revealed in the study that most of the boys and girls who mention "money" as a cause of conflict with their parents emphasize poverty as the essential cause. Here we must add the fact that women do not work and contribute to the finances of the family; of all the mothers only

2 mothers are dressmakers

1 mother is a midwife

1 mother is a teacher

and all the others are full time home makers.

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(1) 134 boys and 46 girls mention the career of their fathers:

<u>Kind of occupation</u>	<u>Boys' fathers</u>	<u>Girls' father</u>
Merchants - mostly small shop owners	46	17
Governmental employees and retired on pension	40	18
Farming & Agric. - mostly tenants & sharers	18	4
Laborers	15	3
Profession - doctor & engineer	6	2
Property owners	5	1
Unemployed	6	1

Procedure

The Questionnaire:

The following is the English translation of the Arabic questionnaire; "The purpose of this questionnaire is a scientific study of one of our social problems; namely, the conflict between parents and their adolescent children. We are not after interfering with your personal, private affairs. So if any one thinks he may be identified when answering some questions in Part I and does not want to, we do not mind - it is all right. We hope, you will answer these questions clearly, frankly and exactly not resorting to imagination and fancy."

Part I

Age ..... Class ..... Religion .....

Academic status of father ..... mother .....

Career of father ..... mother .....

Where do you live .....

Part II

1) Conflicts often take place between parents and their adolescent children; it is a common thing, it occurs everywhere and at all times.

What do you consider, are the things that make you in conflict with your parents?

2) Tell us an incident of a conflict between you and your parents:



- A. cause or causes of conflict.
- B. how was it settled.
- C. what did you feel during and after it.
- D. in what way did it affect your relationships with your parents.

3) Have you any advice that you can give to both parents and children so that they may avoid, as much as possible, these conflicts among themselves?

Time:

The students were given as much time as they wanted; in general it did not take them to answer it more than one hour though the uncooperative students handed in their papers in less than five minutes.

Instruction:

The questionnaire was read to the students, everything was made clear and it was emphasized strongly that the aim is not prying in their personal affairs; they should not write their names. They were asked to be frank and true otherwise the study would lose its significance.

Reaction:

The boys, in general, showed a spirit of cooperation though it was something new to them. Only some students asked whether they were obliged to answer and when they were informed

that, it is not but on the other hand there is no harm in it, they sat down to work. It was not possible for the writer to administer the questionnaire himself in the girls' schools. The supervisor there administered it. It was pointed out that most of the girls, especially in grade IV, showed resentment and that it was difficult to convince them that there was no harm in answering it.

Some of the boys expressed their wishes that this study would lead to many other studies in the future in investigation of our problems.

### Limitations

1. This study is a prelude.

This study is an attempt to approach the topic of conflict between parents and their adolescent children in the Moslem Syrian Family, a topic which has not been investigated though it constitutes a problem which is in fact a serious one. Therefore this study can be considered as a prelude which must necessarily be followed by extensive research in the near future due to the importance of the problem and to the limitations of this study. It is hoped that this study may stimulate those who are concerned with youth and their problems to stop and consider this problem more fully for both the welfare of the adolescents, their parents and the nation as a whole.

2. The sample of this study is not widely representative.

It must be stated that the subjects of this study do not constitute a representative sample of the Syrian Moslem adolescents as a whole. In addition it is <sup>not</sup> big enough to warrant any wide generalization.

The subjects are all from some governmental schools in Aleppo but not all adolescents of the city attend secondary schools. Therefore what will be the case with adolescents who are not in schools though they constitute the majority? What are their problems with their parents and how do they feel about them? The subjects are mostly from the middle and lower middle class; will the findings apply in the case of higher classes for instance? Moreover the subjects are from an urban center but city dwellers in Syria constitute only one third of the population, therefore what can be said about this problem had the subjects been from rural districts?

Another question may also be asked concerning the probable results of similar studies to be carried out in other cities of Syria; Will the results be the same? In what way they are likely to be similar to or different from the results of this study?

It is quite obvious now that any sample must reflect the structure of the society for which it stands in order to be called a representative sample, thus it will not be loaded in favor of some elements at the expense of others.

3. Parents were not asked for their opinion concerning this problem.

Had parents been consulted the picture would certainly have been different from what it is according to this study. Therefore this study can be described as one-sided taking into consideration the point of view of adolescents and discarding that of parents.

Nobody can pass any judgment about a controversial issue unless he considers what both parties think and feel about that issue especially in matters in which a person's ego is involved. When parents are consulted about this problem, then the picture will be more complete and less biased.

4. The questionnaire method is not often, by itself, an adequate procedure to investigate this problem whether it is of the essay type or of the check list form.

There is always the possibility that the respondents do not answer frankly, that they distort facts or they fail to express themselves adequately. Hence there is the necessity to resort to some other measures in order to complement the deficiencies of the questionnaire. Some of these measures are:

A: interviews with parents and children.

B: to use some projective techniques. To give the subjects a test which is somewhat similar to the T.A.T. and which is especially designed for this purpose, namely, the investigation of this conflict. Here comes the necessity for a well trained body of experts in this field to make, to admin-

ister and to interpret such a test.

C: there is a possibility for making or constructing a scale to assess, as objectively as possible, to what extent parents hinder or encourage their adolescent children in the process of emancipation from them. Such a scale can be called Emancipation From Parents Scale (E.F.P.)

A scale was developed by James A. McDill including items which measure the extent to which the adolescent had become psychologically weaned from his parents and at the same time it gives clues to the extent of the conflict between him and his parents, on the one hand and within himself on the other hand. Some of its items are:

E. F. P. Scale

<u>What I do</u>			<u>What I want to do</u>		<u>What my parents want me to do</u>	
Yes	No?	Decide things for myself	Yes	No?	Yes	No?
Yes	No?	Do what my father or mother decide on every question that comes up ....	Yes	No?	Yes	No?
Yes	No?	Depend on my parents to buy all things for me ...	Yes	No?	Yes	No?
Yes	No?	Spend my allowances as I choose	Yes	No?	Yes	No?

(1) Dimock, Rediscovering of the Adolescent, p. 145.

Crow and Crow suggest the use of a questionnaire for the parents: a self-evaluating questionnaire which denotes where parents stand in relation to their sons and daughters.

(1)

Some of its items are:

Where I Stand In Relation to My Son or Daughter

	1	2	3	Score
I criticize my son (daughter) in the presence of visitors	Often	Sometimes	Never	-
I expect my son (daughter) to accept my decisions	Always	Never	Sometimes	-
I treat my son (daughter) as an adult	Never	Sometimes	Often	-
I give reasons for denying my son's (daughter's) requests	Never	Sometimes	Always	-

5. The writer believes that the sex problem and the effect of the segregation between the two sexes on the development of the adolescent personality must be carefully and extensively studied.

The sex problem has direct bearing on the conflict between parents and their adolescent children. The fact that most of the subjects of the study did not mention anything about it whether intentionally or not is in itself significant.

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(1) Crow and Crow, Our Teen-Age Boys and Girls, p. 38-40.

6. One more point to be added concerning the possibility of finding some differences in the causes of conflict among those adolescents who are passing through early adolescence, middle or late adolescence. In other words, can we find some characteristics, concerning our problem, for each of these three periods had the study been more extensive?

On the other hand, can we find any sex differences in respect to causes of conflict and reactions to conflict more than those found in this study?

## Section II

### Results:

Educational status of parents is shown in Table I. We must, here, note that most of the educated parents had their education in Ottoman schools.

Table I. Educational Status of Parents Expressed in Percentage.

Parents	Illiterate	Know how to write and read only.	Have only elementary education.	Have high elementary or secondary education or its equivalent completed.	Have higher education.
Father	30	20.5	22.5	12.8	6
Mother	69.8	7.6	17	3.6	0

Elementary education means five years of schooling, whereas higher elementary means up to four years of schooling after the elementary

period, and the secondary education completed means having baccalaureat certificate or its equivalent.

It is apparent from the above table how low is the educational status of the parents.

Table II gives detailed headings of causes of conflict given by 124 boys answering the questionnaire and table III represents those given by 56 girls.

The detailed headings may be combined together and so become fewer in number, in fact they may be clustered under two general causes:

- A. Lack of understanding of the psychology of adolescents on the part of parents.
- B. Differences in culture - cultural gap.

Taking table II we may specify some details under some of the headings, the same thing applies to table III.

Table II

Causes of Conflict Between Parents and Their Adolescent Children given by 124 boys.

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1. Difference in culture and opinions	52
2. Money; adolescents cannot have everything they think is necessary	39
3. Parents do not understand the psychology of their adolescent children	36



<u>Cause</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
4. Too much restriction on freedom	31
5. Dominance of parents	19
6. Going to cinemas	17
7. Inequality in treating children at home, parents prefer some to others	16
8. Disobedience of children	16
9. Children come home late in the evening	13
10. Parents want their children to cease study and leave the school	10
11. Parents interfere in their children's love affairs	10
12. Fathers and mothers get into conflict with one another, the adolescent sides with one against the other	8
13. The existence of a step-mother	5
14. Parents insist upon their children to study and study with no break	5
15. Children attack their siblings	5
16. Parents decide upon the future of their children without the latter's approval	4
17. Too much advice from parents	4
18. Impulsiveness of children	4
19. Boastfulness of children; children claim to know everything	4
20. Negligence of the father to pay his debts	1
21. Feeling of being unwanted by the parents	1

Table III

Causes of Conflict Between Parents and Their Adolescent Children  
given by 56 girls

<u>Causes</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1. Difference in culture and opinions	29
2. Taking off the veil	16
3. Parents do not understand the psychology of their adolescent children	16
4. Too much restriction on freedom	15
5. Dominance of parents	12
6. Money; adolescents cannot have everything they think is necessary	12
7. Going to cinemas	9
8. Inequality in treating children at home, parents prefer some to others	7
9. Coming home late after the time indicated	4
10. Household management; girls do not work at home	4
11. Presence of a step-mother	3
12. Preference of boys to girls by the parents	3
13. Children attack their siblings	3
14. Boastfulness of children, children claim to know everything	2
15. Feeling of being unwanted and persecuted by the mother	1

Under difference in culture and opinions we may specify:

- A. Parents stick to everything old, they scorn everything new.
- B. Parents do not realize the changing circumstances; they want to bring up their children the same as they were brought up.
- C. Parents are religiously fanatic, some still keep saying: The Quran is our constitution and the only one.
- D. Parents think that everything given in schools is against religion.
- E. Parents believe that to go swimming and to go to the movies is utterly forbidden by religion.
- F. There are differences in views around religion of the State, and political affiliations - parents like the Turks because they were Moslems.
- G. Parents do not realize their national duty and obligation.
- H. Children believe that it is their duty to strike against foreign companies and for national ends.
- I. Parents frown and disapprove of the idea that the two sexes may mix with each other.
- J. Parents believe in legends and superstitions.

Under Money:

- A. Poverty plays the major role.
- B. Adolescents cannot have nice clothes, cannot enjoy having money, larger allowances to spend because of limited financial resources of their parents.

Under; parents don't understand the psychology ....

- A. Parents do not recognize that their children are growing up; they always treat them as if they are still children.
- B. Parents belittle, rebuke and scold their children for the least fault, whether alone or in the presence of others.
- C. Parents resort to beating and force.
- D. Parents, especially mothers, are overprotective.

Under; Too much restriction on freedom:

- A. Parents prevent or do not allow their children to express their opinions especially in presence of visitors.
- B. Parents do not allow their children to participate in social and athletic activities.
- C. Parents do not allow their children to gain from their own mistakes and experiences.
- D. Parents interfere with their children personal affairs.

Under; Dominance of parents:

- A. Parents decide and children have not the right to question any decision fathers take.
- B. Fathers are dictators who impose orders and children have to obey like soldiers, they are the sole authority.
- C. Parents resort to their authority approved by tradition and religion.

Under; Inequality in treating children:

- A. Differences between the two sexes; boys are preferred to girls.

B. Within the same sex, some children are preferred to others.

Under: Disobedience of children:

- A. Children are stubborn; they stick to what they think and refuse to compromise.
- B. Parents ask for many things from their children, so that children find themselves occasionally obliged to disobey.

Under: Interference of parents in their children's  
love affairs:

- A. Parents consider boy-girl relationships as something horrible and indecent, it is something against honor.
- B. Parents, especially mothers, think of love as prostitution and wickedness.
- C. Parents interfere in love affairs leading to marriage especially in case of different religion.

Under: Boastfulness of children:

- A. Children suppose themselves to know everything better than everybody else. They claim to know life better than their parents as they know a lot about it from books.

The same applies to girls with much more restriction on girls than on boys, since the concept of honor is closely tied up with the behavior of girls; their behavior either brings honor or shame to the family. In addition to what is

mentioned above, girls have the major problem facing all women; namely, the problem of emancipation from the ties of the several past centuries of bigotry and fanaticism. Women strive to have their place in the world outside the home. They fight against the symbol of their slavery - the veil; they ask for equality with men and to be considered as worthy human beings on equal footing with the opposite sex.

For the sake of comparison it is interesting to present the results of a similar study in the U.S.A. <sup>(1)</sup> "In a group of 259 college sophomores, all men, who were selected as being normal in health, academic progress and social adjustment, the majority admitted some degree of friction with their parents. For 17% of these students the conflict was acute. The majority of the quarrels and arguments for both groups center around:

1. Economic matters: size of allowances .... support students while in school.
2. Social matters: attendance at dances or movies, selection of friends, selection of clothes, accounting for how time has been spent....
3. Purely personal matters: the refusal of father to wear his coat when there is company ...." It is obvious that there is some resemblance between what we get in our study and this above mentioned one. Crow and Cross in their book "Our Teen Age Boys and Girls" consider that "arguments in the home are sometimes caused by such factors as <sup>"</sup>age differences, changes with the time in

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(1) Cole, L. Psychology of Adolescence P. 295

the general social pattern of behavior, differing cultural backgrounds and educational inequalities (1) between parents and children and the like."

The conflicts with parents do not limit themselves to differences of opinions on large issues, on the contrary the issues may be trivial and yet they bring the family relationships to a crisis because "the accumulated resentment of the adolescent and the accumulated exasperation of the parent may pour forth into angry dispute and make the trivial issue a major conflict." (2) Therefore the wise parent is able to compromise in small matters so that he may earn the loyalty and confidence of his child and thus becomes able to guide him in the making of decisions on more important issues because guidance has no place unless confidence is gained.

