Bringing Up the Dead:

Revisiting the Study of Suicide in Light of the Youth Problem

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Abstract

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The study of suicide developed in the nineteenth century with the aim of understanding the phenomenon of suicide. Recently, however, the goal of understanding suicide has largely been abandoned and replaced with approaches concerned with suicide prevention. The emergence of youth suicide within the past few decades demands a return to the project of understanding suicide to make sense of this contemporary change. Research on suicide reveals a division between psychological and sociological approaches, and only a few works have sought to theoretically link them. Prompted by the lack of reconciliation of psychology and sociology, this investigation aims to bridge the gap between these disciplines. This is accomplished through a survey of literature illuminating various perspectives on suicide and a reflection on two approaches to the study of youth suicide that empirically link the individual and collective dimensions of study. The exploration of the convergence between these approaches provides insight into problems pertaining to youths' identity development and into features of contemporary reality.

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None of this would be possible were it not for life and those who contribute to the shaping of my impressions of it.

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S'il y a un péché contre la vie, ce n'est peut-être pas tant d'en désespérer que d'espérer une autre vie, et se dérober à l'implacable grandeur de celle-ci.

Albert Camus

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Introduction

Early philosophical debates revolved around suicide's legitimacy under particular conditions, but there was no study of the phenomenon as such. Eventually, the debate about suicide ended as Christianity introduced a fierce condemnation of the act, viewing it as "self-murder". In the nineteenth century, the study of suicide, different from Christian morality in its attempt to understand suicide, does not renew the philosophical debate, for it is now broached as a problem.

Throughout the nineteenth century, as a result of increases in the rates of reported suicides in Europe, a number of thinkers committed themselves to an investigation of the probable causes of this drastic change in an attempt to explain this phenomenon. Approaches to this investigation have generally been divided among the disciplines of psychology and sociology. This division still occurs today. At one pole, interpretations focus on the conscious or unconscious mechanisms that drive individuals to act in certain ways. At the other end, interpretations stress the social determinants or contexts of individual behaviour. To date, little work has been done to bridge this gap.

The literature on suicide reveals an abundance of works devoted entirely to suicide prevention. A number of these efforts fall under the banner of "suicidology", a discipline that originates from the psychologist Edwin Shneidman, the founder of the *American Association of Suicide Prevention*. Taking an epidemiological approach, treating suicide as a form of individual pathology, these researchers focus chiefly on drawing out risk factors from individual case data and intervening at the individual level in the hopes of reducing the psychological pain of "at risk people". However, as their

theoretical focus is the practice of intervention, they tend to underestimate the significance of suicide's social personality and instead seek ways of logically linking certain factors with the act according to a number of common characteristics. Their approach occludes the contingency of the subjective meanings individuals ascribe to their actions and the contexts of particular forms of suicide. I believe that in their emphasis on tertiary prevention and public education, they overlook the significance of understanding how interactions between individuals and societies cultivate parallel forms of suicide.

The emergence of youth suicide, in our age and time demands and renders possible a reconciliation of the psychological and sociological approaches. The novelty of this phenomenon suggests a peculiarity of the conditions under which it appears. Youth suicide reveals something significant about contemporary society. A radical transformation has taken place that has affected the previously intrinsic protection of youths against suicide.

Given this contemporary concern, my thesis proposes a rereading of over a century of scientific literature on suicide with the aim of linking perspectives that have historically developed as irreconcilable paradigms. My project comprises two dimensions: first, a survey of the literature illuminating, through their juxtaposition and my own commentary, the various perspectives dealing with suicide; second, an interpretation of these works shaped by my reflection on youth suicide. The first chapter is devoted to an exploration of the modern study of suicide, seeking to clarify and bring closer together the psychological and sociological dimensions of study. Carrying on with this endeavour to link these approaches, I present in the subsequent chapters an interpretation of two empirical works looking at the problem of youth suicide and explore

their convergence through a reflection of their revelations about the identity problems to which contemporary youths are especially vulnerable.

In order to provide insight into the polarization of the dominant approaches to the study of suicide, I begin with a review of the conditions leading to the emergence of suicide's scientific inspection. Modern investigations of suicide tend to be divided among the disciplines of psychology and sociology. The first approach is dominated primarily by psychoanalysts, who tend to proceed by inductive analysis of individual case data and rely on mechanisms of the brain in their explanations. In this field, two important figures stand out: Sigmund Freud and Karl Menninger. Practitioners of the second tend to employ a statistical approach to suicide whereby they draw conclusions about social causes of conditions under which suicide appears according to its objective traits. This approach was headed primarily by Emile Durkheim, who emphasized the social and historical context from which particular types of suicide emerge. The polarization of this field influenced two figures who put forth syntheses of these works and illuminate the possibility of theoretically linking the social and individual dimensions: Anthony Giddens and Olivier Clain. From these efforts to theoretically bridge the gap between psychology and sociology, I turn to two works devoted to an interpretation of youth suicide and that attempt to link these disciplines empirically.

The developmental psychologist Michael J. Chandler interpreted youth suicide according to youths' problems developing a sense of continuity, which means remaining the same person throughout time. He insists that those who lack commitment to their futures would be more willing to abandon their existential projects. He approaches the problem of linking the individual and collective dimensions by viewing them

analogically, contending that both individuals and collectives alike require some means of linking their past, present, and future. From this perspective, he empirically tested the relation between youth suicide and the problems individuals and societies face in achieving a sense of continuity. Relying on the works of Erik Erikson and James Marcia, who address issue of identity development, I present an interpretation of Chandler's research that lends itself to its bond with a sociological approach to the problem of youth suicide.

Similar to Chandler in his ambition to bridge the individual and collective dimensions in a synthetic approach, the sociologist Daniel Dagenais pursued an investigation of the relation between the existential projects of youths who have taken their lives and the familial contexts within which these projects were formed. Dagenais' work emphasizes the significance of the modern family in its assurance of youths' symbolic continuity. He contends that the emergence of youth suicide reveals the anthropological and sociological role the family played with regard to their socialization and preparation for the adult world. In my aim to interpretively link sociology and psychology through the problem of youth suicide, I turn to a discussion of the possibility of reconciling the works of Chandler and Dagenais.

Chapter One: A Review of Modern Suicide

The study of suicide's objective characteristics has generally been divided between two distinct ideological approaches, a division that has largely been retained in this field of study. At one pole, the research has its foundations in medicine, where suicide is ultimately treated as a pathological escape from consciousness, driven by a desire to eliminate all mental conflict in order to achieve a state of inertness. Suicide research in this field tended to proceed by way of description and analysis of individual case data. The second school developed from "moral statistics", where through an employment of statistical data describing social trends, its practitioners emphasized the social forces at the root of individual action. To date, little effort has been made to reconcile the differential perspectives put forward by the practitioners of both approaches. This is likely the consequence of academics' continued emphasis on a singular dimension of social life. Works like those of Anthony Giddens and Olivier Clain theoretically link these dimensions; however, much of the current research has generally retained the metaphysical and epistemological foundations that distinguished these polarized approaches at their initial conception. Their methodological approaches occlude all that lies outside their scope. As a result, each implicitly contends that the actual causes lie within the grasp of their own approach and subsequent dimension of study.

The possibility of explaining youth suicide demands a reconciliation of the individual and collective dimensions in a synthetic approach. If one accepts suicide's

normalcy, or Durkheim's contention about parallel types of suicide and societies, then the very existence of youth suicide is a question of sociality. Understanding youth suicide demands a review of older theories of suicide to gain insight into our current understanding of this phenomenon. Hence, I begin with a review of the study of modern suicide, which follows the particular landmarks that shape my view and interpretation of these works.

Psychological approaches to the study of suicide generally focus on analyses of individual case data. These examine specific variables that depict an individual's history up to and including the events preceding the suicide. The data is either obtained from coroner's reports, interviews with close friends and family members, and records of the victim's clinical sessions, when applicable. The examination of post-suicide brain dissections was also recently added to this list. From these case histories, people's "motivations" are interpreted. This approach is primarily practiced by psychoanalysts, who attribute unconscious and instinctual drives and resultant affective states as the primary causes of overt individual behaviour. Their explanations tend to rely on interpretations of animal behaviour, as the basis of man's primal nature. They tend not to focus on the influence of social organization on the subject's behaviour, though most make implicit reference to the modification of internal states by external factors. In psychoanalysis, suicide is generally seen as a form of individual pathology that runs counter to an optimal state.

On the other end of the spectrum, the sociological approach uses statistical data to describe the intersections between fluctuations in the rates of suicide and other social phenomena. From this approach, researchers tend to provide accounts of the social

conditions that appear concurrently with changes in the suicide rate. This approach does not directly deal with the subject's inner workings. Thus, for those whose metaphysical stance comprises a social determinism, asserting the objectivity and externality of social norms that pre-exist the subject, explanations of individual behaviour rest on interpretations of their responses to particular social conditions which are considered to be the primary cause. The majority of researchers in this field attribute the appearance of social problems to the moral state of a society.

The study of suicide appeared recently, dating from about the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. The conditions of its emergence continue to shape our comprehension of this phenomenon. Thus, before proceeding with a review of the dominant approaches to suicide, it is important to consider the context from which the study of suicide emerged as it elucidates its problematization.