And now before turning to consider the causes given and their interpretations, we may ask ourselves what are the adolescents after? In fact the adolescents want what all people want; they are after

1. recognition and status
2. respect and social favor
3. response and happy social interaction
4. security and group acceptance
5. experience and expression
6. achievement and success
7. happiness and freedom. (3)

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(1) Crow and Crow, Our Teen Age Boys & Girls, p. 51.

(2) Frank, Lawrence K., 43d Year Book of Education, p. 248. *Part I*

(3) Landis, P., Adolescence and Youth, p. 89.

## CHAPTER II

### Section I

Now let us turn to deal with some of the major causes of conflict given by the students themselves and try to interpret them in the light of adolescent psychology.

#### Money:

It is revealed that 39 boys (or about 31%) and 12 girls (or about 21%) mentioned financial affairs as a cause of conflict with their parents. They say that they cannot have everything they think is necessary to them; they need larger allowances, they crave nice clothes and they want to buy magazines, books and reviews and they desire to continue their studies in the future to get diplomas in order to have better positions as employees. All these desires are thwarted more or less by the limited financial conditions of the parents.

A case which may appear extreme but which is not infrequent among those who spoke frankly on this question is presented by an adolescent whose family is composed of eight persons. The only person who works and earns money is the father. He is an employee and receives only one-hundred Syrian pounds a month, that is three pounds a day. The adolescent student continues to say: "how can a family be maintained and be satisfied with such a salary?" Many times he thinks to



commit suicide but he still hopes things will be better in the near future because he is in the final year of the secondary school.

Most of the adolescents who are in poor financial conditions consider their fathers as the direct cause of frustration and hold them responsible. They think if a person is unable to sustain a family and provide for its necessities, he must not get married. This point of view is completely the opposite of the older point of view on marriage and raising a family. Marriage was encouraged no matter what the circumstance is. The still prevailing belief among parents is that: "God provides every new born with his share." In fact there are many views of this kind in the popular sayings. The adolescents think also that should a person get married and be unable to earn his living the government must intervene and help.

We are not here to justify or condemn what they think about it; the important thing is that this poor financial condition provides a source of conflict between the adolescents and their parents.

Many parents, whether poor or not, do not realize how very important clothes are to the adolescents. An adolescent writes: "My father does not understand to what extent I need good clothes." Still another mentions that: "My father thinks that grooming and good appearance is to be forbidden to adolescents."

Conklin reports on Hurlock's study with respect to

clothing; this is the only extensive survey of adolescent behavior with regard to clothing he has been able to discover. "Of Hurlock's more than fourteen-hundred respondents 52.5% of the males and 59.9% of the females reported that adolescence was the time in their lives when their happiness was most affected by matters of clothing." <sup>(1)</sup> Clothing seems to be capable of providing the wearer with great thrills and self-exaltation or with embarrassment and feelings of disgrace and inferiority; it enhances the ego and provides satisfaction and approval of one's peers. The study of Hurlock with this respect <sup>(2)</sup> is illuminating.

There is also a cultural determinant of the importance of clothing in the popular sayings in Aleppo. Some of these sayings are: "Eat what you like but wear what people admire." or "One-half of man is his looks and the other half is his clothes."

Why is it that clothing comes to be of particular significance and importance to adolescents as revealed from their reports and the study by Hurlock?

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood dependency to adulthood independence, self-sufficiency and responsibility. This transition consists of many changes among

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(1) Conklin, E., Principles of Adolescent Psychology, p. 171.

(2) Refer to this study and the questionnaire he used and the answers he got in Conklin p. 172-3.

which there is a change in the concept of self.

This change in the concept of self is evidenced in the reports of adolescents. One student writes: "Ever since I was a small boy my father kept telling me that I was crazy and dull; these words took another meaning when I was sixteen years old." Another writes: "I am no longer a small boy, do not be afraid about me." or "My parents still consider me as a small boy who does not know anything but I realize that I have to take care of myself, solve my own problems and think of what is good for me." A boy, sixteen years old, writes: "And especially at this age I can no more stand or forgive any insult."

The change of the concept of self comes about with the physical and physiological changes which occur during adolescence. And on other hand the concept of self is very much influenced by the attitudes of others towards these physical changes; in fact there is a tendency to overvalue physical appearance in sizing up a person. This means that the image of the body is closely connected with the concept of self and "to a considerable degree the body is symbolic of the self."<sup>(1)</sup> That is why, in the years of adolescence, care for physical appearance and attractiveness becomes increasingly a social concern for the adolescent who is keenly sensitive to the slightest evidence of approval and recognition by his peers and adults.

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(1) Zachry, O.: Emotion and Conduct in Adolescence, p. 32.

On the other hand adolescents ask for greater allowances because as they grow older and their horizons get wider they need more things and in consequence more money to satisfy their needs.

Larger allowances mean very important things to them:

1. In the first place, a larger allowance is considered as a direct recognition on the part of parents that their child is grown-up and that he is now different from what he was before. Because when children ask for larger allowances their parents tell them that when they become older their allowances will increase. Wiser parents find it better to increase the allowances for their adolescent children before the latter insist upon it and get it after quarrels and rebellion. This is in the case of possibility for such an increase, otherwise the parents must make it clear to their children the limited resources of the family. But even this arrangement does not help very much the frustrated adolescent.
2. A larger amount of money given to the adolescent enhances his sense of adequacy and gives a support to his self. A larger allowance may serve to develop the sense of responsibility in the adolescent, as some boys write, in how to spend it wisely in satisfying one's needs especially if the allowance is given for a long period of time, say a fortnite or a month.
3. To have money to spend enhances the social standing of the adolescent among his peers especially as money is highly valued.

The refusal on the part of parents to increase the allowances of their adolescent children, if there is a possibility for it, will be considered by the latter as an indication of being unwanted and rejected. When there is no possibility of increase and when the adolescent is convinced of this fact through a man-to-man discussion with his father, the adolescent is likely to compromise and be more ready to understand the financial limitations and adjust to them. An adolescent boy writes: "I was not embittered against my father but I was embittered against the fate which made my father a poor man." A girl tells that as she is a student she needs many important things. And when she asks her father for her necessities, he usually refuses her demands in such a way that she feels deeply hurt. She continues to say: "I know that my father is poor, but I wish he convinced me about his state of affairs in a more reasonable way."

## Section II

Parents do not understand the psychology of their adolescent children.

In the preceding section, the shortage of money as a cause of conflict between parents and their adolescent children, was considered. Now let us turn to discuss another

conflicting situation arising from the failure of the parents to understand the psychology of their adolescent children in order to treat them accordingly. (1)

There is a widespread belief among adolescents - about 30 % of the boys and 26 % of the girls in the study - that their parents through their behavior with and attitudes towards them show varying degrees of lack of understanding of what is going on in them. According to the study adolescents feel that their parents treat them as children who have not yet grown up, they rebuke, scold, belittle and beat them reasonably and unreasonably whether alone or in the presence of others. Parents deprive them from using their judgment in many circumstances and appear to be overprotective. Through these patterns of behavior parents reveal that they lack an insight in how they must deal with their adolescent children.

In the preceding section it was shown that there is a definite change in the concept of self during the years of adolescence. An adolescent boy writes: "I must live as a man" another states: "I believe that I have become a man who deserves his freedom and I do not accept that anyone should have control over me." or "I feel that I must have the full freedom to behave as I please; if a person tries to interfere in my affairs or to rebuke me I rebel furiously against him."

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(1) Whether this failure is actually true or not has not been investigated in this paper.

These quotations and the other ones already mentioned in the preceding section reveal that the adolescent feels he is no more a child. He does not want to be any longer a child. He feels that he is a man and wants to be recognized as a man by those who still consider him as a child.

In the Moslem Syrian Family, it is customary for parents to expect and require obedience from their boys and girls in childhood. Children have been and still are considered as unreasoning creatures who should obey without question, never doubt the wisdom of their parents and should do as directed. The big boy or the young man or woman remains, in the eyes of his parents, a small child no matter how old he is and especially, as long as he is economically dependent upon them. Parents hold to such popular sayings as: "He, who is one day older than you are, is by one year wiser." A parental challenge to a child is often expressed through the following saying: "what do you know about the world; it is only yesterday that you were born."

Since adolescents are considered as children therefore they are not to be intrusted with any responsibility. An adolescent girl writes: "My mother still considers me as a child, she does not have confidence in me, and she thinks that I cannot judge for myself whether a certain thing is bad or good for me." A boy writes: "Though I am twenty years of age yet my father treats me as if I were still a baby. But I believe that I am now a man ... "

The adolescent has grounds for seeking an increasing

part in managing his affairs as he is growing up and as he approaches adulthood, since he has, in fact, attained increasing mastery of his physical world and competence in self-management. On the other hand, the adolescent discovers that what differentiates the adult from him and from the child is freedom from the direct control of others; that is why adolescents feel that they must direct themselves, solve their own problems and have more opportunities for self-management. An adolescent expresses this view: "I realize that I have to take care of myself, solve my own problems and think of what is good for me." In this way adolescents prove to themselves and to others that they are grown up and that they have become adults. Adulthood is the desired status for the adolescents who are in "no man's land" according to Lewin. *Lewin*

It must be added that the adolescent is reminded always in the school and even, sometimes, at home that he is no more a child and that he must behave as a grown up and at the same time his parents treat him as if he is still a child when they want him to obey and submit to their wishes. Thus the urge of the adolescent to grow up and to establish himself as an adult is sometimes enhanced and many times thwarted by his parents. An adolescent girl writes: "The problem which I face is that my mother considers me as if I am as old, as wise and as experienced as she is ... but, on the other hand, when I have to judge for myself she considers me as a small child; she does not have confidence in me and she thinks that



I cannot judge for myself whether a certain thing is good or bad for me."

How will the adolescent react to the thwarting of his need, namely, to grow up and to be recognized as an adult?

Some adolescents question the parental authority, they resent it and sometimes rebel openly against it. But the majority, however, in spite of themselves refrain from open rebellion by complying with the demands and wishes of their parents. Open resentment is expressed through disobeying parents and through being negativistic towards them. Open rebellion is resorted to more by boys than by girls. Only two girls expressed their rebellion, one of them writes: "My father told me: "You cannot go outside unless you are veiled; but I replied: this is the last time I obey you." She continues to say that when her father realized that she was determined to take off her veil, he never discussed this issue again. Whereas with boys, open rebellion is more frequent - 10 boys expressed it - and sometimes it assumes tragic aspects in an open fight between father and son. An adolescent boy writes: "My father prevented me from buying a nice suit, but I contradicted him and bought it disregarding his opinion and order." Another writes: "Though my father is not poor yet I have to curse him in the face to get my allowances." The tension is sometimes very much heightened as to lead to the following or similar cases: "When lying does not work I tell my father frankly what I want, he becomes furious and so do I

... he gives me some blows and I do the same to him." or "... between me and my father there is a continuous state of discontent and disagreement which sometimes takes a different character and leads to the most unfortunate state of affairs when my father attacks me and when I get into a bloody fight with him."

These are some instances of open rebellion against parental authority; an authority which is sanctioned by religion and tradition. There is the popular saying: "Pleasing God lies in pleasing parents." The Prophet Mohamed said: "Paradise is under the feet of mothers." The Quran places an emphasis on it in the following verse: "Thy Lord hath commanded that ye worship none besides him and that ye show kindness unto your parents whether the one of them or both of them attain to old age with thee, wherefore say not unto them Fie on you! neither reproach them but speak respectfully unto them and submit to behave humbly towards them out of tender affection and say O Lord have mercy on them both as they nursed me when I was little."<sup>(1)</sup>

In contrast with the above rebellious group there exists a group of adolescents - the majority - on whom parents still exercise the traditional authority and still expect strict obedience from them.

Because of traditions and religion which emphasize obedience to and respect for parents, it becomes natural that many adolescents feel guilty when they disobey or resent their

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(1) The Quran; Ch. 17, verse: 24, 25. Volume III.

parents. They feel remorse and the pangs of conscience. A girl writes: "I felt guilty because I disobeyed my father ...". Another girl writes with respect to taking off her veil: "every-<sup>time</sup> thing I put on the scarf - instead of the veil - I feel very depressed, why? because I disobeyed my father who has done and still does everything for my welfare." An adolescent boy expresses his feeling as: "Every time I get into conflict with my parents I feel remorse and regret what I have done." This feeling of guilt is also expressed by the adolescents through their suggestions and advice which they were asked to give. Many of them insist upon obedience to parents - 45 % of boys and 40 % of girls - Even four boys and three girls insist upon blind obedience to parents.

It is true that adolescents seek more freedom and independence from their parents but they are not after complete independence as such. And if some of them express their strong desire for complete freedom it is only a reaction against too much restriction placed on them by their parents. They ask for freedom within limitations, for more freedom they are given now. They consider freedom as the characteristic of the desired status of adulthood towards which they are driven. But in their hearts they still feel dependent upon their parents for protection, affection and love. They still need help and support from their parents. Here is a conflict between the desire for a better status and for freedom and the desire to seek protection and love from parents. This is revealed in a

statement written by a boy: "... I decided to run away from the city but I felt guilty about this idea ... if I desert my home and go somewhere else I will never have a happy life as the one I have at home, and I will never get such love and affection similar to what I receive from my parents."

Not only for love and affection do adolescents feel dependent upon their parents, they also feel dependent upon them economically. They have no job to earn money and to contribute to their living. This feeling of economic dependence stands as a barrier to have more freedom and to be treated as a grown up. One girl only in this study expresses this idea as: "My father does not allow me to take off the veil as long as I am economically dependent upon him." Whereas six boys in this study express this idea strongly. A boy writes: "I was obliged to comply with my father's wishes because he is supporting us." or "I will be obliged to comply with my father's demands until I get a job or position to support myself." Another adolescent writes: "I wish I could sustain myself, then I would desert them - my parents - without feeling any sorrow or pain." These are some of the adolescents' feelings about economic dependence. In fact: "being supported tends to keep the adolescent a child in his parent's house - a child whose opinions do not count, whose judgments are overridden, who is expected to seek and follow advice."<sup>(1)</sup> Economic independence

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(1) Zachry, C.: 43rd Year Book of Education, p. 336. *Part I*

is very important in this process of freeing one's self from the control of others on whom the person has been dependent. The writer believes that the greatest element-factor-in the domination of women by men is the economic dependence of the former upon the latter.