A Brief History of Suicide's Study

Investigations of suicide in the western world began with medieval Christian prohibitions against the act. Under this doctrine, an individual life holds a sacred status. St. Augustine put forth the notion that self-inflicted death should carry the same penalties as murder. In 452, the Church officially pronounced suicide to be an act inspired by the Devil. In Nietzsche's view, Christianity ennobled particular forms of self-sacrifice while condemning others. As a result, two predominant forms of suicide endured: asceticism and martyrdom. Aside from these exceptions, the premature or unnatural termination of

human life was considered sin, and the body was considered sacred. In an article entitled the "Linguistics of Suicide", David Daube suggests that the normative moral position disparaging suicide under the influence of the Church is reflected in the language used in reference to the act, which was universally compound and negative. He notes that harsh expressions such as "self-murder," "self-assassination," and "self-killing" were used (between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries) which reflect the normative condemnatory stance toward suicide throughout the western world (Daube 414).

Toward the end of the Renaissance, questions arose surrounding the legitimacy of suicide's prohibition. The Church encountered opposition as new romantic notions of voluntary death sprang forth alongside new ideological positions emphasizing individual liberty. A number of Shakespearean texts, including *Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Julius Caesar* and *Othello,* depict these emerging attitudes. For example, Hamlet, in his famous monologue, asks why a man should be forced to endure a life of suffering in the name of virtue:

> To be, or not to be: that is the question:
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep –
> No more – and by a sleep to say we end
> The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
> That flesh is heir to! [...]
> (Shakespeare 93-94).

In 1608, the English poet John Donne wrote a treatise entitled *Biathanatos* which was devoted entirely to the justification of suicide on certain rare occasions (Daube 418-419). As the moral legislative power shifted toward secular and individually supported

institutions (like the police), the Church's common expressions designating suicide were replaced with more definite terms that could be employed within the legal institution. The term "self-homicide," fathered by Donne, facilitated the distinction between criminal and justifiable forms of homicide, and was preferred to such accusing references as "murder," "destruction," or "slaughter" (Daube 419-420).

The term "suicide" first appeared as the hyphenated "sui-cide" in Walter Charlton's satirical reproduction of the *Ephesian Matron*, written in either 1651 or 1652. Charlton was evidently influenced by Donne's essay. The term was dormant for close to sixty years until it was adopted into in the French language by Jesuit Abbé François Guyot Desfontaines. His association with Voltaire led to Voltaire's appropriation of the term in an essay written in 1739 entitled *Suicide ou homicide de soi-même* (Daube 427). The term "suicide" developed out of the need for a more humanistic and neutral designation. Its appearance reflects the erosion of the concept's religious foundation in favour of one more appropriate for legal and scientific discourse. The problematization of suicide, which was inherited from the Church, rested on the consideration of acts of self-inflicted death as a "crime" or as a serious problem. From its problematization arose the apparent necessity of understanding what challenged this moral standard. In other words, if the sociology of suicide did indeed part with the moral positions of the Church and society of that time, it did so without returning to the neutral moral stance of the Ancients.

These new attitudes toward suicide elicited a powerful response from religious, moral and legal authorities. Great efforts were made by these authorities to repress awakening concerns highlighting individual liberty as well as efforts appearing to justify

suicide. According to Georges Minois and Lydia G. Cochrane (1999), concern over the anxieties generated by the ideological confusion prompted a short-lived return to classical dogmatism so that a climate of intellectual stability could be maintained. They suggest that the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reform can be seen as the Church's attempt to reclaim culture and assuage people's uneasiness toward the growing proliferation of science and reason (Minois and Cochrane 116-117).

In England, the debate on suicide was renewed around 1680 as the suicides of several notorious figures[1] appeared alongside a rise in the numbers of reported cases of self-inflicted death. The English felt they were being hit by a wave of suicides. In 1733, the physician George Cheyne, published *The English Malady: a Treatise of Nervous Diseases of all Kinds*, which investigated why the English killed themselves in greater numbers than people of other nations (Minois and Cochrane 181). Cheyne's text epitomized the transformation taking place in the Enlightenment, when theories of "demonic possession" were replaced with scientific discourses that targeted madness and psychology as the principle cause of suicide. For Cheyne, suicide is the result of weakness, madness, perversion, and cowardice, as well as a product of a particular social-temporal climate. He attributed the increase in reported suicides to the climate and decline of religion. Despite the similarity of his condemnatory stance toward suicide with that of the Church, Cheyne's work was significant for its consideration of social and material causes, rather than moral or metaphysical ones.

[1]Arthur Capel, Earl of Essex (1683); John Child, Baptist preacher (1684); Robert Long, one of the Duke of Monmouth's lieutenants (1685); John Temple, secretary of war and son of William Temple (1689); Thomas Creech, Oxford scholar (1700); etc. (Minois and Cochrane p.180-181).

Suicide was viewed as a sickness. It was no longer a question of purity; individuals were afflicted. The expansion of this individual affliction was viewed as a social malady, not in terms of moral states, but in terms of widespread mental illness. Cheyne's attempt to explain the increased rates within a particular geography foreshadowed the moral statistical approach to suicide that arose almost a century later, which focused on moral and social causes, rather than on individual sickness. In Minois and Cochrane's view, his text significantly contributed to the solidification of the moral-legal stance toward suicide and arguably pacified debates on individual liberty in the western world since the nineteenth century (Minois and Cochrane 321). Schopenhauer's reaction to this stance illustrates rather well the dominant view of suicide at his time:

> As far as I know, none but the votaries of monotheistic, that is to say, Jewish religions, look upon suicide as a crime. This is all the more striking, inasmuch as neither in the Old or in the New Testament is there to be found any prohibition or positive disapproval of it; so that religious teachers are forced to base their condemnation of suicide on philosophical grounds of their own invention. These are so very bad that writers of this kind of endeavour to make up for the weakness of their arguments by the strong terms in which they express their abhorrence of the practice; in other words, they declaim against it. They tell us that suicide is the greatest piece of cowardice; that only a madman could be guilty of it, and other insipidities of the same kind; or else they make the nonsensical remark that suicide is wrong, when it is quite obvious that there is nothing in the world to which every man has a more unassailable title than to his own life and person.
> (Schopenhauer)

Beginning around the 1830s, there developed a discipline of "moral statistics" that committed itself to the investigation of suicide, making the beginning of attempts to understand suicide rather than justify its condemnation. Its practitioners recorded human action and measured the rates of physical and social variations to gain insight into the

dynamics of social life in which individual action is embedded. Relatively stable and repeating patterns of individual acts revealed to the moral statisticians that action is not purely driven by individual passions alone. They discovered that individual action is also attributable to extra-individual forces. The majority of the moral statisticians denied the reality of independent human action and argued that the same laws existed for the moral and physical world. The concept of sickness was applied to societies affected by the ills of amorality. Their thesis resembled that of medicine in that both treated suicide as something that "affects" individuals and societies. For example, in *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization* (1881), Thomas Masaryk contended that modern society was in a state of "moral crisis" and that civilization was collapsing as a result of the dissolution of the unified worldview previously provided by the Catholic Church (Masaryk, 169).

Statistical reports presented in Durkheim's thesis *Le suicide* (1897) indicate that between the 1830s and 1890s, the rates of suicide increased by about five hundred percent. Around this time, there was a shift from condemnatory theories of suicide to ones seeking a social-evolutionary understanding of this phenomenon. The competing metaphysical stances toward individual action taken by psychologists, physicians, and sociologists, previously explained suicide in terms of pathology. This view dominated the field until Durkheim introduced a different view of pathology. Rather than viewing it as an anomaly compared to a universally constant average, Durkheim saw it as a singularity arising from a given societal type at a particular stage of evolution (Turner, Beeghley and Powers 343). For him, societies exhibited symptoms of pathology when rates of deviance exceeded what was typical of a particular societal type. Thus, suicide for Durkheim is a normal social phenomenon. He conceived of it as a social fact. He

contended that every society normally exhibits an aggregate tendency to suicide. For Durkheim, individuals are born into pre-existing social structures of values, beliefs and norms, and simultaneously create or reproduce these external structures. He considered individual passion secondary to the foundational socializing structures.

In the meantime, the medical field continued to view suicide as a symptom of disease or a form of insanity. According to Minois and Cochrane, the French psychiatrist Jean-Étienne Esquirol, in his text *Des maladies mentales* (1838), claimed suicide is a symptom of mental alienation and that suicides are the delirious and involuntary actions of insane persons. Minois and Cochrane also noted that Claude Bourdin's *Du suicide considéré comme maladie* (1845) presented suicide as an actual disease, "suicidal monomania", for which the host or victim should not be held accountable. Similarly, Sigmund Freud developed a theory of the internal organization and operation of the human mind that served as the foundation for the psychoanalytic theory of suicide developed by Karl Menninger in *Man Against Himself* (1956). In their view, past experiences are incorporated within the personality structure and these unconsciously surface in behaviour. They submit that man is required to constantly negotiate conflicting primitive, instinctual desires representing life and death. Menninger's theory maintains that suicide is motivated by interactions between these impulses.