So far, the process, in which adolescents shed aside childlike attitude towards and dependence on parental authority, was considered. This process is known by emancipation from parental authority or by psychological weaning in contrast to the physical weaning that takes place in the first or second year of postnatal life. This process of becoming an adult is not a smooth one, it is marked by temporary regressions to seek guidance, affection and security in the parental home. Immature parents who are emotionally insecure do not often greet this emancipation process and may consider it as a direct threat to their sense of personal worth and to the satisfaction which they enjoy as they have control over others and as others are dependent upon them. They think that they will be put on the shelf and they cannot accept it easily and calmly. Especially mothers, who consider bringing up children as their chief business in life, feel that they are losing their job as soon as the adolescent starts to assert himself. The study reveals that of all the mothers of the adolescent boys and girls only four mothers have other work beside their main job of home making and child rearing.

### Belittling, rebuking and beating

Another aspect which reveals that parents lack an understanding of the psychology of their adolescent children is that parents belittle, beat and rebuke their children severely, reasonably and unreasonably, whether alone or in the presence of others. This situation makes the adolescents resent and feel very much uneasy and discontent.

To be humiliated is one of the most severe emotional experiences for the adolescent especially in the presence of others. A girl writes: "When my father scolds me... and I cannot say or do anything, I wish if any quantity of poison be within my reach to take it in and get over with this life..." Scolding is considered by a boy as a punishment which is more severe than beating: "... I came late... the punishment was not a beating but something more painful: scolding with the most severe and humiliating words." Some parents on many occasions belittle their adolescent children, scorn their knowledge and laugh at their proposals and ideas. These are the most humiliating and embarrassing experiences for them. "My father kills - frustrates - my growing self by his sarcastic way of talking with me in the presence of my younger siblings. This made them disrespect me and made them very impolite with me; as if I am nothing and of no value... it is a very disturbing and an unpleasant situation."

The question here is: why is it that belittling, beating and rebuking are very much humiliating to the adolescent?

Scolding and beating are characteristics of human relationships where some individuals are in position of authority and dominance and others in a position of submission. Since adolescents are working on the important developmental task of achieving adult status and being recognized by adults as equal, they are likely to feel hurt and to resent any attempt to treat them as inferior. And on the other hand, adolescents are very much sensitive to the slightest token of approval and recognition since they are not sure of themselves, of their work, adequacy and social standing.

"If I ever fail in doing anything my father tells me that I am a donkey, a dull person and many other humiliating attributes; and so I lose my confidence in myself and I no longer dare attempt to do anything lest I fail."

### Section III

#### Too Much Restriction on Freedom.

Too much restriction on the freedom of the adolescents is another aspect through which parents reveal that they lack an understanding of the psychology of their adolescent children. 31 adolescent boys, i.e. about 25%, and 15 girls, i.e. about 27 %, complain that their parents place too much restriction on their freedom. More restriction is usually



placed on girls than on boys in the name of the family honor though the study does not reveal this fact clearly enough. It is a well known fact, in Syria as well as in the Arab world, that the concept of honor and the way women behave are very closely connected so that it is hardly possible to disconnect the one from the other.

For boys and girls alike restriction on freedom centers around different items. According to the study some parents prevent their children from expressing their opinions and views on many occasions. A girl writes: "My parents stifled in me the freedom to express my opinions and views and weakened my ability to discuss any topic even those topics of which I am fully convinced." An adolescent boy writes that when there is a problem to discuss in the family and when he gives his opinions, his father contradicts him and allows his younger siblings to speak. This makes him feel disgust and makes him avoid meeting his father. To prevent the adolescent from expressing his views, in the presence of others is very humiliating to him as he is striving to establish himself as an adult whose opinion is appreciated and taken into consideration. A boy writes: "Sometimes when the colleagues or friends of my father are discussing a topic ... I believe - feel - that I know a lot about it; I want to take part in the discussion but my father prevents me ... I feel hurt because I realize that I have become a young man." Another states that: "When I want to converse with visitors at home, my father prevents me ...



Oh! How much I feel ashamed ...” Such a situation is very trying to the adolescent and induces conflicts within himself. Adults outside the home, in general, expect him to behave as a grown up, and in the school teachers ask him to give his opinions concerning the topic of discussion and in some instances encourage him to do so. He reads on freedom in his books, on freedom of thought and expression and on how the man should be free to express himself ... but all this is just the opposite of what he finds at home: “I find - at home - just the opposite of what I have been taught at the school, I read about freedom but you cannot give your opinion and if you do so, this makes your father angry and displeased with you. This displeasure of parents has an everlasting effect upon the future of any person.” Here is the conflict, within the adolescent, between what he desires to do according to his intellect and what he must not do according to his feeling and emotion.

Another form of restriction placed on adolescents is centered around participating in social activities in the school, or taking part in the activities of clubs or societies whether in or outside the school, or joining and passing time with one's friends especially for girls. In other words, some parents try to insulate their children from the current of social life by keeping them at home, under their supervision and control. A boy writes: “The house is for me like a prison, I leave it only in the morning - for the school.”

According to the adolescents' reports, parents believe that evil prevails nowadays; that the world is perverted and, everything is going wrong and that the world is drawing nearer to its end. A boy writes that the father does not want his son to mix with other people so that his son's character may not get spoiled. That is why parents insist upon their boys and girls to get permission from them whenever they want to go out, and to state where they want to go, with whom and when they will be back. A boy writes: "I can not go anywhere unless I tell and get permission from my father, otherwise I cannot go out and that is what troubles me." A girl writes: "Even to visit my girl-friend, <sup>(1)</sup> I have to get a permission for it." This restriction upon joining one's peers and being with them leads eventually to isolate the adolescent from his age group and to feel lonely and to lose this sense of belonging to the group. A boy writes that from his childhood his parents did not allow him to play with other children of the quarter. His parents are very cold and do not show any sign of love and affection. And so he became a pessimiste and gave himself up to daydreaming. He says that years come and go even without speaking with members of his age group except on few occasions; he has no friends and of all his classmates he only known the <sup>one</sup> who sits next to him. A girl states that as a result of too much restriction from her parents she became "isolated from other girls."

Psychology tells us that the adolescent is concerned

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(1) To have a boy-friend is not tolerated by all means.

with himself in the world of his peers, and that the urge for friendship, recognition and approval from one's peers is very strong during adolescence. Psychology also tells us that the effort of adolescents is "directed at appearing like, behaving like and doing what the group does." <sup>(1)</sup> and that "on many matters adolescents care more for the approbation of associates of their own age than they do for the approval of adults. Parents' views often carry less weight with adolescents than do the opinions of their companions." <sup>(2)</sup> And here it must be added that the adolescent is regarded by his friends as a worthy human being and not as a child, because all adolescents are more or less alike as to size, strength, competence and experience. For all this some adolescents resent their being separated from their friends and try by all means to be more in contact with them even though their parents do not approve of it. Girls, for instance, visit their friends secretly without having permission from their parents and are ready to be punished when detected because they repeat it again. An adolescent boy relates how he absented himself from the house during a whole day in the country side with his friends without informing his parents because "I like to go with my friends and my parents do not permit me to go at all," he says. This

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(1) Tryon, Caroline M., 43rd Year Book of Education, p. 223. *Part I*

(2) Brooks, F: Psychology of Adolescence, p. 193.

is because the adolescent feels the need to be accepted and approved by his peers and to get their approval he must do and behave as they do. Here arises a conflict within himself, between his desire to comply with his group and his desire to please his parents; these two desires are often contradictory. At the same time, the opposition of the adolescents and their resistance may serve the function of self assertion. This self-assertion is characteristic of every individual and not of adolescents only.

The restriction put upon adolescents with respect to joining and participating in social activities appears from their reports. A girl writes: "I cannot take part in any trip or any society or any party even though this party is given in the school itself." Another girl complains that: "We want to be allowed to attend cultural and scientific lectures, but unfortunately our fathers do not approve of that ..." It is not only that girls are not allowed to participate in social life and activities but boys too. And here in addition to restriction on social activities another factor is added; namely, restriction on athletic activities whether it is a boy-scout activity or playing football or swimming. An adolescent boy states that: "I am not allowed to participate in the boy-scout group or in any athletic team in the school ... this restriction on the part of my parents makes me oppose them in every bit of action and makes me do what I have in mind, disregarding their opinion ..." Some parents do not approve of playing football

because they fear that their son may get his leg broken one day. Whereas with regard to swimming they fear that their son might drown in the swimming pool. Some parents think it is horrible for the adolescent to stand almost naked in front of others and that is why, according to them, they do not allow their children to go swimming. A boy tells how his father blamed him severely and how the father gave him a severe beating after having gone swimming. The father exclaimed: "Did I ever go swimming or did I ever go to the movies when I was your age ... how dare you swim in front of other people?"

Here also psychology tells us about the importance of play activities and their values. It was found that play serves two functions, namely: recreation and regeneration of energy and zest on the one hand and as a means of social adjustment because it provides for the expression of basic needs and urges <sup>(1)</sup> on the other hand. Dimock considers that some of the drives that may find expression in play activities include: "The desire and need for novelty, adventure and excitement; the deeply rooted necessity of social approval, attention status and recognition; and the urge for a sense of mastery, power, success and achievement." <sup>(2)</sup> This explains why play behavior, no matter what form it takes, is central rather than peripheral in the development of the adolescent. The boy who has been just quoted above tells how his father prevented him

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(1) Dimock, H.: Rediscovering the Adolescent, p. 35.

(2) Ibid., p. 36.

from playing football and from going swimming, but he played football and swam and enjoyed his time very much. When he returned home he was severely punished. He continues to tell that after that beating he decided to commit suicide and did attempt it by taking a heavy dose of aspirine, but he was saved in the last moment. Here also another situation giving rise to a conflict within the adolescent; the desire to play and the desire to please his parents.

Another kind of restriction placed on adolescents is that restriction which prevents them from having new experiences and from gaining from their mistakes. According to the adolescents the mistakes which a person makes are educative and adolescents must not be deprived from this type of education. A student writes: "I may be wrong, but I have to make mistakes in order to learn."

The desire of the adolescents for new experiences is often opposed by parents. This desire for new experiences is revealed through the demands of the adolescents to participate in the trips around the country which the school organizes. The writer believes that participating in long trips serves three functions and satisfies some of the most fundamental needs of the adolescent. In the first place, it serves as a direct recognition from parents that the adolescent is becoming more and more able to take care of himself; this is true when the question of financial limitations does not enter. And in the second place it serves as an opportunity for the

adolescent to escape his parental supervision, for a few days, and it provides him with a good occasion to learn how to be responsible for himself and how to depend upon himself, that is done under the guidance of the teachers in charge. And in the third place it satisfies the desire and need for novelty, adventure and excitement, since on the trip, the adolescent is going to see many new things; people and places; Landis comments upon the value of new experiences as follows: "New experience has its value for youth; Confidence in coping with new situations is a product of one's own capacity plus one's previous experience."<sup>(1)</sup>

So far some kinds of restriction on the freedom of the adolescents were considered. The reactions of the adolescents to these restrictions differ from rebellion and persistent opposition to submission and acceptance of this state of affairs. An interesting fact is revealed by two girls who consider the restrictions on their freedom as a token of recognition and belongingness: "I felt that my parents care for me, i.e. I mean something to them." The other girl rationalizes her feelings also. She says that she got angry and furious because her parents did not allow her to visit her friends but, later on, she felt that her mother was right and: "This strengthened my attachment to them and thus my love for them increased." Whereas a boy feels quite differently in response

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(1) Landis, P.: Adolescence and Youth, p. 98.



to a similar situation. The boy states his feelings strongly: "I felt as if I am a small boy because of the manifold restrictions imposed upon me, I began to wonder of ways and means of getting my freedom and when I could not find a way I became disappointed and so I thought of committing suicide."

Parents must come to realize that keeping children at home because the world outside is perverted and evil, according to their opinion, does not educate, it is rather mis-education. "Protection from experience does not educate; it  
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only prolongs childishness."

#### Section IV

##### Dominance of Parents

Dominance is another aspect through which parents show that they lack an understanding of the psychology of their adolescent children. The study shows that about 15 % of boys and about 21 % of girls consider the dominance of their parents as a cause of their conflict with them, although almost all adolescents, at one time or another, feel more or less strongly, the dominance of their parents.

According to adolescents, parents show their dominance through behaving as dictators who insist upon blind obedience like soldiers, and who take decisions as definitive, and

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(1) Cole, L.: Psychology of Adolescence, p. 267.



do not agree to talk over any decision which they take: "My father is an army officer and hence his orders must be carried out immediately and unquestioningly." Adolescents say that their parents interfere in regulating every bit of their actions and every detail of their everyday behavior. Some parents decide whether or not their children are allowed to read non-academic books and what kind; they decide what kind of shoes or clothes their children must buy and wear, and they require in some instances - a certain form of hair cut. Fathers often decide upon marrying their daughter without asking her approval. A girl writes: "My mother does not allow me to read any book except those academic ones; I am weak in composition and the teachers advise me to read a lot; if I cannot read at home where could I? especially I am a girl whose parents are so fanatic that they do not allow their sons to go to the public library to read."

To exact blind obedience from their children parents resort to their authority sanctioned by tradition and religion, as mentioned already. And here the adolescent has to submit, though it is against his will. An adolescent boy reports: "My father is like a dictator who imposes his opinions and judgments upon me, and I have to comply and bear even though it is against my will." In the case of non-compliance, the adolescent is threatened by expulsion from the parental home. In this respect an adolescent boy writes that: "I used to submit to my parent's will in almost all cases, and thus every-

thing was settled, but on the other hand if I did not submit then the street becomes my home... I wish I could support myself than I would desert them without feeling any sorrow or pain." Another boy writes that: "My father threatened me that he will no longer send me to the school if I ever contradict him, but I did not care because I think that I can support myself without his help." Seven boys are threatened by their fathers either to be expelled from home or to be deprived from more schooling if they opposed their parents' wishes.

Here is a situation giving rise to a severe conflict and emotional insecurity, within the adolescent, between his need of dependency upon his parents and the fear of being rejected by them from one time to another.

The dominance of the father is often transmitted to the older child who becomes to be regarded as the father himself; and who tries in his turn to dominate his younger siblings. A girl tells that: "My older brother wants to dominate me and I do not accept it, and thus we get in conflict with each other and with my parents who support him because he is older than I am."

In respect to the dominance of parents one may think of a close connection between the general rebelliousness and unrest of youth and the dominance of their parents. It is illuminating to quote Conklin here: "For a long time, students of behavior problems have been aware of the frequency with which rebelliousness in adolescence could be traced to the

struggle with parental efforts to dominate .... It can be seen in such youths the rebellious reactions to any one in position of authority, and in extreme cases they react in like manner against any sort of authority even though it be in the impersonal form of laws or of institutional regulations .... Chronic agitators and rebels of all sorts ... are now often interpreted as being the product of such parent-adolescent conflicts." <sup>(1)</sup>

According to this view, can we think of demonstrations and strikes of students (for national ends) as an expression of rebelliousness against parental domination?

Syria, witnessed during the last thirty years, i.e. under the French Mandate, and still is witnessing a widespread rebelliousness of youth directed against foreign interference and interests in Syria and against local governments which, according to the adolescents, betray national aspirations. This rebelliousness expresses itself through strikes and demonstrations which often involve clashes with the police and which sometimes result in bloodshed on both sides. These strikes and demonstrations "have become so violent and recurrent as to become a real problem to governments, ministries of education and school authorities." <sup>(2)</sup> During this academic year, 1950-1951, the writer visited Aleppo in December and in March. On both occasions there were strikes and troubles.

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(1) Conklin, E.: Principles of Adolescent Psychology, p. 253.

(2) Akrawi, M.; The Year Book of Education, 1949, p. 432.

even in December classes were suspended for 6 days by order of the government because there was a bloody clash between students and police. Several members from both sides were severely wounded. That strike was directed against the French Tobacco Monopoly - The Regie.

Since open and direct rebellion against parental authority is not tolerated by the Moslem Society in Syria, then can we suppose that the latent rebelliousness against parents takes an approved outlet, by society as a whole, through strikes and manifestations for nationalistic ends? This may and may not be true anyhow this problem needs careful investigation. It must be added, here, that strikes are approved by many except by parents and even parents approve them if their children do not participate in them.

The rebelliousness of the Syrian youths, revealing itself through strikes and demonstrations, may be considered as a reflection of the general unrest and insecurity of the nation as a whole politically and culturally. This will be discussed later.

One final point is that this study reveals some evidence which is in line with Chassell's findings, namely, that notable evidence exists of a possible sex difference in the reactions to parental discipline. Parental domination seems to be associated with introverted tendencies in case of girls while it seems to be associated with extroverted behavior in the case of male children.

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(1) Conklin, Principles of Adolescent Psychology, p. 254.

## Section V

### Going to Cinemas

Another situation causing conflict between parents and their adolescent children is centered around going to movies. Some parents believe that movies teach immorality and they try to prohibit their children from going to them.

Sex and everything related to it is strongly taboo and inhibited. Love is wicked and shameful. The sexes are segregated and their mingling together is not tolerated. These are still prevailing beliefs and practices. Since most moving pictures deal with love stories and love affairs they usually contain several scenes considered to be immoral by the above standard. <sup>(1)</sup> More restriction is placed upon girls than upon boys - 14 % of boys and 17 % of girls - about attending movies. This may be explained by the close connection between the behavior of women and the concept of honor.

Another reason for the parents against movies is the financial limitations. Attending movies means, to parents, spending money foolishly without getting any profit out of it in addition to the bad effects on the morality of the adolescent.

Preventing the adolescent from going to cinemas is considered by him as a kind of restriction on his freedom and

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(1) The whole body of the woman, except the face, hands and feet, is taboo and it is sinful to look at it.

the meaning of it was already given. On the other hand attending movies is becoming a necessity rather than a mere luxury to him especially as it is a way of escaping conflicts.

There is a definite lack of other recreational activities, in Aleppo, that absorb the interests of the adolescent and give them full expression. The school, as it is organized, is, to most adolescents, only a place where they go to attend classes and nothing more. There are no such agencies as youth organizations and clubs that bring adolescents together and provide them with opportunities to live a richer and more stimulating life.

In the absence of other kinds of group recreational activities, it is natural that the movies assume an important place. In this respect Conklin states that: "Attractive as movies appear to be, it is of importance to observe how easily they seem to be displaced in the interests of youth by organizations providing group activity."<sup>(1)</sup> He further mentions that a study made by Alice Miller Mitchell reveals that boys and girls of high school age attend movies less frequently than children of 5, 6, and 7th grades and that is due to the greater amount of social activities in high schools.

The movies appear to be attractive and appealing to the adolescent as well as to others. Movies provide for amusements, fun and thrill. And for a period of time in his life,

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(1) Conklin, S.: Principles of Adolescent Psychology, p. 91.

the individual is carried away to live in an imaginary world away from the reality of life and its restraints. The movies provide for an emotional experience where untolerated urges and impulses, find satisfaction and release, without the fear of incurring punishment. Thus movies serve a compensatory function through identification with the hero and through living with him the emotional experiences as if they were in the realm of reality.

Movies impart much information and knowledge about different things and they suggest solutions to problems that are perplexing the individual. Here the moral point of view is not considered.

"It is in fact probable that what the adolescents get from the theater is mainly a crystallization of points of view, desires or attitudes already in existence ... the adolescent saw what he or she was previously conditioned to see."<sup>(1)</sup> This point of view is supported by a study made by Blumer and Hauser in which they found that: "Children in low rate delinquency areas were less susceptible to criminal influences of the movies than were children in high rate delinquency areas."<sup>(2)</sup>

It cannot be denied that the movies have played a major role in acquainting the people of the Near East with the Western Culture especially in the realm of social life and the

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(1) Cole, L: Psychology of Adolescence, p. 482-3.

(2) Conklin, E: Principles of Adolescent Psychology, p. 96.



relation of women to men. An observer can easily sense the discontent and disappointment in the minds of Syrian adolescents as a result of the discrepancies between two worlds: the world of the movies and its splendor and idealism in some respect and their world of reality with its poverty and lack of opportunity, though only two students mention this disappointment specifically. <sup>(1)</sup> Anyhow students were not asked to write about their feelings in this respect.

Owing to the fact that the movies serve as an escape as well as having compensatory functions and providing for emotional experiences. Movies serve functions which are nowhere else provided for in Aleppo and thus they have a strong appeal to the adolescents of the city.

## Section VI

### Inequality in Treating Children

Another cause of conflict lies in the failure of parents to be impartial in dealing with their children. The parents are liable, as any other human being, to be influenced to different degrees, favorably or unfavorably, by their children and others, and the way they behave expresses their feelings no matter what care is given to disguise them. What matters

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(1) The writer feels that a careful study must be devoted to investigate the effects of movies on the minds of the Syrian youth.



in human relationships is the motives that lie behind actions not actions themselves and also the impression or the feeling that an individual has when treated in a certain way.

In the family relationships, as the study reveals, some parents fail to treat their children on a basis of equality (about 13 % of the boys and about 13 % of the girls state this fact or feel it).

In general there is a differentiation in treating the two sexes; girls are denied privileges accorded to boys, this differentiation goes back to the moment when the child is born - if the newborn is a girl the parents are disappointed especially if it is the first child. One girl writes: "My father prefers boys to girls, he often forgives my brothers when mistaken but he faces me with all my faults." Another girl states: "If I ever get into conflict with my brother, my father, then, sides with him and scolds me." Still another girl is conscious and well aware of this attitude towards girls and women in general, in mentioning: "Women are less important than men, this is a general belief." In fact such an attitude prevails, not in Syria alone, but in some other places too. But there are also exceptions in some instances as a boy writes: "My father bestows his affection on my sisters much more than on me, that makes me hate them and vice versa, I know, my father does not love me at all." Alongside with this differentiation between the sexes, there exists inequality in treating children within the same sex. The adolescents who complain of it claim

that their parental attitudes towards them are unlike those towards the other siblings. Often, the parents side with one child against another arbitrarily without any valid reason. It seems that if the adolescents, as a boy puts it, have an argument with a younger sibling the parents rebuke them for maltreating the youngsters, on the other hand, if they have an argument with an older sibling, they also are scolded for being impudent - insolent - since older siblings must be treated as parents, with awe and with respect. Thus the younger siblings are the parents' pets and the older are to be considered as parents and adolescents are to be responsible for everything wrong after all: "If my sisters make mistakes the blame is put on me, ... my mother so persecutes me that I feel she is not my mother," a girl writes.

The inequality reveals itself in according favors to some and denying them to others, through unfavorable comparison among siblings and through blaming and punishing some for the faults of others.

This inequality makes adolescents who feel discriminated against as if they are rejected and unwanted, this feeling is the root of emotional insecurity. A boy writes: "I feel insecure because of the fact that some of my brothers are preferred to me." Emotional insecurity is one of the most severe conflicts a person experiences in life because his basic need for affection, protection and belongingness is not satisfied as long as he feels being rejected by those in whom he

seeks satisfaction of his need. Emotional security is considered by psychologists as the essential element for a wholesome development of the individual personality. The child's self-adequacy, courage as well as self-reliance stem originally from the feeling of being emotionally secure in his relationships with his parents in the years when he is growing up. (1)

How do adolescents react to this discrimination in treatment? To detest, to hate, to feel aversion against parents, siblings as well as against the home and to run away are usual responses on the part of adolescents. "I hated my brother very much and I reciprocated the ill-will of my parents." or "The preference of some to others causes me to hate both my parents and my siblings" or "I began to consider them - my parents - as enemies who lack the quality of being father and mother, i.e. who lack paternal and maternal feelings." Here a girl expresses her feelings about discrimination very strongly as: "My mother takes into consideration any opinion given by my older sister and disregards mine even though it is a good one. I feel as if checked ... and this leads me eventually to detest the home."

These are some of the feelings and attitudes of adolescents who feel as if they are discriminated against and picked out by their parents to be punished and ill-treated. It is a sorry state of being and it needs careful attention and treat-

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(1) Symonds, P.: The Dynamics of Parent-Child relationships, p. 3.

ment because these adolescents are, in this way, deprived of a golden opportunity to develop normally and to become well-adjusted and happy adults later on.

## Section VII

### The Existence of a Step-Mother

The presence in the home of a step-mother makes often for emotional unrest among young people. It is a family situation in which tact and understanding must be practiced by everyone. The study reveals that 5 boys and 3 girls only give this reason, namely, the existence of a step-mother as the most important source of conflict and unrest in the family relationships. Those who complain of this situation undergo the most severe conflict and feel emotionally insecure.

The existence of a step-mother may be due to either:

1. The mother dies and the father gets married again
2. The father deserts the mother with or without divorce and takes a second wife.
3. The father keeps his first wife and marries again; the two wives have to live together in the same house especially when the husband is unable to establish a house for each.

Islam tolerates polygamy; a man is allowed to have as many wives as he likes but not more than four at a time.

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It is true that Islam places some restrictions on polygamy but these are not observed by many who practice it.

Here also we must note the fact that in case of divorce, for instance, the father has the right to keep his children who are above seven years of age if he desires to, and if there is nothing against him such as insanity or immorality.

Facts from the study and facts known to every person familiar with the family relationships where there is a step-mother, reveal that the step-mother is very often aggressive toward and unkind to the children of the other wife whether she has or has no children of her own. When the adolescent has to live with his father and step-mother, because his mother is either dead or deserted, he is usually on bad terms with her. He cannot consider her as his own mother; he often considers her as an intruder who is robbing him of the attention, love and affection of his father. Thus he becomes critical of her behavior, negativistic and uncooperative with her. The same thing applies to the step-mother who cannot take the adolescent or the child as her own and in whom she finds a rival for the love of her husband. The result is that the adolescent is always mistreated by his step-mother, he resents her. What is worse is that his father usually sides with her against his

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(1) The Quran says: "... take in marriage of such other women as please you, two, or three, or four, and not more. But if ye fear that ye cannot act equitably towards so many, marry one only." The Quran: Chapter 4, Verse 3, Volume II.

child because he often falls under her domination especially when she is much younger than he is. Thus tension often becomes so heightened as to lead to the expulsion of the child or to his running away from his father's home.

A boy writes: "... at last our father expelled us - my brother, sister and me - ... and this is the third year and we still are away from him. When we meet with him face to face we don't talk with him neither does he, as if we do not know each other and as if we are not his children ... ever since my mother died, my life is a continuous persecution, humiliation and pain." Another boy writes about how his father deserted his mother when he was nine years of age "... and since that time we lived the worst life of humiliation and oppression under the dominance of a step-mother who charmed her husband to beat his children." This boy continues to relate how he was unkindly and severely mistreated and how his father was about to shoot him had he not run away. And all this is caused by the step-mother.

And when the two wives - the former and the latter have to live in the same house then trouble is frequent and with no break, the relationships are tense and often at a crisis.

Owing to the fact that the second wife is usually younger she is more favored by the husband who submits often to her wishes and little by little he becomes completely dominated by her. Troubles arise as each wife competes for

the love and approval of the same husband. Each wants him for herself alone and resents the idea that another woman has a share with her in his love. Thus the effort of each wife is directed towards displacing the other one and usually the battle is won by the new wife. This means that the father becomes antagonistic towards both his former wife and the children. A girl writes: "One thing troubles our life, it is my step-mother who incites our father against us and tries to make him detest us ... my father so submits to her wishes that he expells us with our mother away from home ... my step-mother has only one wish; removing my dear mother from her way and making out of us bodies with no soul." Another girl mentions that: "The only wish of my ste-mother is to expel me with my mother from my parental home."

In these instances the adolescent experiences the agony of emotional insecurity and of severe conflict. He needs badly the love and affection of his father, especially when the mother is away, he is dependent upon him also for his living and on the other hand he fears constantly the prospect of being removed from the home. He feels insecure about the present and the future. Such a home is the worst type of broken home and it is unfortunate that the adolescent has to live in it or has to desert it and both are not perfect solutions from the point of view of wholesome personality development.

It must be added also that the father himself ex-

periences more or less a severe conflict; he sometimes is torn between his loyalty to his child and his love for his mate which are often incompatible. Between two evils he must choose the least one according to him. (1)

The study reveals that besides those causes of conflict between parents and their adolescent children, which have been so far considered, there are other causes which may be included either under dominance of parents or restrictions on freedom and so on.

For instance: parents want their children to leave the school, or they interfere in the love affairs of their children, or they insist upon their children to study with no break, or they decide the future of their children without taking into consideration the interests of children themselves, or parents insist upon their children to come back home very early in the evening; all these may come under any one of the causes which are considered fully in the preceding sections.