* * *

In sum, modern approaches to suicide have generally taken one of two paths: (1) the social statisticians treated suicide as a social fact, linked with more or less persistent social conditions; (2) psychoanalysts viewed suicide in terms of primitive unconscious

impulses classified under particular personality structures. The former gives a sense of the shape of suicide as well as its tendencies as a collective phenomenon; and the latter permits the generalization of universal traits according to the common characteristics of individual cases.

Recognizing the necessity of merging these opposing approaches to the study of suicide, two authors stand out in the significance of their theoretical syntheses: Anthony Giddens and Olivier Clain. Their consideration is of great importance, along with these other influential works, because they aided in the definition of possible overlapping sections between the various approaches and elucidate the ways in which individuals and societies interact to generate particular outcomes.

Suicide as a Normal Collective Phenomenon

The moral statisticians tended to negatively view the trends they causally linked with suicide. Thomas Masaryk, for example, claimed that suicide was primarily associated with the spread of amorality in the wake of religion's decline, and was thus a crisis of civilization. Durkheim's work differed in his treatment of suicide as a normal social phenomenon that varies from one society to the next. This author saw a parallel evolution of suicide types and societal types, whereby the constraints of social norms contribute to the population's suicide rate.

Durkheim's ultimate goal was to describe the individual passions driving people to take their lives. If sufficient data was available, he explains that he would have proceeded with a description of individual cases. Instead, he used a statistical approach.

With this data, he described types of suicide according to particular moral and social states. He argued that the characteristics of individual cases would form classes corresponding to these social types. Then, drawing from literary examples, and his own experience, he deduced individual forms from his typology of suicides.

Durkheim's book is not only devoted to the study of suicide, but it is also a summary of the discussions on suicide of his time. Many authors sought an account of suicide's extra-social factors and social causes, yet none compare to Durkheim in his discussion of the various interpretations. The object of his work was to *understand* suicide. The fact that his reflection led to his consideration of a typology of suicides demonstrates his reconciliation of its theoretical character, as his typology reflects the sociality of suicide. It also demonstrates its historical character, given his consideration of the parallel transformations between forms of suicides and forms of societies. In addition, it is worth emphasizing that Durkheim relied on a moral statistical approach by default, a fact that has been overlooked by a century of commentaries on this seminal work.

According to Tuner et al., Durkheim's work was the "first systematic effort to apply correlational and contingency techniques to causal explanations in a coherent sociological theory of suicide" (Turner, Beeghley and Powers 345). In addition to seeking an intellectual justification for his sociological approach, his work was intended to persuade an individual-centered academic community to consider the influence of social organization on individual action. He justifies the adoption of his default on the basis that individual cases, while necessary for explaining the subjective component of

individual suicides, cannot explain its patterning and thus overlooks that which shapes action.

Durkheim begins by defining his object of study: "'Suicide' is the term applied to any case of voluntary death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act, carried out by the victim himself, which he was aware would produce the result" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 19). This detailed definition generates a number of important propositions:

- The word "act" refers to completed acts, as opposed to behaviours or thoughts, and thus excludes suicide attempts.
- "Positive or negative" acts include inaction as well as action.
- The phrase "Carried out by the victim himself" implies that the actor and the victim must be the same person.
- The qualifiers "Directly and indirectly" include acts where the intention is to die and where a single act or series of acts immediately results in death, as well as those where the actor's intention is less obvious, and whose behaviours result gradually in death.
- The phrase "Which he was aware would produce the result" refers to suicides where the actor is aware of his action and its consequence and is a willing participant.

Durkheim proceeds to disprove the extra-social factors most commonly attributed to fluctuations in the suicide rates at that time[2]. Like moral statisticians, he argues that the drastic changes they observed were not the result of random fluctuation; instead, they followed a certain pattern. They suggest that the stability of a society's suicide rate is an indication that each society has its own aggregate tendency to commit suicide. He claims

[2]Suicide as the result of cosmic or environmental factors; organic psychological factors; genetic factors and imitation.

that if individual or extra-social factors are involved, they are secondary to the social environment, because it shapes these trends. Durkheim's thesis treats suicide as a collective phenomenon, shaped primarily by social forces.

For Durkheim, the drastic increase in suicide coincided with the dissolution of the traditional institutions which, he argues, integrated pre-modern subjects in communal life and morally regulated their passions. Durkheim witnessed, with increased industrialization, the development of a complex division of labour, which for him resembled the functioning of complex biological organisms. He insisted that this mode of achieving social solidarity – where people differed in their individual functions but worked toward a common goal – would eventually replace the traditional mechanical mode that united individuals through the homogeneity of values, customs, and beliefs in their community. In his view, modern societies would achieve cohesion and solidarity through harmonious and functional relationships between specialized individuals, mediated by institutions within the social body, in the pursuit of collectively meaningful goals. He considered the individualism that emerged as the traditional forms of solidarity began to dissolve a reflection of modern society's orientation toward an organic solidarity.

However, Durkheim supposes that the unity of the system would be threatened if individuals' ties to these collective projects weakened and they abandoned their roles as integral components of the social organism. He insinuates that unless unity was achieved, modern individualism represented a threat to social cohesion. In his view, man gradually developed particular social needs which superimposed biological or physical needs. These had reached a degree of equilibrium in traditional societies. He claims that

the transformations brought about by increased industrialization led to the dissolution of the traditional institutions that maintained more homogeneous forms of solidarity. As a result of this transition, societies incapable of adapting to the new forms of solidarity could not maintain cohesion and subsequently observed a weakening of social ties and a moral impoverishment.

Unlike moral statisticians and the contemporary Durkheimians, Durkheim does not simply present factors that positively contribute to suicide; he provides a theoretical model describing the relationship between particular social states and their corresponding forms of suicide. He does not negatively perceive the modern societal transformations, as these other authors do; he emphasizes that society's transition from a particularly stable state resulted in a loss of its institutional protection against suicide.

Using rudimentary statistical comparisons to demonstrate the contribution of the decline in moral controls to the suicide rate, Durkheim developed a typology of suicide divided along two axes: individualism-collectivism (modern-premodern) and integration-regulation. On one end, egoistic suicide and altruistic suicide represent the extremes of attachment to social groups and their goals; on the other, anomic suicide and fatalistic suicide represent the extremes of regulation, or the limitation of individual aspirations and needs.

For Durkheim, these aspects of group membership are critical to the typology's unity. He argues that interpersonal ties bind individuals to collective norms, values, and meanings, and that the sense of collective purpose helps maintain these ties and contributes to the feeling of being part of a greater whole. He suggests that those whose

values no longer conform to those of the community are often overly preoccupied with themselves, and suffered as a result of their isolation. He also maintains that desire, when it does not conform to their circumstances, is also a source of suffering, and that those whose goals constantly recede as they are approached are perpetually miserable. The following is a brief review of his typology.

Egoistic Suicide. Durkheim advocated that religious, domestic, and political communities are critical to the solidarity of traditional systems. He compared the suicide rates of particular societies through variables like religious denomination, family size, and political stability. He found that communities displaying stronger social ties among its members also tended to enjoy lower rates of suicide. In his view, communities whose values and goals are shared among the members appear to have had greater protection against suicide, as the density and homogeneity of social groups inversely varied with suicide. He concludes that "suicide rates vary inversely with the degree of integration of social groups to which the individual belongs" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 224). He reasons that the weakening of mechanical solidarity, or diversification of belief and opinion, threatens the integrity of modern societies and is an important cause of modern suicides. Durkheim designates this type of suicide "egoist" because of its relation to the collapse of traditional institutions, which are the bases of meaning and solidarity for the individual. Egoistic suicides are those associated with an excessive individualism where the individual ego asserts itself over the demands of the collective. As individuals' values and beliefs diverge from those of their community, they begin to take precedence.

> Plus les groupes auxquels il appartient sont affaiblis, moins il en dépend, plus, par suite, il ne relève que de lui-même pour ne reconnaître d'autres

> règles de conduite que celles qui sont fondées dans ses intérêts privés (Durkheim, *Le suicide* 223).

Durkheim posits that individuals acquire their values, beliefs and norms from society and argues that they have no meaning outside this context. In his view, weakened group solidarity leads to incongruence between individual values and collective aims. Durkheim explains that: "if man is with a group he loves, he is more adamant about living so as not to offend the values for which he normally sacrifices his own" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 226).

Durkheim suggests that the community provides a mutual support system; the individual draws upon its resources when facing difficulties. He asserts: "The bond that attaches them to a common purpose attaches them to life [...] Life is only tolerable if there appears to be some purpose in it, a goal that is worth pursuing" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 226). He explains that individuals can be self-sufficient and live happily without having any other object than their own living; they do not inherently need anything greater than themselves. However, modern individuals have ideas, feelings, and practices that have no relation to the demands of the social body. The more people are detached from collective activity, the more they are detached from that which gives their own activities meaning.