On the other hand children recognize also that they also are responsible for some other causes of conflict between them and their parents. They give such causes as: they disobey their parents, they attack their siblings especially the most favored by their parents, they are impulsive and they boast of their knowledge and claim to know everything. These patterns of behavior on the part of children are ways through

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(1) For a discussion about the presence of a step-parent refer to Crow and Crow, pp. 72 and following.



which children assert themselves and react to conflicts and to emotional insecurity.

And now let us turn to consider another major cause of conflicts, namely; the cultural gap between parents and their adolescent children.

CHAPTER III

Section I

Cultural Gap Between Parents and  
Their Adolescent Children

The thesis of this paper is that the tension and conflict which often characterize the parent-adolescent relationships in the Moslem Syrian family are mainly due to

1. Lack of understanding of the psychology of the adolescents by the parents.
2. The cultural gap between the younger and the older generation.

So far, the first cause was considered and interpreted in the light of the psychology of adolescence. Let us now turn to consider the second part, namely: the cultural gap.

The study shows that 30 % of the fathers and about 70 % of the mothers are completely illiterate, they do not know how to read and write. About 20 % of the fathers and 8 % of the mothers know only how to read and write. All these cases can be considered as illiterate since literacy in the modern sense of the word term is not conceived to be the mere knowledge of how to read and write. <sup>(1)</sup> Thus about 50 % of the

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(1) The writer believes that a literate person is a person who

fathers and 78 % of the mothers can be considered as insulated from the intellectual stream flowing in the country; their intellectual horizons are very narrow and they are isolated.

Since the students who took the questionnaire are all in grades IV through VI, another conclusion follows from the study; about 20 % of the fathers and 5 % of the mothers have had a number of years of schooling equal to that of their children. Furthermore the kind of education which the fathers had, was radically different from the type of schooling offered nowadays when every aspect of life in civilized countries is changing rapidly from day to day as a result of an amazing advance in science and technology.

Only 6 % of the fathers have had higher professional education as doctors or engineers or lawyers.

In addition to the cultural gap between the parents and their children, which the study so obviously reveals, there is another significant element, namely, that of age. Thus it is natural to expect that the points of view, opinions and aspirations ... of both parents and children concerning many problems and their respective outlook on life should differ. We know that the attitudes, opinions and ideas of a person are the outcome of his experiences in the culture in which he

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is able to read and write fluently and understandingly and should be able to improve himself continuously. Literacy is defined as follows: "... more broadly, the ability to read and write at the level of the average fourth grade pupil." Good, Carter V.: Dictionary of Education, McGraw Hill Book Company Inc., New York, 1945.

happens to live and with which he has contacts. This is evident since human beings are born similar but, later on, they become differentiated as to nationalities and religions according to the type of education they receive.

The differences between the parents and their children are centered mainly around: religion and its place in life, nationalistic feelings and obligations; emancipation of women, legends and superstitions and the way natural phenomena are understood and explained. Parents and their children differ also on traditions and their strong hold on the older generation. According to the younger generation their parents are not fit to live in the world of the twentieth century. Thus differences may be classified into four categories: moral, political, social and intellectual.

Some examples serve to shed light on these points:

1. When the Syrian Constitution was being revised in the year 1950, there was a hot discussion about the religion of the State. Must we include in the Constitution an article stating that the religion of the State is Islam? or must the State be a lay institution? Heated discussions and arguments took place everywhere in the home, school, in public places, newspapers and parliament. The progressive, modern conception of the nation and the State was opposed by the traditional point of view. It was an open struggle between the new as represented, in general, by the younger educated generation,

and the old, as represented by the older generation, the clergy and sheikhs. This issue provided occasions for conflict between the parents and their children. At last the old won a partial victory concerning this issue.

2. During the winter vacation - December 1950 - the students in Aleppo struck and demonstrated against foreign companies especially against a French owned monopoly of Tobacco. As a result of that demonstration there was a clash between the police and the students and blood was shed. Such incidents lead to conflicts between the older and younger generation as reported by students. <sup>(1)</sup> The general attitude of parents towards such actions on the part of their children was one of disapproval. The children, on the other hand, were fully convinced that it is their duty to strike against any foreign interference in our national affairs and to fight it. Speaking of strikes another said: "It is imperative that I do my duty even though I disobey my father because I feel that my obligation is toward the whole nation." Students believe it is their duty to lead the nationalist movement in the country.

3. Some students write: "To explain natural phenomena scientifically is considered by my parents as interference with the secrets of God, hence it is a heresy ..." or "My parents

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(1) Out of 31 students who answered the questionnaire right after their return to the school, i.e. after six days of the strike and the clash with the police, 8 students cited the political activity of students as a cause of conflict with their parents.

believe that to say that the earth is a planet in the solar system, that it is round and it revolves around the sun is a symptom of insanity and heresy ...." The following incident took place with a classmate of the writer of the above statement about the earth. The case is as follows: "The director of the Third Secondary School for boys in Aleppo received a letter from the elders of Shaik-Said - a suburb of Aleppo - in which they asked the director to expel a certain student from that village from the school. The reason given was that he believed in the roundness and motion of the earth. They claimed that the young man was mad and had gone astray from the right path and they threatened that he might be killed."<sup>(1)</sup>

4. The traditional and conservative conception about the inferior status of women has been challenged and shaken particularly during the last 15 years. In their struggle for emancipation the effort of women was directed against the veil; the symbol of their slavery.<sup>(2)</sup> The struggle is going on and from one day to another women gain strength and support. This challenge of tradition and formal religion is very bold and the struggle is very hard because of the close connection, on the other hand, between the concept of honor

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(1) Al-Nazir newspaper issued in Aleppo, N. 3278, 22.3.1951.

(2) In fact, not only the effort of educated women but that effort of every well educated man is directed against the veil and the conception of woman behind it.

and women. Taking off the veil thus has become a very important issue between parents and their adolescent girls. This conflict is clearly revealed from the study. About 30 % of the girls cite that veiling is a source of conflict. But here it must be added that many girls have already taken off the veil. The emotional tension caused by it has reached its peak and is on the decline.

These and many other instances serve as evidence of the fact that two antagonistic ways of life or two systems of thought exist side by side, competing with each other in Syria. An old system struggles for its existence against a newer one which strives to establish itself and gain an over-all victory over the old. The conflict between these two ways of life is reflected in the high degree of tension and unrest characterizing the parent-adolescent relationships in the Moslem Syrian family.

The older generation, in general, represents the traditional and conservative outlook on life. The adolescents in their reports say that their parents are narrow-minded, fanatic, conservative. They say that their parents generally scorn everything new and glorify the old; in other words they do not accept the idea of evolution and adaptation to new conditions. Some students write; "Parents want to bring up their children the same way as they were brought up." That is why we hear a father say to his son: "Did I ever go

swimming or did I ever go to the movies when I was your age?"

On the other hand, the younger generation represents to a greater degree the new and modern outlook on life. The younger generation feels the necessity of becoming broad-minded, of freeing themselves from the strong hold of traditions and of adapting themselves to the present conditions. The younger generation is more influenced by the new tendencies which have come as a result of a rapid infiltration of western culture into the land. In other words, adolescents feel the necessity of becoming modernized and consider it as the way to progress.

But it cannot be said that all parents are backward, traditionalist and conservative and that all children are progressive and modern. Three boys, for instance, attribute the conflicting situations between parents and their children, in general, to the lack of religious training of both. They suppose that had religion been strictly emphasized at home there would not have been any room for conflict. In other words, among adolescents there are some who believe that all our problems can be solved only through religion.

Thus the conflict between parents and adolescents can be understood in terms of a larger, wide spread conflict embracing every aspect of life; a conflict between two cultures. This problem is stated by Hourani as follows:

"An old way of thought and life which has gone un-



challenged and fundamentally unchanged for some hundreds of years, finds itself in some way opposed, in others <sup>ing</sup> inescapably transformed by the new civilization of the West. In consequence, the Syrians find themselves no longer living in a united and coherent world but torn between two worlds neither of which is altogether their own." (1)

Syria formed a part of a world which had a civilization of its own: religion, culture and a way of life. Every aspect of life was regulated according to accepted principles drawn from religious teachings and from customs. The Quran embodies the principles according to which a man should live. On the basis of these principles Moslem thinkers have established a moral system embracing every sphere of human activity. But blind superstitions and misinterpretations have taken place and many erroneous views and notions are incorporated in the scope of religion. Some adolescents complain that their mothers still believe that: "Washing clothes on Fridays is forbidden." Such superstitions were incorporated into religion as a result of prevailing ignorance, cultural stagnation and relative isolation from the outer worlds.

But during the last 150 years, contacts between Syria and the world increased greatly and the influences of the west began to be felt more and more keenly. The western civilization came to the Moslem Arabs as the product of infidel

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(1) Hourani, A.: Syria and Lebanon, p. 59.

minds and hands who were not considered worthy of equal treatment with the Moslems. At the same time it revealed itself as secular threatening and challenging the place of religion. It came asserting its superiority and its contempt for the East and thus it aroused antagonism and humiliation because the Moslem Arabs, like all isolated ethnic groups, considered themselves to be superior and their religion to be supreme.

The infiltration of western ideas during the last century was slow, but now as a result of the amazing advance in the means of communication and transport, the influences of the west are very drastic. The mores, customs, traditions, values, modes of thought and life, social and political organizations ... all have been undergoing a considerable change and : "This process of change is becoming so rapid that it threatens to change beyond recognition the Arab Cultural pattern. Western civilization, with its trenchant and decisive modern methods may so swamp the Arabs and the Near-Eastern worlds as to make them lose their cultural individuality. Here then lies the central problem of the Arab world today." (1)

The clash between the old and the new manifests itself in self-division; self-division of the Moslem Arab nation and self-division within the individual.

The self-division within the individual is exemplified in the adolescent who tries to be modernized, to escape,

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(1) Akrawi, M.: The Arab World: Nationalism and Education, the Year Book of Education, 1949, p. 437.

from the strong hold of traditions and religion and to emancipate himself from his earlier training and its bonds but who, at the same time, cannot get rid of them entirely. In this connection, for instance, a girl writes that she feels guilty whenever she takes off the veil because she is violating a religious taboo though she is consciously aware that: "Freedom and equality with men cannot be achieved except through abolishing the veil."

This is in line with Hourani's idea that: "In a sense every Arab or at least every educated Arab of the towns, is forced to live in two worlds. Not only his way of thought but his social life is becoming daily more deeply affected by Europe and America but at the heart he is still an Arab and usually a Moslem."<sup>(1)</sup>

The Arabs are divided into those who became completely westernized, and those who are, to a small extent, influenced by the West and who are afraid of western culture; and between these two groups lie those who do not know to which group they belong.

The self-division and the uncertainty which goes with it is revealed in such questions as: Have we a truly national culture? What are the determinants of this culture? With so many of our way assuming a western pattern, can we still call ourselves Arabs? What are the limits to which we can go in

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(1) Hourani, A.: Syria and Lebanon, p. 71.

adopting western ways and still remain Arabs?

This self-division between two ways of life is full of inconveniences. It may produce an abnormal tension on mind and nerve in the individual, it may stifle his creative energies and may result in a profound melancholy and paralysis of the will. It reveals itself in general insecurity, pretentiousness, cynicism and despair.

And in addition to this cultural phenomenon there are the ambivalent emotions and feelings of the Arabs towards the west which induce still more tension and conflict in them.

In general there are feelings of appreciation for and recognition of the western culture as superior in many respects. On the other hand there are feelings of antagonism towards it created by the domination of the west over the Arabs which have resulted in taking refuge in the past glories of the Arabs. There is a dependence upon the west for modern sciences and knowledge contrasted with feelings of suspicion, doubt, bitterness and disappointment towards the west due to the policy of western powers towards the Arab peoples of the Near-East.

In such a state of confusion and unrest, of doubt and insecurity culturally as well as politically, the Arabs are occupied with some questions which need urgent answers:

What should be the bases of Arab nationalism and its relation to Islam?

What can the Arabs become and what can they do in the world?

What form or degree of westernization will serve best to revive their creative spirits? or

"How will it be possible for Arabs, by preserving or modifying the old and accepting what is new, once more to form a unified world of thought and life which they can call their own?"  
(1)

The Arab World is waiting for satisfactory answers to such questions in order to solve its problems.

Now let us turn to discuss some of the effects of the West on the Arabs of the Near East as adolescents feel them and as they express them in their reports.

Three effects are revealed in their reports and are considered to be sources of conflicts between adolescents and their parents.

1. Questioning the place of religion and secular tendency.
2. Emancipation of women.
3. National movement and consciousness.

## Section II

### Questioning the Place of Religion and Secular Tendency

The study reveals that, among adolescents, there is a general discontent with and resentment against formalities

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(1) Hourani, A.: Syria and Lebanon, p. 59.

of religion as practiced by parents, against superstitions and misconceptions incorporated in the framework of religion. It shows a trend in the minds of adolescents to separate religion from the State, and a trend against sectarianism which emphasizes religion as a basis of social organizations. In short the study shows a hostile attitude on the part of adolescents toward formal religion and fanaticism. These, are considered, to be obstacles to progress, understanding and national solidarity.

According to the reports of adolescents, some parents require their children to perform all the religious formalities such as the five daily prayers and fasting during Ramadan and so on ... An adolescent boy writes: "The aims or ends of life according to my father are praying and fasting and preparation for the life thereafter, whereas, the ends of life, according to me are progress and adaptation to changing circumstances." That is why this adolescent feels keenly: "The conflict that results from being obliged to live according to two contradictory mentalities at the same time."

Eleven boys and eleven girls emphasize the religious fanaticism of their parents as a cause of conflict between them and their parents.

Owing to the ignorance which prevails among parents and owing to the fact that they have been brought up in a strictly conservative and religious milieu many parents consider schools as centers for teaching heresy and everything

given there is against religion. <sup>(1)</sup> An adolescent boy writes that his father is fully convinced that: "Schools teach paganism and weakens the faith of the student" and he gives an example about astronomic geography which is considered by his father as heresy. The case given at the beginning of this chapter sheds light on this point. Another adolescent states that: "His father believes that explaining natural phenomena means uncovering the secrets of God and this is nothing but blasphemy and falsehood.