Durkheim posits that traditional institutions, like the family, religious, and political groups successfully contain and reinforce collective morality. He argues that the dissolution of these institutions contributed to the collapse of the communal system of value and meaning that bound individuals to meaningful collective pursuits. This left

individuals bereft of any continuous and meaningful frame of reference. Durkheim explains that without a strong objective foundation, life seems hollow and all of life's pursuits appear meaningless:

> Si [...] l'homme est double, c'est qu'à l'homme physique se surajoute l'homme social. Or ce dernier suppose nécessairement une société qu'il exprime et qu'il serve. Qu'elle vienne, au contraire, à se désagréger, que nous la sentions plus vivante et agissante autour et au-dessus de nous, et ce qu'il y a de social en nous se trouve dépourvu de tout fondement objectif. Ce n'est plus qu'une combinaison artificielle d'images illusoires, une fantasmagorie qu'un peu de réflexion suffit à faire évanouir ; rien, par conséquent, qui puisse servir de fin à nos actes[...] Voilà en quel sens il est vrai de dire qu'il faut à notre activité un objet qui la dépasse. Ce n'est pas nécessaire pour nous entretenir dans l'illusion d'une immortalité impossible ; c'est qu'il est impliqué dans notre constitution morale et qu'il ne peut se dérober, même en partie, sans que, dans la même mesure, elle perde ses raisons d'être (Durkheim, *Le suicide* 228).

Durkheim's psychological illustration of this type of suicide comes from Lamartine. It is characterized as a calm melancholy in which these individuals look at all social activity with indifference and aversion. They are characterized by self-absorption and an insensibility to their surroundings, a sentiment only reinforced by their isolation.

> En se détournant de ce qui l'entoure, la conscience se replie sur elle même, se prend elle-même comme son propre et unique objet et se donne pour principale tâche de s'observer et de s'analyser. Mais, par cette extrême concentration, elle ne fait que rendre plus profond le fossé qui la sépare du reste de l'univers.
> (Durkheim, *Le suicide* 314)

Durkheim's conception of the psychological component of egoistic suicide involves an imaginary amplification of the solitary condition of modern man. This amplification has real consequences: people's withdrawal from the world. He suggests that this emptiness

of the outside world was pulled within, leaving the subject to reflect only upon his deprivation. If one obsesses it is inevitable that he or she will be unable to escape from it.

> En faisant la vide autour [de notre conscience], elle a fait le vide en elle et il ne lui reste plus rien qu'à réfléchir que sa propre misère. Elle n'a plus pour objet de méditation que le néant qui est en elle et la tristesse qui en est la conséquence.
> (Durkheim, Le suicide 315)

For Durkheim, there is nothing violent or hurried about this form of suicide; these individuals' final moments are filled with a sweet melancholy, some making their decision cheerfully.

This author also described a second, epicurean variety of egoistic suicide, which is characterized by a cool indifference rather than sadness and melancholy. This form is meditative, the suicide of intellectuals. In Durkheim's view, these individuals savour their suicides, as they see it as a way of ending the pain caused by their indifference toward life.

Altruistic Suicide. On the other end of the continuum of individual integration, Durkheim conceives of altruistic suicide as the complete fusion of the individual with the collective. Altruistic suicide is the result of individuals being so attached to the group that they commit themselves to death for the common good. He considers this form of suicide to have been more prominent in pre-modern societies, in which strong group solidarity meant that the meanings of individuals' actions seldom deviated from collective values. People of these societies tended not to kill themselves because they assumed the right to do so; they felt a strong sense of duty or obligation to do so.

Durkheim draws upon a number of literary examples to illustrate this type. Bartholin, for example, told of Danish warriors who would have been ashamed to die of old age and sickness. For them, suicide was an escape from such stigma. The Spanish Celts "believed that paradise awaited those who took their lives and a frightful subterranean hell for those who died of illness or decrepitude" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 235). In addition to those stricken with old age, Durkheim speaks of women in India who killed themselves upon the death of their husbands, slaves upon the death of their masters and warriors upon the death of their chiefs. Refusal to participate in meaningful or ritualistic behaviour was usually regarded with dishonour. Punishment for defying such customs included ostracism, religious sanctions, and sometimes death (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 237).

Durkheim argues that for a society to have been capable of obliging some of its members to take their own lives, the individual must have been of little value: "For the parts to have so little value of their own, the whole must form a compact and integrated mass" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 238). He maintains that individuals in pre-modern societies depended on the group for a sense of purpose in their actions. They carried out their own deaths for the good of the group and assurance of the continuity of their cherished values, arguably the only ones they knew.

Durkheim distinguishes between three types of altruistic suicide: (1) obligatory altruistic suicide, (2) optional altruistic suicide, and (3) acute altruistic suicide. The first type refers to those who commit suicide as a duty, as they feel obliged to kill themselves under certain conditions. The second refers to those not explicitly required to kill themselves, but do so because circumstances and customs render death praiseworthy,

thereby encouraging it without requiring it. This type is exemplified by the Japanese practice of Seppuku, in which, Durkheim explains, certain individuals cut open their bellies as a test of dexterity, rather than turning their sword against their opponent. The third type, "acute suicide", includes the suicides of "fanatics", who take their lives for the joy of sacrifice, believing such an act to be praiseworthy. Examples include Christian martyrs, or ascetics such as Jains, Buddhists or the Brahmans of India. What these have in common is the hopeful belief in more beautiful prospects beyond this life, and the subordination of individual life to a particular value or group whose future has been secured by having died to uphold it. Durkheim asserts: "In all these cases we see the individual aspiring to cast off his personal being in order to be swallowed up by this other thing that he considers to be his true essence" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 243).

Durkheim characterizes the individual forms of altruistic suicide as an expression of energy that originates in violent emotions; it is an active suicide. With obligatory suicide, the majority of this energy is invested in reason and the will, generating a calm sense of duty. Optional altruistic suicide involves a similar investment in the will, but here the individual is subsumed by a calm courage. Finally, its more acute form is characterized by a "burst of faith and enthusiasm" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 313). This enthusiasm may be sad as well as happy. For Durkheim, a suicide of this sort is consummated in hopes of uniting with a loved divinity, or it is a sacrifice in hopes of appeasing a powerful, hostile force.

In brief, Durkheim attributes egoistic and altruistic suicides to either insufficient or excessive integration into the collective. In his view, egoistic suicide, which is typically modern, was influenced by the weakening of mechanical solidarity and the

growth of organic solidarity as a result of the division of labour and industrialism. He considers it to have been the consequence of the detachment of the individual from a shared system of meaning, which left the individual bereft of an objective reference. In Durkheim's view, egoistic suicide was the result of the significant void that was distended by the dissolution of institutions that traditionally maintained group cohesion. In its individual form, this type corresponds with the slow and meditative suicides characterized by a calm melancholy or intellectual apathy. Altruistic suicide occurs more commonly in pre-modern systems of mechanical solidarity in which the meanings of people's actions are normatively structured and relatively homogenous throughout the entire community. For Durkheim, altruists kill themselves because the community values such an act, and their own values count for little. The act is carried out with a greater investment of energy, as it is viewed positively by the collective. These actors are detached from any personal meaning and perform their duties wilfully, courageously, or with enthusiasm.

Anomic Suicide. The statistical data of which Durkheim availed himself revealed a peculiarity with regard to suicide which led to his characterization of a second typically modern form of suicide: anomic suicide. Not only did he observe a tendency of higher suicide rates following periods of economic recession, as one might expect, but suicides also seemed to increase following prosperous phases. Durkheim asserts that this paradox may be explained by viewing both as crises or upsets to the equilibrium between individuals' needs and their means of satisfying them. Following periods of crisis, he claims, individuals' means are radically altered and as a consequence may no longer be compatible with their needs. According to Durkheim, traditional institutions direct the

passions and structure individual action through an objective regulatory system. This author argues that, like its other modern counterpart, the progressive dissolution of traditional forms of solidarity lead to the deregulation of desire.

Durkheim's justification of this type of suicide rests on his distinction of desire in animals versus that of man. For him, an animal's desires are naturally limited as they are primarily material and determined by the physical environment. On the other hand, the needs of social man are not limited to the body. By the very fact that he is social, his desires are acquired in this manner and may consequently extend beyond the necessary minimum. Man is capable of imagining that which is beyond his reach. By Durkheim's account, unrestricted desire is impossible to satisfy and a perpetually renewed source of suffering. Durkheim adds that "No living thing can be happy or even live at all unless his needs are sufficiently well adjusted to his means" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 269). Hope may counter the frustration of desire, but only temporarily, as it cannot be sustained indefinitely through repeated disappointment.

Durkheim suggests there is nothing in man's psychological constitution that can provide the necessary limitations. He considers it is necessary for some external force, society or one of its institutions, to perform this function. In his view, society should impose limitations on man's expectations by arranging them in a hierarchy recognized as legitimate. Traditionally, divine forms of authority were held responsible for the allocation of fixed hierarchies of expectation, which were generally respected and collectively maintained. According to Durkheim, "The working man is not in harmony with his social position if he is not convinced that his position is the one that he deserves" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 274). When society is disturbed, he explains, either by crises of

fortune or misfortune, individuals are required to adjust the boundaries of their expectations The failure to do so leaves these individuals in a in a state of perpetual disappointment caused by their unrealizable goals.

According to the intensity and frequency of the crisis, Durkheim differentiates between chronic and acute forms of anomic suicide. In addition, his conception also comprises recessive and progressive modalities. He argues that industrial societies inherently promote a state of chronic anomie and free the passions from the possibility of a balanced relationship with the means of satisfying them. Industrial relations were undisciplined and industrial capitalism throve on the continuous projection of desire beyond the reach of man. Industrial success, which was only a means to an end, became an end in itself. Not only were traditional modes of desire-regulation losing their effectiveness, but industrial relations also encouraged unlimited and insatiable desire. The frustration that arose out of the perceived impossibility of satisfying one's needs was viewed as an endless source of torment. On this, Durkheim wrote:

> Du haut en bas de l'échelle, les convoitises sont soulevées sans qu'elles sachent où se poser définitivement. Rien ne saurait les calmer, puisque le but où elles tendent est infiniment au-delà de tout ce qu'elles peuvent atteindre. Le réel paraît sans valeur au prix de ce qu'entrevoient comme possible imaginations enfiévrées; on s'en détache donc, mais pour se détacher ensuite du possible quand, à son tour, il devient réel. On a soif de choses nouvelles, de jouissances ignorées, de sensations innommées, mais qui perdent toute leur saveur dès qu'elles sont connues. Dès lors, que le moindre revers survienne et l'on est sans forces pour le supporter.(Durkheim, *Le suicide* 285)

In addition to an economic anomie, Durkheim also observes statistical trends within conjugal and domestic relations that led to his characterization of another

dimension of anomic suicide. To explain the peculiarities in the figures, which revealed a connection between divorce and suicide, he devised a conjugal or domestic anomie. The figures suggest that for all regions, higher divorce rates correlate with higher rates of male suicide. He found that the suicide rate is lower among married men compared with single men, lower among the single men than the widowers, and lower among widowers than the divorced.

Attempting to understand the meaning of these findings, Durkheim began by emphasizing that the impact of divorce on suicide does not originate in its consequence, the solitude of the divorcee. If this were the case, the rates would have been higher among widows than divorcees and the influence of divorce on the suicide rate would have been the same for men and women, which was not the case. Observing that, on the one hand, in societies where the rate of divorce is extremely low the suicide rate among widows is lower than in other countries and, on the other hand, that societies in which the divorce rate is high observed higher suicide rates among the married, he concluded that divorce is simply a symptom of the fragility of the family institution. Durkheim's reasoning rests on his interpretation of the anti-anomic role domestic society plays. He posits that where the institution of marriage is most fragile, its regulatory function[3] is also weaker. The figures suggest that marriage plays a protective role for men. He argues that marriage protects males from suicide in its stabilization of their expectations.

The next necessary step for Durkheim was to understand why men, to a greater extent compared to women, require some form of limitation on their potentially anomic expectations. His explanation rests on women's need for freedom, arguing that in regions

[3]For Durkheim, one of marriage's primary functions was the regulation of sexual desire through the structuring of the conjugal relationship.

where the institution of marriage is most firm, marriage represents a burdensome constriction of their freedom. For men, who require constraint, marriage conferred to them a concretized familial role, which women obtained naturally. The explanation on which he relied – the necessity of men's sexual regulation - appeared some fifty years later in Simone de Beauvoir's work. The most important element of Durkheim's conception of anomie is the anti-anomic character of family sociability, which serves as an objective foundation for modern identity.

For Durkheim, the fragility of the marital institution contributes to a chronic state of anomie. Like economic anomie, this author also ascribes acute and chronic modalities to conjugal anomie. The acute form is manifested as a result of abrupt changes in micro-social relations to which adaptation is especially difficult. These abrupt changes were the result of the destabilization of expectations in industrial societies. Examples include widowhood or divorce, where the individuals involved had grown accustomed to sets of restrictions on their expectations prior to the dissolution of the marriage, and were unprepared for the new sets of restrictions thrust upon them.

Unlike egoistic suicides, anomic suicide is viewed as an act driven by passion. It is not performed with the faithful enthusiasm of altruistic suicide however; it is associated with "anger and everything that normally accompanies disappointment" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 314). For Durkheim, it is the result of the seemingly endless stream of frustrations, with no possibility of drainage or diffusion, from limitless expectations and insatiable desires. These eventually reach their limit when the individual has exhausted his means of coping and is incapable of enduring life's sufferings any longer. Anomie opens the way to fantasies and to their subsequent disappointment. Similar to the view

held by psychoanalysis, Durkheim sees it as a state of acute excitement where people find relief in destructive acts. If these individuals acknowledge themselves as the cause, their excitement finds relief in suicide. Alternatively, he explains that these frustrated individuals sometimes curse life in general, or directs their anger toward a particular person they holds responsible for "poisoning their life" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 314). In these cases, these individuals may take someone else's life along with their own.

The work of Brierre de Boismont, of which Durkheim availed himself, depicts another individual state Durkheim associates with the impossibility of meeting one's expectations (though more consistent with his conception of fatalism), which he describes as a "state of irritation and exasperated weariness":

> There are still others who, though they have no complaint against men or circumstances, of their own accord tire of a quest with no possible end, in which their desires are irritated rather than quenched. They turn against life in general for having deceived them.
> (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 316).

Durkheim explains that in this case, peoples' states of weariness and exhaustion inhibit the same kind of violent reaction as the previous case. An overall disgust with existence is more common with this form. A literary reference Durkheim finds most appropriate to illustrate this individual state is Chateaubriand's René, whose inconsistent tastes and limitless desire rendered impossible the task of enjoying the same illusion for long.

Fatalistic Suicide. Durkheim's characterization of anomie as the "impossibility of satisfying desire because it is infinite" led to his conception of a fourth type of suicide: fatalistic suicide. Appearing only in a footnote, the conception of this type was clearly an afterthought. After having completed his explanation of anomie, Durkheim realized the necessity of distinguishing between recessive and progressive anomie and putting them

on opposite ends of a continuum of desire-regulation. He conceives of this type as being the result of an excess of regulation: "the one committed by those whose future is pitilessly confined and whose passions are violently constrained by oppressive discipline. [...] It is a rule against which there is no appeal" (Durkheim, *On Suicide* 305). It is the result of a restriction on the possibility of future satisfaction. Desire is not satiated because it is limitless, as with anomie. For the fatalist, his most minimal desires are unmet because of some kind of obstruction. This type comprises those who consider futile any attempt at deriving any kind of satisfaction from life. The small pleasures of life are not enough.

Durkheim's examples of this type include men who married too young and married women without children[4]. Though he did not speak explicitly of its corresponding individual forms, one might infer that the dominant emotion would be a paralyzing feeling of hopelessness. Suicide would thus bring a sense of release or freedom from the oppressive constraints inhibiting satisfaction.

In sum, anomie and fatalism represent the poles of a desire-regulation continuum and attest to the necessity of equilibrium between reality and desire. For Durkheim, industrial societies failed to provide the necessary orientation of man's drives and subsequent actions, which was largely related to crises affecting the marital institution as well as the deregulation of economic relations. The family traditionally provided structured moral limits for individuals' passions, seeing that they receive consistent and reasonable rewards for their efforts. However, the crisis of the family as well as the expansion of industrial capitalism, which thrived on desire-projection, helped create a

[4]We might also add to this: the suicides of slaves, prisoners and those stricken with incurable illness.

chronic discrepancy between people's demands and their means of satiating them. Statistical data displaying relations between weakened matrimonial bonds and suicide among men supports Durkheim's claim that the family provided them with the necessary boundaries and served to protect them from suicide. Moreover, modern societal transformations also affected the stability of regulating systems, like the family, increasing the frequency of acute anomic crises as a result of dramatic changes in people's conditions.

The fatalistic type is not necessarily modern; it appeared in pre-industrial societies as well. Its causes include physical and social constraints. Durkheim explains that, as a result, these individuals receive too little satisfaction from their successes. Illustrations of this type include recessive economic crises in their acute form and the institution of marriage for women in its chronic form.

* * *

Durkheim's thesis is unmatched in its implications for the sociology of suicide. Previous theories of suicide, with roots in Christianity's prohibition of the act, considered it a form of pathology. Through Durkheim, suicide is understood as a social fact, a normal artefact of social life, which evolves throughout different social and historical contexts.

In Durkheim's view, traditional forms of solidarity maintained group cohesion through their provision of an objective reference through which the homogeneity of values, beliefs, and norms were established. The dissolution of traditional institutions, which occurred as society passed from one societal type into another, reveals these

institutions' significance in the structuring of interpersonal attachments, connecting all to a collective purpose, as well as the discipline of desire. Unlike the position held by his predecessors, who saw increases in suicide as evidence of the decline of civilization, Durkheim visualizes these increases in terms of individuals' adjustments to major shifts in social norms. From this position, he interprets the individual passions driving certain individuals to suicide, according to his typology of social causes.