Many other superstitions related to holymen and their miraculous deeds serve as causes of conflict between parents and their adolescent children who have been, more or less, liberated from these superstitions, through sciences and scientific knowledge. In fact science liberates the human mind and thus it threatens the strong hold of dogmas of religion and traditions on people. In this respect an adolescent boy writes: "The word forbidden has lost its significance and strength; the young man requires reasonable explanations for things he must not do."

A case, which reveals a trend in the minds of the younger generation for secularization of the state, was given already at the beginning of this chapter <sup>(2)</sup> and there is no

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(1) In the appendix a case of conflict between a student and his father around the explanation of the process of snowing is illuminating.

(2) Refer to page 59-60

need to repeat it here again.

The last point to be considered here is the tendency of adolescents to attack sectarianism and its emphasis upon religion as the basis for social organization. For a long time, and still at present, but to a lesser degree, religion stood as a barrier between people. It isolated people from one another and produced hatred, distrust and prejudice among followers of different religions, even among different sects of the same religion. So powerful was the dissecting effect of religion that the nation became divided and subdivided into groups, each with its own interests and aspirations and each regarding the other with distrust and suspicion. A student relates that during the last elections that took place in Syria, he and his father got into conflict with each other because: "My father considers that all the Moslem candidates except the candidates of Moslem Brotherhood do not pray and hence they are not fit to be leaders. Even my father blames the candidate of Moslem Brotherhood because he spoke of Christians in his program, as brothers and this is terrible since God cursed them. In short to vote for Christian candidates is forbidden." The writer had many experiences of this kind during the elections. This idea is in line with a current belief among the Moslems especially, among the conservative of them, who believe that one must trust only those who follow his religion.

The student who has been just quoted continues to say



that he was very furious at this and that his father considered him as a lost person who had gone astray. The student considers voting as the most sacred duty of every citizen towards his country and it is unfortunate to have such an attitude towards members of other religions.

Still another instance about religion and how it is used to segregate people is afforded by the following case. A student 17 years old fell in love with a girl of a different religion. The boy hoped that one day they will get married but his parents opposed him strongly. They said: "How do you love a girl who is not a member of our supreme religion? The student's answer was: "Why should religion enter here since we love each other?"

It must be added that it is not true that all parents are narrow-minded, fanatic and conservative and that all adolescents are broad-minded, liberal and modern. Some parents are really progressive and they keep up with the requirements of life in the twentieth century whereas some adolescents still have a rigid and backward mentality. But in general religion plays a greater role in the lives of the members of the older generation than in those of the younger one.

Section III

Emancipation of Women

Doctor Kurani in his monograph on the Interaction of Islamic and Western Thought in Retrospect and Prospect mentions that the infiltration of western culture into the Arab Lands has given rise to three major interrelated movements. One of these movements is social which "is revealed also by a demand for the emancipation of women, the abolition of polygamy and the veil." <sup>(1)</sup> The study reveals that 16 girls are in conflict with their parents around the question of the veil. It must be added that many girls have already taken off the veil and for them this question provides no more a cause of conflict.

Hourani considers that the process of change in the status of women is being speeded by one manifestation of western civilization, namely, the film which "expresses a way of feminine life and a conception of the relations between men and women which are far from those prevalent in the Islamic World." <sup>(2)</sup>

After many centuries, during which women were considered as a means for man's enjoyment, women, especially during the last 20 years, began to shake off the strong hold of tradition. And now women are after equality with men, after being recognized as worthy human being.

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(1) Kurani, H.: The Interaction of Islamic and Western Thought in Retrospect and Prospect, p. 5.

(2) Hourani, A.: Syria and Lebanon, p. 93.

According to the girl's reports many parents still believe that women are not equal to men and that they are inferior. <sup>(1)</sup> The current belief among people whether men or women is that: God created the woman with half the mental endowment as men. Hence girls will not be given the same privileges and opportunities as boys. According to the study, many parents want to terminate the education of their girls as early as possible, and, if they do accept to send their girls to secondary schools, they hesitate to send them to the university. Why? Because the university means co-education. Since traditions and religion do emphasize the segregation of the two sexes therefore to have adolescent boys and girls study in the same institution is not usually tolerated. <sup>(2)</sup> But girls are insisting on secondary education and more and more on continuing their study in the university. Here is a situation that gives rise to recurrent conflicts between girls and their parents. A girl writes that her father was asked whether he would

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- (1) Those who believe that women are inferior to men resort to the Quran to justify their belief and interpret it in line with their interest. The Quran says: "...and call to witness two witnesses of your neighbouring men; but if there be not two men, let there be a man and two women of those whom ye shall choose for witnesses..." Ch.: 2, Verse 282, Vol.: I. In another place: "Men shall have the pre-eminence above women..." Ch. 4, Verse 33, Vol.: II. In another place also: "...a male shall have as much as the portion of two females", Ch. 4, Verse 175, Vol.: II.
- (2) There is one governmental school in Jableh in which co-education is followed. The reason is the lack of a school for girls. The number of girls is very small and even boys and girls of the school do not talk with each other.

send his daughter to the university. He replied that he was not yet decided but he would try. The girl got angry and said: "Girls must be considered and treated as equal with boys nowadays;" She says that at that moment she was full of hatred against, and jealous of the other sex. Another girl writes that parents do not feel the necessity of educating women - their girls - so that they could not have contacts with men. She continues to say that even when parents find it necessary to live up to the requirements of the present they send their girls to elementary schools but do not allow them to continue beyond the secondary stage in order not to mix with the other sex.

How to get equality? Women find one way to achieve it; it is through liberating themselves from the slavery of man which is symbolized by the veil. A girl writes that: "It is only through taking off the veil that we can get freedom and equality." But the veil is considered an essential element in traditions and religion - though religion does not require the veil as it is actually practiced. The important thing is that the veil, as it is now, is a part of religion according to many parents. Thus they cannot tolerate willingly their girls if they want to take off the veil.

As it has already been stated, girls feel guilty when they take off the veil because they are violating a religious taboo. Here is a situation giving rise to severe conflicts in the first place between parents and their adolescent girls and

in the second place within the girls themselves.

Thus the adolescent girl is faced with a complex of problems first of which to be recognized by her parents as a grown up person and no more as a child, second, to be treated on a basis of equality with boys, and third, to be emancipated from the ties of traditions and formal religion, as symbolized by the veil.

The effort of the progressive elements in Syria to ensure the liberation of women has resulted in a partial victory which is nevertheless a very significant one. The new constitution of Syria, issued in the year 1950, accorded the educated women <sup>(1)</sup> the right to vote and this right was practiced in the last elections.

#### Section IV

#### National Movement

"The main influence of western civilization on Arab life lies in the rising tide of nationalism and the movement for independence which pervade the entire Arab World. In the main this movement is a direct contribution of Western education." <sup>(2)</sup>

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- (1) The women must have the elementary school certificate - Certificat d'etude elementaire - in order to be allowed to vote.
- (2) Kurani, H.: The Interaction of Islamic & Western Thought in Retrospect and Prospect, p. 5.

Consciousness of a common language and traditions coupled with feeling of opposition, whether real or imaginary, give rise to an intense sentiment known as nationalism. (1)

During the second half of the nineteenth century the Arabs began to discover their past glories and undertook to revitalize the Arabic language and culture. This movement was a direct result of the work of schools at that time and an effect of the enlightenment that came from the West. Arab poets began to sing the achievements of the Arabs, their glories, their literature and dream about a glorious future. (2) At that same time there was a real opposition to the fulfillment of the aspirations of the Arabs by the Ottoman Turks. Later on France and Great Britain were believed to constitute an obstacle in the way of independence and self-determination of the Arab countries.

The desire of the Arabs for independence and self-determination came as a result of their desire to equal the west and since the west "set value upon the independence and power of the national state... the Arabs too must be independent and powerful and modern in their social organization." (3) Moreover every nation must have the right to be independent

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(1) Hans, Nicolas, Comparative Education, p. 216. Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1950.

(2) Antonious, G.: The Arab Awakening.

(3) Hourani, A.: Syria and Lebanon, p. 100.

and free from the control of other nations.

The study is concerned with the role of adolescents in the national movement as a source of conflict between them and their parents.

According to the study 13<sup>(1)</sup> students, all boys, had conflicts with their parents because of political affiliations and nationalistic feelings. According to their reports, their parents do not approve at all of the role which they play in politics. Some parents think that they send their children to schools to learn and not to strike and since the students are enthusiastic about what they consider their national duty, they get into conflict with their parents. Children are threatened by their parents that they will no longer be allowed to go to schools if they strike again. They usually submit and promise their parents that they will not strike at all, but sooner or later they strike and demonstrate again and over again.

A student writes that his father does not care whether foreign companies remain or become nationalized whereas the student feels he has an obligation towards his nation. This obligation consists in awakening the people to the dangers of foreign companies in respect to national independence and

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(1) Among these 13 boys, 8 out of 31 boys who took the questionnaire right after their return to school after the strike, state that they had conflicts with their parents about national activity of the students.

sovereignty. Another boy states that: "I consider my participation with my fellows in the strike against foreign companies as a national obligation whereas my father considers it as foolishness and waste of time..."

Thus students have come to think of themselves as active leaders in the nationalist movement and struggle. Doctor Akrawi comments upon this fact as follows: "In countries where political experience is a new thing, where a large proportion of the population is illiterate or with a very low standard of education and where many of the leaders are not among the best educated men in the country, college and university students feel that ... they know the problems of their countries and can therefore pass correct judgments about them and that they are in duty bound to participate actively and to lead if necessary, political and national movements."<sup>(1)</sup>

And here we are faced with the problem of strikes and demonstrations which have become so violent and recurrent as to become a real problem to the governments and school authorities.

Can we think of these strikes and demonstrations in a new light? In connection with the dominance of parents it was mentioned that these strikes may be understood as an outlet

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(1) Akrawi, M.: The Arab World: Nationalism and Education, the Year Book of Education, 1949, p. 432.



for rebelliousness of adolescents against parental dominance. And here also, this problem may be viewed as a reaction to a deep cultural conflict within the student and the nation. Doctor Kurani expresses this point of view as follows: "The Arab student is proud of his religion, civilization and nationality; but his westernized education has prevented him from being sufficiently rooted in his tradition to acquire an adequate sense of its values or to arrive at an intelligent understanding and appreciation of the spiritual and intellectual meaning of Islam or Arab nationalism... His environment and the world political developments serve to exaggerate the gap which exists between him and his people, on the one hand, and between him and the foreigner on the other hand. In his search for a new object of worship the most appealing ideal lies in the political sphere. To the attainment of his country's political ends he gives himself with zeal." <sup>(1)</sup> Being young and zealous adolescents react strongly and their actions are often highly emotionally charged.

From another point of view these strikes may be viewed as a reaction to the political insecurity of Syria. Political insecurity is due to external factors, namely, the attitudes of Western powers towards the Arab world including Syria since the close of the First World War and to internal factors also. The younger generation comes to realize from

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(1) Kurani, H.: The Interaction of Islamic & Western Thought in Retrospect & Prospect, p. 11.

time to time that some of the leaders of the nationalist movement betray the national aspirations and dupe the people to the extent that the younger generation has lost confidence in the actual present leaders. That is why strikes are directed not only against foreign interference but also against national local governments.

The lack of confidence in some of the present leaders may account for the fact that adolescents want to assume leadership in the national movement and feel intensely their duty towards the nation.

An adolescent boy writes that when he came back home he began to enumerate the dangers of foreign companies and claimed that it is the duty of every citizen to rebel against these companies. He continues to tell that his father scolded him and told him to mind his own business but he exploded and said: "We have a duty toward our nation, it consists of awakening this sleeping people."

## CHAPTER IV

### Suggestions and Recommendations

So far the two major causes of conflict between parents and their adolescent children, namely: lack of understanding of the psychology of adolescence by parents and the cultural gap between the younger and the older generation, have been considered. And in the preceding sections it has been clearly shown that the parent-adolescent relationships in the Moslem Syrian Family are often characterized by varying degree of tension to the extent that family life becomes disorganized and unsatisfactory and in some cases extremely trying to both the adolescent and his parents.

It is really a sorry state of affairs and it calls for careful attention and consideration on the part of every person concerned with the education and the welfare of youth; in other words the welfare of the nation since adolescents of today will be the adults of tomorrow and will be the parents of the next generation. Well-adjusted adolescents are likely to develop into well-adjusted adults since good adjustment at any period of life is a reflection of the periods which preceded it.

The psychology of delinquency recognizes the far reaching effects of bad homes and the severe conflicts and thwartings arising in them, on the personality development of

the individual. The saying that the maladjusted of yesterday may be the delinquent of today and the criminal of tomorrow is significant.

For these reasons and because we believe that education must be concerned with the total growth of the individual, one of our concerns, as teachers, will be how to minimize or avoid conflict situations in the family and how to help students meet them.

How can we avoid conflicts within the family?

In the questionnaire given to students there was the following item:

Have you any advice (suggestion) that you can give to both parents and children so that they may avoid, as much as possible, these conflicts among themselves?

120 boys and 42 girls gave some suggestions which appear in tables IV and V.

Table IV

Advice given by 120 adolescent boys to minimize conflicts with their parents.

<u>Advice</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1. Children should obey their parents and be patient (four of them insist upon blind obedience)	54
2. Parents should give more freedom to their children	45
3. Mutual respect and cooperation between parents and children	40

<u>Advice</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
4. Parents should broaden their horizons and meet the demands of the present time	25
5. Parents should provide for everything thought necessary by their children	21
6. Parents should guide their children through discussion and conviction, not through force	12
7. Parents should not resort to beating, they should be tolerant	16
8. Children should not ask for many things	9
9. Children should be tactful & wise with their parents	7
10. Parents should be impartial in treating children	5
11. Fathers should not get a second wife	5
12. Parents and children should not discuss things when they are angry	2
13. Parents should accept what their children teach them	2
14. Parents should devote more time for their children	1
15. Frankness between parents and adolescents	5

Out of 124 boys who answered the questionnaire, 120 gave their advice.

Table V

Advice given by 42 adolescent girls to minimize  
conflicts with their parents.

<u>Advice</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1. Children should obey their parents (3 of them insist upon blind obedience)	17
2. Mutual respect and cooperation between parents and children	17
3. Parents should give more freedom to their children	13
4. Parents should provide for everything thought necessary by their children	11
5. Parents should broaden their horizons and meet the demands of the present time	11
6. Parents should not resort to beating and scolding	8
7. Fathers should not get a second wife	3
8. Children should be tactful and wise with their parents	2
9. Children should not ask for many things	1

Now let us consider their suggestions and see what  
they think about them.