Certain authors sought to extend Durkheim's work, clarifying concepts as well as employing improved statistical measures and contemporary data. Moving away from Durkheim's description of indicators and displaying key elements in an ideal-typical context, their works present the factors that directly influence or cause suicide. Durkheim's indicators, which he uses to provide an illustration of suicide in order to understand its meaning, are not interpreted by him as external factors that would have directly influenced suicide. For him, the phenomena observed in conjunction with suicide are all features of the same societal type. Hence, Durkheim's positivism should be referred to cautiously. His work reveals the protection inherent to a number of institutions that was not visible before. Conversely, the contemporary Durkheimians postulate a universal positive determination of suicide, positively correlating factors with increases in suicide, and claim a causal relation between suicide and the individualistic sentiments that characterize modern societies.

Modern Individualism as a Moral Disease

The validity of Durkheim's analyses was heavily scrutinized by his successors. The majority abandoned his typology and retained only certain elements of his theory. Having abandoned Durkheim's view of suicide as a social fact with forms corresponding to particular social phases, these authors present factors they correlated positively with suicide, which they interpret in terms of society's moral impoverishment. These authors' primary interest is the relation between social isolation and suicide. Their works strive to deepen Durkheim's reflection by incorporating elements of psychological theory.

Maurice Halbwachs, the author of *Les causes du suicide* (1930) and one of the most important second-generation Durkheimians, attempted to revise Durkheim's original findings using improved measures of statistical analysis. Halbwachs rejects Durkheim's theory of anomie, arguing that it lacks empirical grounding. He also criticizes Durkheim for independently treating the variables presented in his typology, arguing that they comprise multiple dimensions of the same aggravating moral state. In his view, the increase in suicides observed by statisticians is the consequence of modern individualism, which he views wholly negatively:

> The woes of unemployed workers, the bankruptcies, failures, and downfalls are not the immediate cause of many suicides. Rather, an obscure oppressive sentiment weighs down on every soul because there is less general activity, because there is less participation by people in economic life transcending them, and because their attention is no longer turned toward externals but dwell more, not merely on their distress or on their base material competency, but on the individual motives they may have for desiring death.
> (Halbwachs 299)

Halbwachs sees the increase in suicides as a reflection of increasing despair, anguish, regret, humiliation, and discontent; he considers these symptoms of the social isolation cultivated by modern individualism. He suggests that complex societies introduce a

greater number of contacts and a reduction of support systems, which increasingly expose people risks and conflicts, multiplying the possibility of injury. For him, those who are most vulnerable and take the greatest offence to these conflicts are most prone to suicide.

> When people are no longer caught up in a collective current of thought and action they find themselves face-to-face with their egos. This is when they have the most opportunities for giving offence to one another and when the weakest of the most unfortunate succumb.
> (Halbwachs 319-320)

Although he does not formally present them as types, Halbwachs distinguishes between two forms of suicide linked to the isolation of individuals from shared systems of values and from meaningful social ties, according to the perceived sources of their distress. When the source of distress is external, this author views the act as a form of revenge, or punishment, against another person, or society itself, by killing oneself in defiance of their will. This expressive form resembles roughly Durkheim's characterization of anomic suicide. Halbwachs conceives that this type is an aggressive, emotional, rebellious act intended as a punishment.

> Here, then, are people who no longer are killing themselves to obey certain conventions and collective beliefs. They kill themselves 'in opposition to society' or in opposition to a particular person who, in their eyes, represents society. The cause of their distress is indeed within the group which has offended them, mistreated them, and treated them unjustly and cruelly. But the group has not desired their death [...] the group did not desire the consequence. The injured person desires it. The volition is indeed his own, since it runs counter to the group's intention.
> (Halbwachs 299)

When the source is internal, Halbwachs reasons that the suicide is the result of lassitude, discouragement or disillusionment. This form more closely resembles the melancholic suicide described by Durkheim in his discussion of psychological types. The act is not as

emotional or reactive as the previous form; the individual feels and reflects on his isolation.

> He silently interrogates the beings and things around him, receives negative and discouraging responses which are but the echo of his sadness, and interprets them as an encouragement to take leave of life [...] all of the collective sadness and melancholy become embodied in him and rises through him to a higher awareness of itself. (Halbwachs 302)

Halbwachs considers modern society, with its increased points of conflict and weak interpersonal ties, as a threat to civilization and a social malady rather than as a phase of social evolution. Moreover, he rejects Durkheim's concept of anomie on the basis of finding little support for the link between crises of prosperity and suicide. Halbwachs' understanding of suicide as a product of social isolation or excessive individualism depicts a static relation. That is, his theory is an interpretation of suicide at a particular place and time. At the same time, his social-psychological theory provides further insight into the relation between the individual's perceived sources of distress and the direction of aggression. This psychological component is only alluded to in Durkheim's work, considering the different ways in which anomic and egoistic suicides are manifested individually.

Halbwachs treats the social as its own dimension of reality. For him and many contemporary Durkheimians, social forces primarily determine individual behaviour. In their consideration of suicide as the effect of social forces, their works represent, in a sense, a return to the works appearing before Durkheim that viewed suicide as a form of social pathology. Among these contemporary Durkheimians are Andrew Henry and James Short, and Jack Gibbs and Walter Martin. These authors put forward psycho-

sociological explanations which describe different dimensions of the relation between social isolation and suicide.

In *Suicide and Homicide* (1954), Henry and Short present an explanation that is meant to account for both suicide and homicide. They attempt to go beyond the economic correlates of suicide and homicide, developing a theory that links social and psychological factors. Their theory combines Durkheim's theory of suicide and social integration with Freud's theories on aggression. Henry and Short's theory is based on findings similar to those of Halbwachs: higher distributions of suicide exist in urban rather than rural regions and among the single, widowed and divorced than among the married. Additionally, they consider the tendency for suicide increases with age, and its rises during periods of depression and falls in periods of prosperity. In addition, they conclude, like Halbwachs, that these correlations reflect differences in the degree of isolation from meaningful relationships (Halbwachs 60). As mentioned earlier, these contemporary Durkheimian authors deviate from the Durkheimian social-historical approach, positively correlating factors with increases in suicide. However, Henry and Short's theory differs from the other contemporary Durkheimians as it bridges the psychoanalytic and sociological approach by emphasizing the relation between aggression and social isolation.

Henry and Short postulate that high status position and isolation from social relationships are the key factors in the determination of suicides. They argue that both represent varying degrees of social restraint, which is a factor in expressions of

aggression in individuals. They view the degree to which social norms are internalized in terms of its restriction of individual action. They postulate that when individuals are not adequately restrained by the demands of others, their tendency to commit suicide increases; when individuals are more restrained, they are less likely to kill themselves but more likely to direct their aggression outwards. That is, the passions of those not restricted by the demands of others are less inhibited, increasing the possibility of suicide. They maintain that without expectations to fulfill or norms to reproduce, people are more easily willing to take their lives. As well, without external power to blame, their aggression seeks an outlet elsewhere: within themselves. Conversely, facing an external, oppressive force, they can more easily locate a source for their suffering and direct their aggression toward it.

Henry and Short's theory considers suicide exclusively in terms of the relation between aggression and external restraint. They focus on how social isolation and social status cultivate feelings of aggression. Like Durkheim, they argue that sharp economic fluctuations intensify feelings of aggression because they alter expectations. However, unlike Durkheim, who in his conception of anomie sees restraint in terms of keeping the passions limited so that satisfaction is possible, they view it in terms of its effect on expressions of aggression and on their desire to kill themselves. Henry and Short contend that suicide is the result of having no suitable external object onto which people might cast the blame for their frustration and too little inhibition for acting upon themselves.

Henry and Short consider social status a means of measuring the extent to which people have to conform to the expectations of others and subsequently the degree to which they hold themselves responsible for their frustration. Their logic follows that

persons of high status tend to be more isolated from meaningful relationships with others, and are thus less restrained. In their view, these individuals are more likely to kill themselves. Their negative perceptions are reinforced the more they are isolated, adding to their frustration and feelings of inferiority. On the other hand, these authors suggest that people of lower social status are generally required to conform to the demands of others and hold others responsible when things go awry.

Another theory of suicide involving status as a measure of isolation is put forward by Gibbs and Martin. In their text *Status Integration and Suicide (1964),* Gibbs and Martin go through a string of logical arguments to develop a more precise way of validating certain elements of Durkheim's theory of integration. Judging Durkheim's definition of integration inadequate and difficult to measure, they offer a conception of "status integration", which they claim provides an improved precision and which permitted their successful transformation of Durkheim's concept into a testable empirical proposition (Gibbs and Martin 67).

Gibbs and Martin interpret Durkheim's concept of integration as a measure of the strength of ties between individuals and society. In their view, the basis of individuals' ties with society is in social relationships. Based on this assumption, they postulate "that the suicide rate of a group varies inversely with the stability and durability of social relationships within it" (Gibbs and Martin 69). However, they suggest that this hypothesis is also too difficult to test, given the "insufficiency of sociological knowledge" and available data. Therefore, to arrive at a testable hypothesis, they

incorporate a Weberian approach to social relationships, similar to Henry and Short, and postulate, "the stability and durability of social relationships within a group vary directly with the extent to which the individuals therein conform to the patterned and socially sanctioned demands and expectations placed upon them by others" (Gibbs and Martin 69). They emphasize the conditions that determine the extent of conformity to the patterned and socially sanctioned demands in a population.