### Children should obey their parents and be patient

54 adolescent boys, or about 45 % and 17 adolescent girls, or about 40 % consider that to avoid conflicts with their parents, the adolescents should obey and respect their parents. 4 boys and 3 girls insist upon blind obedience.

Adolescents say that they must obey first and then discuss with their parents and they must not forget that their parents want their welfare. Adolescents must consider their parents as guides who have the right to guide them and direct them in the right way.

Adolescents give some reasons why they must obey their parents. Some of the reasons are:

1. Religion teaches and emphasizes it.
2. Traditions approve obedience and do not tolerate disobedience. And also the man who is obeyed and respected by his children is respected among other men.
3. Parents are more experienced and wise. They have been taught in the school of life.

One adolescent writes that: "The adolescent must realize how much effort and energy is exerted by his parents and how many difficulties they have to overcome in order to insure his living, schooling and education."

But the question is: does obedience remove the causes of conflict? No, obedience does not attack the source of conflict, it only deals with the open manifestation of con-

flict. Adolescents say that they must bear their parents no matter how much they suffer.

Parents should give more freedom to their children.

The second important suggestion is that parents should give more freedom to their children, but within limits. These limits should be inversely proportional to the degree of maturation of the child, the more the child becomes mature, the less restrictions placed upon him. The main idea here, according to the adolescents, is that parents must realize that their adolescent child is no longer their small baby. Children must enjoy more opportunity for self-direction, and must be trained to assume responsibility. Parents must give their children freedom of choice and must encourage them to depend upon themselves. Parents must give their children freedom to express their opinions and views and must encourage them to do so. Parents should not plan beforehand the career or the type of study for their children because these things must be determined according to the child's inclinations and aptitudes. Parents should grant their children more freedom to participate in social life, to practice hobbies, athletic activities, et cetera.

Adolescents say that oppression causes explosion, it does not allow the growing self of the adolescent to develop. So the adolescent must be given more freedom to enhance his



self-respect and self-adequacy.

An adolescent writes: "Children must be given an opportunity to live as men." Stated in psychological terms the guiding principle is that: relative freedom commensurate with the level of maturation of the adolescents is necessary in order to develop mature adults.

Mutual respect and cooperation between parents and adolescents

The guiding principle here is that: parents should treat their children in such a way that children feel that they are respected by their parents and they are considered by them as grown up. Parents must treat their children in the same way as they want their children to treat them, i.e. with respect. Parents should respect their children for their own individuality and not as a means through which they fulfill their desires and wishes. According to the adolescents reports this respect for children will be evidenced through:

1. The father must consider his son as a friend with whom he discusses matters freely, he must respect his child's personality and should not appear as a dictator.
2. The father must consider his son as a brother with whom he has common interests. The popular saying which is most often not applied is: "When your son grows up, make him your brother."
3. Adolescents should have their place in the family, should

be informed about important things and should be given a chance to discuss the family affairs with their parents. An adolescent writes "parents must make their adolescent child feel that he is a respected member in the family, through allowing him to know about the major problems of the family."

4. Parents should not willfully hurt the feelings of their child, especially in the presence of others.

Parents should broaden their horizons and meet the demands of the present.

Adolescents suggest that their parents must come to realize that the world is changing very rapidly and that the environment in which they lived is radically different from the environment of today. Children quote the Great Caliph Omar who 13 centuries ago said: "Do not bring up your children the same way as you were brought up because they are born to live in a world different from yours."

Adolescents suggest also that their parents must get rid of their rigid, crystallized mentality and must adapt themselves to the changing circumstances. Parents must become tolerant of the new ideas and concepts. This will be achieved through being educated or re-educated. This plan for re-education falls on the shoulders of the government.

Some adolescents say that they cannot give any advice to their parents because parents are so rigid that they cannot be changed. Therefore children must be tactful and wise in dealing with their parents, in other words, children must not heedlessly attack what their parents believe in. This last idea is given by seven boys and two girls.

The emphasis here is on broadening the horizons of parents through re-education.

Parents should provide for everything thought necessary  
by the adolescents.

According to the adolescents: parents must provide for the necessities of their children so that children will not resort to other means in order to satisfy their needs. But many parents are very poor, a fact which raises the question of eradicating poverty as an adolescent boy writes: "If we eradicated poverty and ignorance, no conflicts would take place."

Adolescents think that to eradicate poverty, the standard of living of the family must be raised. An adolescent thinks that "the duty of the government is to insure an income sufficient for the family so that the members of the family will not be handicapped."

It must be added that some adolescents suggest that parents give their children allowances for a long and definite

period; this measure trains the adolescent in responsibility and teaches him the value of money and how to economize. In this respect Crow and Crow mention that: "The handling of money is a part of the growing up process, and every boy or girl needs experience in using money, in order to develop a better understanding of its value... Every teen-age school boy or school girl should be given an allowance and should receive definite guidance in budget making."<sup>(1)</sup>

Parents should not resort to beating and scolding;  
they should be tolerant.

According to the adolescents beating makes children feel hatred against their parents and makes them think of undesirable things. Parents must not punish their children for every fault, especially for minor ones. Parents should be tolerant, kind and merciful.

Closely connected with this suggestion is the very important suggestion adolescents give, namely: Guidance is accomplished through discussion and conviction and not through force.

In the preceding pages it was mentioned that adolescents suggest that they must consider their parents as guides and here they realize that this guidance can only be achieved

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(1) Crow and Crow; Our Teen-Age Boys and Girls, p. 89.

through discussion and not through force. Psychology shows that punishment may inhibit the wrong act but it does not show the right one.

Parents through their sympathy and affection for their child can make him seek their guidance willingly when he needs it. Conklin comments in this respect as follows: "Those members of the family group who are in adolescence will achieve most by feeling that in their parents they may find sources of wisdom but not dictation, friends to whom they may go for counsel, friends who are after all far more intimate than friends, who can because of their deeper understanding aid in facing the problems of life adjustment."<sup>(1)</sup>

In addition to the already mentioned suggestions there are some others as: Children must not ask for many things; they must realize the possibility that their parents cannot provide for them everything they ask for.

Parents should be impartial in dealing with their children so that there will not be discrimination among children. Because an adolescent writes: "The child who is discriminated against feels hatred towards his brother... and that is what I felt."

Fathers should not get a second wife, because the step-mother is not and cannot be a real mother. In the case of the presence of a step-mother, the home atmosphere is always in a crisis.

There must be full frankness between parents and

their children. Children must not fear their parents. Three boys insisted upon sex education. An adolescent tells about the severe shock he had when he was 14 years of age because he learned about marital relationships. He was very much disappointed and this discovery affected him very deeply.

Parents and children alike should not discuss things when angry because they are carried by their heightened emotions at that moment and they may say things which they regret later.

Parents must learn from their children, they must accept what their children believe in. Finally one student requires that parents should devote more time to their children.

These are the different suggestions given by the students and it is quite obvious that they include some good constructive thoughts. In their analysis of the causes of conflict and in their suggestions for removing these causes the adolescents reveal a natural desire for achieving status and recognition.

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Immediate Suggestions

In addition to the foregoing suggestions given by the students the writer believes that the school must assume an important role in respect to this problem. Some other measures should be taken in order to avoid conflicts or to help release feelings and emotions on the part of the adolescents. Some of the immediate measures are:

1. Provision of good teachers, who are well trained; teachers who believe that education must be concerned with the total growth of the student emotionally, socially, physically as well as intellectually.
2. Providing for adequate training in psychology particularly in the field of the psychology of adolescence in teacher training colleges so that prospective teachers will become aware of adolescents' problems and will understand them and their importance in order to give them enough care and attention.
3. Teachers should be given more freedom and opportunities to discuss the problems of their students with them, whether in the class room or outside. Teachers should be given freedom from the incubus of the examinations and the rigidity of curriculum and be allowed to achieve their educational task more fully.

4. Provision of well trained school psychologists and counselors - at least in large schools - to help students meet and solve their problems and to acquaint other teachers with the Student Personnel Point of View (S.P.P.V.). Or at least school principals should be trained in or become enthusiastic about such a plan.
5. Introducing a good testing program for vocational as well as for educational guidance in schools. Here there is the necessity for a well trained body of specialists in the field of tests and measurements, in order to guide each student in line with his interests and aptitudes.
6. Holding special circles in the summer for instance, where teachers discuss carefully the problems of adolescents they encounter. How to approach these problems and how to solve them in a way that insures a wholesome development of the student personality.
7. Summer camps for adolescents must be provided for and be encouraged. In these camps adolescents are trained to talk on or to assume more responsibility for self-direction and self-government. Parents must be convinced not only to allow their children to join such camps but to encourage their children to go to them.
8. Here comes the necessity of establishing school-home relationships and contacts.



Through informal interviews, teachers must help parents to realize that the needs of their children demand more of their time and thought than they are giving now to such problems. Teachers-parents associations should be established and teachers should take the initiative since parents are still reluctant to take such a forward step. The idea behind the association is to establish desired contacts with the home "The best associations are those which work for intelligent co-operative relations between the home and the school."<sup>(1)</sup>

It may be hoped that schools and colleges take more responsibility for helping parents to accept new ideas and practices along with their children and for assisting parents to reduce the present conflict within the family.

9. Child-guidance clinics should be established, at least in large cities, to which severe cases are referred in order to give them better and more adequate treatment. These clinics will serve for parents too.

10. An interesting program of talks, lectures and articles addressed to the public through the radio, on magazines, reviews and newspapers... in which effort is directed to arouse in parents an interest to consider the problems of their children, to think about them and to seek professional advice when necessary.

11. A similar program should be established for adoles-

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(1) Jacobson and Reavis; Duties of School Principals, p. 740.

cents the aim of which is to assist adolescents to gain better insight into their own problems and their psychological make-up.

### Long Range Recommendations

Together with these practical suggestions which may be immediately implemented, there are others of a long range nature which require careful planning but which at the same time are designed to help achieve a better solution.

1. Reconsideration of the aims of education and of secondary schools. The aim should be the total growth of the student.
2. Curricula should be revised in order to serve the aim we have in mind. In other words the curriculum must be more flexible to meet the needs of the child and to give the creative teacher an opportunity to educate the child as a total individual. When the curriculum and the teaching methods consider the interests of the child his difficulties and emotional problems, then his education will contribute significantly to his adjustment.
3. Much more attention should be given to extra-curricular activities. The extra-curricular program should include opportunities for students to develop their interests and skills along any line. The objectives are primarily: "self-

development, self-expression, the pursuit of hobbies and social growth."<sup>(1)</sup>

Koe's study of different books and articles on the effects of these activities reveal the following effects in order of importance. "Stressing the values of training in some civic social moral relationships, emphasis on socialization resulting from participation, training for leadership, improvement of discipline, cooperation, training for citizenship in a democracy, training for recreational and esthetic participation."<sup>(2)</sup>

The principle here is to make every student feel the necessity of and participate willingly in these activities. To encourage those who are away from them is very necessary, they may need them most.

4. The necessity of a large widespread comprehensive plan of adult education.

Some of the goals of adult education according to Symonds<sup>(3)</sup> are:

- A. To enable parents to meet a changing world with intelligence and security.
- B. To induce them to evaluate their experiences motives, behavior as well as their aim in dealing with their children.

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(1) Cole, L.: Psychology of Adolescence, p. 261.

(2) Conklin, E.: Principles of Adolescent Psychology, p. 185.

(3) Symonds, P.: The Dynamics of Parent-Child Relationships, p. 137.

- C. To assist them in developing skills and techniques for dealing with situations arising from their functions as parents.
- D. To expand and enrich the total life of the family.

Symonds says that helping to influence parents in what they do is the province of education, but helping to influence them as to what they feel is the province of psychotherapy which is more important than the other.

Such a program of adult education must be realized through the cooperative efforts of community, organizations and the government.

- 5. The necessity of introducing a system of counseling and psychotherapy plan in the school and if possible outside.

Rogers considers the psychotherapeutic situation as an opportunity for growth. Psychotherapy makes for growth because the person who comes for therapy gains insight into his problems and gains confidence in coping with them. In psychotherapeutic situation negative feelings are released and guilt about them is reduced, this release helps to gain insight and permits the more positive feelings to be expressed since there is no more inhibition. The purpose of therapy is therefore the more adequate development of the individual. Symonds states the main aim of psychotherapy as: "to help the individual to accept himself more fully and to become more self-directing and secure in his relations with others."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Symonds, P.: The Dynamics of Parent-Child Relationships, p. 165-66.

It must be added here that therapy for the child is more effective when coupled with the therapy for parents especially for problems arising in parent-child relationships.

6. The school must teach the worth and dignity of manual work and should provide opportunities for students to work and earn money.

Any kind of work should be respected as long as it contributes to the general welfare of society. In addition, manual work according to Pestalozzi, has educational values in spiritual and cultural development. The school should no more prepare only for white collar jobs as it does nowadays. This cannot be done as long as the standard of living of manual workers, whether laborers or peasants, is very low. Respect for work comes when it is well paid.

The writer believes that opportunities must be provided for the adolescent to work and earn money in order to contribute to the family finances and to begin to support himself. It is through work and through earning money that the adolescent will necessarily be respected and treated as a grown up by his parents.

7. The writer believes that the school must be a co-educational institution and sex education must be introduced in schools. The idea of sex-segregation should be abolished.

8. The community should provide for different recreational activities of all kinds and types.

Parents should be encouraged to participate with their children in these activities in a friendly and not authoritative spirit. And thus the ideal of the parent as a brother or a friend can be realized.

9. Effort must be directed toward making desirable homes for adolescents. A desirable home for adolescents has the following main characteristics:

- (a) It allows its children to grow up.
- (b) It does not pass on its own maladjustments.
- (c) It is willing to modify externals.
- (d) It provides a haven of security at all times of stress.
- (e) It keeps a harmonious balance among its members.
- (f) It serves as a model.
- (g) It is a stimulating and interesting place.
- (h) It contains a complete family circle.<sup>(1)</sup>

Some of these suggestions may seem to be utopian but direct and enthusiastic effort on the part of all will realize them eventually.

The important job is to change the attitudes of parents towards their children, because unless attitudes and motives behind them are changed behavior cannot be redirected.

At the same time adolescents should have the right education under the best possible teachers.