These authors suggest that a person's status is important in the determination of their rights, duties, and obligations, as these represent different roles individuals must perform. Hence, they propose that "the extent to which individuals conform to patterned and socially sanctioned demands and expectations placed upon them by others vary inversely with the extent to which individuals in that group are confronted with role conflicts," which they called "social identification" (Gibbs and Martin 72). Essentially, they explain that individuals are more likely to conform to patterned behaviour with fewer challenges to their identities. With this reasoning, they postulate that "the extent to which individuals in a population are confronted with role conflicts varies directly with the extent to which individuals occupy incompatible statuses in that group" (Gibbs and Martin 75). However, because individuals are unable to occupy two groups simultaneously, they explain that the incompatibility of statuses could not be directly measured. They sought an observable and measurable phenomenon that reflects the extent to which the occupancy of incompatible statuses prevails in a population. In their view, every individual occupies a particular status configuration. Therefore, the extent to which persons occupy compatible statuses in a population is a function of the extent to which these conform to a pattern.

Subsequently, they hypothesize that "the extent to which individuals occupy incompatible statuses in a population varies inversely with the degree of 'status integration' in that population" (Gibbs and Martin 78). Reformulating this argument, they conclude that "the suicide rate of a population varies with the degree of 'status integration' in that population", whereby compatible statuses in a population are a function of the degree to which the occupied statuses conform to a pattern (Gibbs and Martin 77-78).

Gibbs and Martin imply that integration is affected by inconsistencies or conflicts between various identities or role statuses in a population and their socially sanctioned modes of behaviour. They present a measure of integration as a function of the incompatible statuses individuals occupy in a society. Gibbs and Martin employ highly speculative conceptions of the various elements of their understanding and extremely broad, static measures of role occupancies, such as age, occupation, and gender. There was no consideration of their measurement over time, and they neglect the fact that not all groups have concrete and defined statuses. Yet, their understanding of status integration is significant in establishing shared horizons between sociological and psychological approaches to the study of suicide. Like Durkheim, they emphasize the importance of a cohesive symbolic system. For Gibbs and Martin, however, a "lack of cohesion" can be more precisely measured according to degree to which individuals are required to occupy and negotiate incompatible statuses than according to abstract measures of group solidarity.

Their view of individualism is tied to individuals' non-conformity to pre-established status configurations. Despite treating status as a real and objective thing,

there is no doubt that the symbolic system within which all individuals necessarily identify helps shape the quality and intensity of social relationships between individuals. These authors bridge the concepts of integration and social identity. Also, like Durkheim, Gibbs and Martin emphasize the aggravating effect of the transformation of traditional forms of solidarity on a population's suicide rate. However, like other contemporary Durkheimians, they perceive modern individualism as being entirely negative and as the cause of increased isolation and declining quality of social ties, rather than as a condition involved in the transition from one social phase to another, as Durkheim suspected.

* * *

These theories of suicide developed according to the measurement and description of broad social trends and rested on the claim that suicide is determined primarily by social causes. That is, individual differences could not account for the patterns of suicide that statistics revealed, and researchers subsequently relied on these to explain the individual act. The major difference between Durkheim's thesis and those of these contemporary moral statisticians is that Durkheim viewed suicide as a dynamic social phenomenon, not a universal constant. The social conditions linked with suicide depend upon a particular historical and social context. The others were only interested in the description of social factors that positively correlated with suicide, which for them represent potential causes.

Contemporary Durkheimians emphasized, to a greater extent, the psychological dimension as they interpreted the relation between isolation and suicide. For Halbwachs,

modern individualism generates a greater number of conflicts between individuals as a result of the increased complexity of interpersonal relationships and the loss of support systems. His differentiation of types that resulted from social isolation, which resemble those of Durkheim in their individual manifestation, was psychologically differentiated according to the individual's perceived source of suffering. In their differentiation of suicide and homicide, Henry and Short emphasized the relation between isolation and people's perceptions of others' expectations. Also, Gibbs and Martin emphasized a relation between the quality and durability of interpersonal relationships and suicide, arguing that the occupation of objectively recognized social statuses generate fewer role conflicts.

Durkheim, on the other hand, saw individualism and the dissolution of traditional institutions as the consequence of the division of labour and industrialism. He conceived of pathology in terms of deviations from social norms, rather than from a universal moral standpoint. Durkheim revealed the protective function of traditional institutions through his association of their dissolution with increases in suicide. The institutions provided an objective reference that served to unite and reproduce individual action. Unlike others, Durkheim was optimistic about the possibility of individuals' adaptation to the forms of solidarity characterized by their increased specialization. Contemporary Durkheimians viewed these societal transformations negatively.

While the sociological view of suicide was being developed, there were other researchers who argued that the extent to which norms, beliefs, and values generated specific behavioural effects could be explained in terms of individual differences. Explanations of these differences originated from qualitative analyses of individual case

data. The most pertinent theory comes from Freudian psychoanalysis. Its practitioners interpret individual action as a product of unconscious mechanisms buried deep within the mind.

Primal Instincts and Pathological Perspectives

Psychoanalysis seeks to explain overt behaviour through the scientific analysis of unconscious drives. Through a description of common characteristics between individual cases, they postulate the universality of these traits. Freudian psychoanalytic theory contends that the unconscious operates through three structures of the mind: the id, ego and superego. The id contains primitive instinctual drives that largely operate according to the pleasure principle and vary little from person to person; the ego forms the individual's personality and is developed and reinforced through socialization; the superego represents the conscience and is mainly composed of internalized authority figures and ideals received from the others. The ego acts as an intermediary between the person's instincts and the demands of others; it is this aspect of the self that comes in contact with the outside world. As the instincts remain fairly constant, it is the ways in which the outside world reinforces pre-existing tendencies in the ego, and are received from the id, that concern psychoanalysts.

In terms of research, psychoanalysis is mainly interested in the description of individual cases. From these, behavioural patterns are extrapolated and an objective and universal framework of internal mechanisms is constructed to account for individual conduct. Psychoanalysts are not interested in describing a single individual's psychic states; they are interested in a universal psychic structure as objective as Durkheim's

social trends. Psychoanalysts tend to reject causal explanations of behaviour involving external factors and argue that the peculiarities of individuals' action lie within their psychological constitutions. In their view, external social factors only modify pre-existing tendencies. Suicide is primarily an abnormality, a mental disorder resulting from and motivated by the ego's vulnerabilities in combination with an external trigger.

According to Freud, behaviour is primarily mediated by internal mechanisms. In his view, the structures of the mind function according to the first law of thermodynamics: the conservation of energy. Therefore, his explanation of behaviour involves tensions between these internal structures as they attempt to achieve a state of balance. Freud would have explained suicide in terms of the competition between life and death instincts[5], and death's eventual defeat of life over expression.

Freud did not write explicitly about suicide. However, Freud's work was instrumental in the development of a psychoanalytic theory of suicide. He wrote an article entitled *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), which was devoted to exploring the objective and theoretical differences between these psychological states. Here, he explains that the loss of a loved one can cause major disruptions in libidinal investment which can be a source of tremendous suffering for the individual. In both of these states, a number of single impressions, such as unconscious traces, memories, and mental associations, must be abandoned by the libido to restore a proper flow of energy. For Freud, mourning is generally seen as a normal reaction to the loss of a loved one. For some individuals, the same events are associated with melancholia, yet this disposition is pathological as its distinguishing mental features are a painful dejection, a loss of interest

[5]Life: *libido/Eros* – primal instincts for survival, propagation, hunger, thirst, sex etc.; Death: *Thanatos* – motivated by the desire to return to a state of calm, an inorganic or dead state.

in the outside world, a lowered capacity for love, an inhibition of all activity, self reproach, and a delusional expectation of punishment (Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia* 244). In mourning, self regard is not affected. Freud states that to restore equilibrium, melancholic individuals seek the destruction of the object responsible for their unrest, which is judged to be an aspect within them.

The psychoanalyst argues that individuals normally discover through "reality testing" that the loved object no longer exists and learn to withdraw the libidinal energy bound to this object and diffuse it through other channels. When the displacement of energy is too abrupt, these individuals may experience difficulty giving up their mental associations as well as their earlier and more comfortable states of libidinal balance. They may cling to memories and imaginary representations of the object for a period following the object loss and in some cases withdraw themselves from reality into hallucination. Freud contends that this loss is always followed by a transient phase of ambivalence or alternation between detachment from the object and the maintenance of a prior libidinal state. In most cases, however, reality triumphs and the ego is freed from its pathological fixation on memories of the lost object.

In Freud's view, this pathology stems from the ego's incorporation of the loved object into itself. He calls this internalization of external objects "narcissistic identification." He considers this the earliest form of object attachment. When the libidinal balance is upset, individuals regress into this immature form of identification until the libidinal investment conforms to reality. When a loved object disappears from the outside world, the ego is forced to abandon its attachment to the object. Instead, some individuals remain identified with these objects and cling to their mental abstractions. In

Freud's view, typical mourning is entirely conscious, as the lost object is physically gone; in melancholia, it is a portion of the ego that depends upon the presence of the object for a sense of completeness or libidinal balance that is lost. A void appears in the ego at the loss of this object that helped define it. Freud suggests that "in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (*Mourning and Melancholia* 246). Freud observes that melancholic patients are prone to self-reproach, being overly critical of themselves, often judging themselves as worthless and incapable of any achievement. In response to this perception of inadequacy, Freud commonly observed expectations of punishment. This void perceived within them remains until they have achieved a state of equilibrium between their unconscious drives, the demands of the outside world, and the reality of available objects.