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(1) Cole, L.: Psychology of Adolescence, p. 301.

### C O N C L U S I O N

The conflict between parents and their adolescent children is one major problem among many others in Syria. These problems are all closely connected and interdependent. To deal effectively with one problem one must be aware of the total pattern.

All of Syria's problems are reflected in different types of conflict between parents and their adolescent children. In fact these conflicts may be considered as the outward manifestation of the problems of the nation as a whole, or an indication of the instability and unrest which prevail all over the country.

Syria has been undergoing a deep and radical change in every way of life. This change is going on, sometimes at a rapid pace and sometimes less rapidly. This makes for insecurity about the present as well as about the future, an insecurity which reveals itself in a feeling of confusion, pretentiousness, cynicism, despair and melancholy.

On the moral side, religion is losing its hold on and authority over people. At the same time there has not yet been formulated another ideal to which a person can give his loyalty. There is a widespread attitude of indifference and uncooperativeness, distrust and lack of confidence among the peoples. The formalities and superficial aspects are neglected. *observed where the essence and core of moral conduct are neglected.*

Culturally we have drifted away from the Arabo-Islamic culture and yet we do not belong completely to the European. How much shall we retain of our past? What shall we reject? How shall we adapt and reconcile the old with the new? All these are pressing questions, they demand satisfactory answers if the Syrians are to regain their psychological security.

On the economic side, more things are being demanded by an increasing number of the population. This requires a higher standard of family income. But the means of production are elementary and natural resources are not adequately developed, <sup>(1)</sup> in addition to the fact that women who constitute half of the population do not participate in efficient productive work. Production is poor and the producers, especially farmers, still live on a low level because of their limited income. Equality of opportunity does not exist. The economic balance was until last year deficient and there is a widespread apprehension about an impending economic catastrophe. This apprehension has its deep effects upon both parents and adolescents.

On the social side the pattern of the family life is changing and the relationships between its members are changing too. New concepts of democracy, freedom, equality and mutual respect are taught in schools but not applied at home. Women are emancipating themselves and their movement is strongly opposed by the conservative members of the society.

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(1) Refer to Warriner: Land and Poverty in the Near East, for a discussion on Feudalism and its effects on production and poverty.



On the political side, nationalism is not yet well formulated and its relationships to religion and other minority groups are not yet well defined. Syria is politically insecure because it is beset with dangers coming from outside and from inside. Some of its leaders on some occasions seemed to betray national aspirations. The question is who shall lead the national movement? The younger generation or the older one? and what are the disadvantages of each? And how shall be our relations with the western powers?

This brief presentation of our major problems in Syria shows that the conflict between the older and younger generation is closely connected with every one of these problems. In fact, in the discussion of the causes of conflicts it was clearly shown that conflicts between parents and their adolescent children center around moral and religious concepts, around financial issues, around social problems as abolishing the veil and emancipation from traditions and around political questions and the national movement. On the other hand all the problems of Syria are closely connected and cannot be dealt with separately. For instance, the political problem cannot be solved unless solutions for the cultural, economic and social problems are formulated and well defined.

The conflict between the old as represented generally by the older generation and the new as represented generally by the younger generation is likely to remain since life is

going on and since the world is changing continuously. The degree of discrepancy between the old and the new, the tempo or rate of the change and the flexibility of both parents and children will determine the acuity of this problem. Here comes the role of education in making this conflict less intense and in ameliorating the situation. The writer believes that this conflict cannot be eradicated completely or permanently. This imposes on society the necessity for considering and reconsidering continuously the ways and means of how to deal with these conflicts in the light of the changing circumstances.

We need a reform, an over all reform that treats all our problems and social ills.

Where do we begin? We must begin with society, home and in the school simultaneously.

A P P E N D I X



Age : 15

Boy

Once, while I was going to school in the morning, I met a school girl to whom I was introduced by my sister and we went to school together.

It did not come to my mind that accompanying a girl would incur the displeasure of my mother who was watching me from the window. As I came back home I was questioned by my mother about that girl. I replied: "She is my sister's friend." My mother said: "Your sister's friend!!! How dare you talk with her?" I answered: "What is wrong with it?" Then my mother got furious and shouted: "You!! impudent!!"

My mother became angry with me and my father intervened and both of them decided not to talk with me if I ever do it again. I tried and tried to convince them that there is no harm in walking with a girl but failed.

My failure, in this respect, was due to their fanatic and prejudiced approach to the whole question of the mingling of the sexes.

They went on saying that God forbids disobedience to parents. I was obliged to submit and I felt that they aimed at insulting me but when I thought the question over I excused my parents for they grew up in a completely different time.

That incident made me not to accompany any girl-friend to school unless I am out of sight of my parents.

N.B.:In addition to the fanatic attitude of the parents, this adolescent gives another reason for conflict with his parents, namely: that parents do not have nationalistic feelings.

Age: 16

Boy

Most conflicts between my parents and me are due to the fact that my father is old Ottoman minded. That is why he contradicts me in everything. For example, he does not approve of the idea of political parties, hates all party creeds and claims that "The Quran is our constitution and it is the only one." Thus he opposes the idea of students interference in political affairs. When I told him that we were striking against the French Company, his answer was: "There are political leaders who take care of such national problems."

He believes that students are not mature enough to understand the big problems of the country. His advice to me is to read the Quran carefully and to pray.

My parents must come to realize that it is imperative for the individual in our society to have a national aim towards which he strives. Therefore I have to be a party member no matter what the consequences are.

I am not embittered against my parents, I find the excuse for them. They did not have enough education to enable them to understand my view point concerning the concept of nationality and the responsible party activity. In their days under both the Ottomans and the French such a spirit did not prevail.

Age 16.5

Boy

Once I went to the cinema with some of my friends. When I returned home in the evening my "respected" father asked me where I had been. I replied that I had been in the movies.

My father exclaimed and said: "The movies!!!" - as though I had been in a bar or a cabaret. Soon, my father slapped me, kicked me, gave me some strong blows all over me and ordered me to go away from him. I felt a shudder all through my body and fainted... Since that day I feel a repulsion for him... How much I wish to desert my home and live by myself away from my parents and siblings and not see the devilish face of my father.

Tell me please; is there any father who beats his 17 years old son? I don't think so, but my "respected" father does.

After I had passed the first period of life - childhood - and reached the age of 16, I began to sense many experiences and feelings which others did not appreciate in me. I felt that I had an individuality of my own and began to have feelings of inferiority whenever I was insulted. But my "respected" father did not realize, and certainly will not, that his son is no more a small child but a young man.

N.B.: This adolescent complains also of being discriminated against by his father who prefers his other sons to him.

Age : 17

Boy

There are many causes for conflict between my parents and me:

1. If I want to converse with our visitors at home my father prevents me. Oh, how much I feel ashamed in the presence of these visitors. This makes me shun my father and not talk to him until my mother reconciles us after a period of time.

2. Once I desired to buy a piece of cloth for a suit. I asked my father to buy it for me but he refused. I insisted, but in vain ... then I made up my mind to run away. I packed up but my mother did not allow me, and gave me enough money to buy the cloth.

3. But the main differences center around some traditional beliefs and religious superstitions to which my parents hold. My mother for instance, believes that it is forbidden to wash clothes on Fridays or that it is forbidden to cut off the nails in the evening or on certain days of the week.

This adolescent tells about his feelings in respect to these conflicting situations. He writes: "I am tired of this life with my parents, because my beliefs contradict theirs. I ask God for success in this academic year in order to live alone and by myself away from them. I am tired of the punishments they inflict upon me for the least fault. I am tired of their preventing me from being outside after sun-set, of their preventing me from going to movies or from accompanying them to an evening gathering or to a party."

Age : 17

Boy

One summer evening, while I was reading a literary book in the balcony, my father came and shouted at me saying: "You, impolite! are not you ashamed? How dare you fight the nephew of your step-mother?" I replied: "But, my father I do not know anything about it." My father then said: "And you dare tell me that I am lying?" I said "No, but did you see me fight him or curse him?"

My step-mother came at that time and said while weeping: "Yes, you fought my nephew and cursed him." Anyhow my father went and came back with a bamboo cane. He struck me on the eye, and continued to beat me severely. I said to myself: "All right, he is my father and I must bear him and be patient." The cane broke and my step mother said to my father: "You see, he is a donkey, he does not care. The cane is broken and he does not cry. If you were really a man you would shoot him with the pistol." My father got more and more furious, he went to the bedroom to bring the pistol and I fled from the house with my pyjama on and without wearing my shoes. I wandered a long time until one o'clock in the morning. I sat down to sleep in the street but the night watchman prevented me because it is against the law. I got out of the town in the direction of my mother's village... I arrived there and met my mother and my uncle.

And now I am in Aleppo, where my father still lives, in a hired room for myself, and my uncle and grand brother



support me with everything.

N.B.: This adolescent swears that he did not know anything about the incident.

His mother was deserted and he had not known her before this time.

Age : 19

Boy

The incident I am going to relate happened last summer.

It was a very hot day. I was fond of sports, especially of swimming and playing football. My parents used to prevent me from going to school in order not to play football and they always threatened me with punishment if I ever went to the swimming pool. On that day I wanted to go to the school to play; I did go and I played and after that I went to the swimming pool. My brother knew all about it and told my father.

As soon as I arrived at home in the evening I was received with a torrent of questions and curses. My father began to beat me with his hands... and said: "Did I ever go swimming or did I ever go to the movies when I was of your age."

I do not know what happened after that, but I remember that I had made up my mind either to commit suicide or to leave home. I chose the first solution and took a heavy dose of Aspirine. I fainted and did not know what came after. When I opened my eyes I found myself in the hospital and the doctor was standing beside me. This incident had a deep effect upon my life; I realized that I must live as a man.

N.B.: This student gives the following further causes of conflicts:

1. Ignorance of parents about the right kind of education.
2. Too much restriction on the child's freedom regardless of age. Parents consider their children as unreasoning creatures.
3. Preventing the child from joining literary & athletic clubs.
4. Over protection of the mother.

Age : 19

Boy

One winter night last year, while it was snowing I asked my father to explain to me the process of snowing. My father's answer was that: "There is an angel sitting on the top of a high mountain, holding a rope in his hand. And as he pulls the rope snow falls down."

I could not but laugh at such an explanation. My father began to scold me because I did not seem to believe in his explanation which he heard from a dignified religious man. Then I went to explain the process of snowing scientifically. His response was: "You!! heathen!! I will not send you to school any more because it corrupts you. You were much better before entering school."

From that day on, I never discussed anything with him.

Such an ignorant, religious attitude of parents towards the explanation of natural phenomena left me in a situation of doubt.

This student considers the causes of conflict as:

1. Ignorance of parents and their insulation from modern current intellectual stream and civilization.
2. Parents believe that modern sciences contradict religion hence an educated person is a heretic.
3. Parents do not tolerate the mingling of the sexes; even they do not allow boys and girls to go together for a walk, for instance.

Age : 19

Boy

"If I ever want to have my hair cut, it will be according to my parents' liking ... If I want to buy shoes or a suit, the same thing happens. My father obliges me to read the books that please him though they do not appeal to me. In almost all cases I used to submit to my parents' will and then everything was settled, but if I did not submit the street would become my home... I wish I were able to support myself so that I would desert my family without feeling any sorrow or pain... I began to consider my parents as any two ordinary persons; they lack the quality of being father and mother."

N.B.: This adolescent gives the following general causes of conflict as:

1. "Unjust dictatorship of my father.
2. My father kills my growing self by his sarcastic way of talking with me in the presence of my younger siblings... as if I am nothing and of no worth at all. Even my younger siblings dare attack me in an unpleasant and very disturbing manner.
3. My father does not treat me and my siblings on a basis of equality. I suffer greatly when he treats my younger brother with much love, affection and fondling which is just the opposite of the way in which he treats me."

Age : 13

Girl

How much painful and gloomy was that month during which a man came to my father asking me for marriage. My father accepted but my mother did not. My mother kept saying: "I will not allow my daughter to get married and to leave school until she wants to." I was not willing to leave the school and to be away from my friends with whom I lived for a long time. All that time I was crying and suffering and my mother sided with me and insisted not to let this marriage take place.

After this incident was over, I became all right and very happy and became more and more attached to my mother.

Every time I hear about that incident I remember what a terrible mistake my father was about to make; a mistake which might have destroyed my life and happiness.

Age : 15

Girl

The conflicts between me and my mother center around:

1. Asking money for school requirements. When I ask my mother for money she replies that she does not have it and insists upon me to tell the teacher that I cannot pay. But this makes me feel ashamed among my class-mates. I do not agree and insist upon having the money. This leads my mother to threaten me not to allow me to go to the school any longer.
2. Going to cinemas. I hear my class-mates speak about nice films and pictures. I desire to go there too and when I ask my mother for permission she refuses arbitrarily and we get into a conflict.
3. Taking off the veil. My mother insists upon me to keep my veil on even in the classroom, but my class-mates would ridicule and make fun of me in such a case. Taking off the veil in the class room makes my mother still more furious and she threatens me with discontinuing my schooling.
4. About household work and management.

Thus the causes of conflict according to her are: poverty in the first place and general ignorance among the members of the family and the abuse of religious authority.

Agc : ?

Girl

I have a problem and I think it is a serious one.

I am the oldest of all my siblings and for a long time I believed that my mother loved me very much but many incidents proved to me the opposite. I do not know why she persecutes me so much, that I thought that she is not my mother. I would like to think that God created her with no affection. But I sense the different kind of relationship she has with my brother who is younger than me. She adores him and admires him very much and gives him whatever she can. Even my sisters are better treated than I am. If any of my sisters ever makes a mistake I am blamed for it. Even my father who loves me is being influenced by my mother... She prevents me from getting out even with my brother. Even when I talk with my father and he addresses me in an affectionate way my mother gets furious and explodes on my father... One day my father told me that: "I feel you are not happy and you are discriminated against, but I can do nothing." This is because my mother provides him with money.

There are many incidents, I wish to relate, if I have the time, in order to feel released... Oh, how much I would like her to treat me with a little bit of affection and love.

One day I was walking with my mother. I asked her to pass through the main street in order to meet some of my friends. She began to curse me and she addressed me with the worst and filthiest words which a vulgar person dares not say... the second

day I told my father about it but he was more furious and began to beat me. Oh, how much I am persecuted, and how much I wish my life to be more peaceful.

N.B. : This girl thought of committing suicide.



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