According to Freud, the primary affective state in melancholia is guilt. He explains that patients extend this sense of emptiness over their past, visualize that they had always been worthless or incomplete, and hold bleak visions of the future. The loss of the loved object stimulates aggressive impulses, which, unable to fix themselves on the actual object, are directed inward toward a mental abstraction of the object. That is, to satisfy the desire to restore a state of libidinal balance, the ego seeks the destruction of one of its faulty components, which may be generalized as the self. The conscience holds the self responsible for the loss or impoverishment of the ego. Freud suggests that it is for this reason that such loss is often followed by a negative and highly critical fixation on the self.

According to psychoanalytic theory, the ego largely depends on the stability of external conditions that it has grown accustomed to throughout its development. Freud

suggests that abrupt changes force a reinvestment of energy that potentially stimulates aggressive impulses. If these impulses are unable to fix themselves on the actual object responsible for the ego's impoverishment, the self may be targeted. A guilty conscience holding the self responsible for its suffering demands a self-directed expression of aggression. The self is treated as an object viewed as if one were outside looking in. These are the foundations of a psychoanalytic theory of suicide in Freud's work.

The psychoanalytic theory of suicide was developed in greater detail by Karl Menninger in *Man against Himself* (1938). At the time of Menninger's writing, the statistical approach was beginning to dominate the field. Menninger's work was intended to revitalize the psychoanalytic approach to suicide and to respond to the many researchers who employed overly simplistic explanations of suicide as a form of escape from an intolerable life situation. Some of these situations include flight from reality, sickness, poverty, discouragement, financial misfortunes, and unrequited love (Menninger 17). Menninger argues that the difference between those who kill themselves and those who do not when faced with inevitable and potentially painful stresses lies within their psychological constitutions. From his analysis of individual cases, Menninger claims to have developed an objective interpretation of unconscious drives that, like Freud, he maintains are principle motivating forces in the determination of individual action. Menninger argues that suicide is "determined either by some inherent constitutional variation, abnormality, or weakness in the individual or by the acceleration of powerful reinforcement of the destructive tendencies of the personality during the formative period of life" (21). This disposition, cultivated early on and maintained over the course of one's life, results in the eventual victory of the death instinct.

Menninger acknowledges a social dimension of suicide corresponding with the meanings individuals ascribe to their deaths. He discusses that wanting to die represents a misunderstanding and pathological perception of this inorganic state. He argues that man cannot possibly conceive of inexistence; instead, he ascribes to it some virtual meaning. At best, it is viewed as a kind of sleep, a temporary state in which the world and subject simultaneously disappear. Also, like Freud, Menninger claims man instinctively seeks the destruction of objects that disrupt the libidinal economy. Psychoanalysis tends to view this mechanism as a form of self-preservation, not of the body, but of the ego's integrity. For the conservation of energy, individuals are driven toward the destruction of object inhibiting the achievement of an established threshold of pleasure rewards. Menninger conceives of three mechanisms that explain all acts of suicide: the wish to kill, the wish to be killed, and the wish to die. For him, suicide is the result of one or a combination of these impulses although he places specific emphasis on the wish to die, claiming that "no suicide is consummated [...] unless the suicidal person also wishes to die" (23).

Psychoanalysis contends that individuals' contact with their community inevitably leads to conflict, forcing the repression of their passions. Psychoanalysts propose that these inevitable upsets and frustrations often lead to resentment and protest, which are manifested through acts of violence intended as punishment. This violence is typically inhibited and directed through positive outlets, such as in the growth of personality and creativity; however, some people may be incapable of positively managing such impulses, necessitating their expression. For Menninger, the desire to kill and the desire to be killed are both primarily composed of these violent, aggressive impulses.

For Menninger, the wish to kill is primarily rooted in the desire to punish another. The individual driven by this impulse is in search of an external outlet for his aggression, but this desire to punish may be directed inward in three conditions. First, there is a lack of external objects onto which this desire may be expressed. Second, an overwhelming sense of guilt emanating from the conscience surrounds the externalization of this desire in general or toward a specific person. Third, the outward expression of aggression may require too large an investment of libidinal energy to accomplish. As seen with Gibbs and Martin, the availability of external objects onto which these impulses can be directed may be limited by the degree of an individual's isolation from social ties. However, they state that the internalization of others' expectations grants access to external outlets for aggression, resulting more often in murder rather than suicide. In contrast, Menninger considers the role of the conscience in the inhibition of outwardly directed acts of aggression.

Menninger explains that the wish to be killed is driven primarily by feelings of aggression seeking expression within. This component of suicide is motivated primarily by guilt, and this mechanism comprises a desire for self-punishment. This guilt, rooted in the conscience, is unlike the previous mechanism, as it does not surround the outward expression of hostile impulses. In this case, the conscience seeks the punishment of the self for having committed some kind of irremediable wrong. The intended object is not an external one; it begins and ends with the self. For Menninger, this impulse is engendered by an over-identification with the figures of authority making up the conscience. He proposes that the wish to be killed involves the perception that the ego

itself or an element of its composition is at fault and must be punished as a result. The self is associated with values judged to be worthy of punishment.

For Menninger, the wish to die is not motivated by feelings of aggression like the other two components. As individuals receive ideals they feel compelled to achieve, failures may be a source of distress, resulting in feelings of inadequacy, shame, and worthlessness. When this mechanism is involved, voluntarily death is viewed as a way of alleviating or escaping the suffering caused by tensions between the ego and its ideal. In Menninger's view, individuals who extend their present feelings of inadequacy over their futures may see themselves on hopeless pursuits. This form of suicide is not necessarily aggressive like the previous components. If all other options appear to have been exhausted, the misconceived abstraction of actual death may seem a preferable state to life, a concept stained with a generalized and permanent feeling of anguish. Menninger suggests that only individuals with a poor capacity for coping with reality and who possess an unrealistic, pathological conception of life and death would take their lives when confronted with difficulties. He argues that because their goal is the restoration of libidinal balance, these individuals cannot possibly have a realistic conception of death. The inert state they seek to achieve nullifies the possibility of benefiting from it. Therefore, he argues, these subjects must conceive of death as a temporary state from which they could return, or one in which conscious experiences are still possible.

Menninger devises two pathological personality types that account for individuals' predisposed vulnerabilities to suicide: (1) the infantile oral personality, most commonly associated with the wish to kill and the wish to be killed, and (2) the schizoid personality, generally associated with the wish to die. The first personality type

characterizes individuals whose conscience compels them to achieve and receive the praise of others, but are unable to accept this praise as a result of an overwhelming sense of guilt toward its acceptance. This competition between aspects of the conscience, the ego-ideal and superego, often hinders their ability to enjoy and maintain meaningful relationships with others. These individuals adapt poorly to change and are overly dependent on others for a sense of worth. Hence, they are characterized by a pathological dependence on the stability and durability of established relationships. These individuals also tend to respond to frustration with aggression and hostility (Menninger 42). The psychoanalyst claims that these people tend to regress to "infantile narcissistic identification" with the outside world, whereby all conflict is internalized and reflected upon the self. As seen with Freud, this immature identification potentially leads to self-punishment.

The second personality type refers to those who, after experiencing a number of terrifying upsets in early childhood, are convinced the world is bleak and loveless. According to Menninger, they "live in constant anticipation of relinquishing all attempts at love and happiness in the world" (48). Their attachment to others is weak and transient, and future satisfaction or happiness seems unattainable. Hence, their suicide represents an escape from a life in which happiness is impossible.

Menninger's elaboration of the psychoanalytic approach to suicide is valuable in explaining the relationships between the affective states linked to suicide and the internal mechanisms developed by psychoanalysis to explain patterns in behaviour. Both Freud and Menninger consider the events preceding suicide secondary to the internal components. They claim that people's experience in the world only reinforces potentials

that are already present. For Menninger, predisposed weakness and the inability to cope with inevitable stresses are key factors in suicide. These are reflected in individuals' personality structures.

* * *

In classifying individual characteristics observed among those driven to suicide, psychoanalysts ascribed these to particular personality structures. The pathological constructs that predispose individuals to suicide are treated implicitly as objective and universal. Though their theories linking individual behaviour and their observations relied on metaphysical assumptions about the inner working of the mind, their characterizations of observable qualities is significant. The similarities between aspects of Durkheim and Freud's reflections must be stressed. Both sought to understand the melancholic personality and relied on similar depictions of the melancholic state. Menninger's work provides a distinction between personality types associated with suicide. This helps distinguish some of the psychological qualities cultivated by the particular moral conditions of Durkheim's typology. Giddens and Clain saw the necessity of making these intersections more explicit and provided a synthesis of these approaches. Their syntheses dealt differently with the merger of the individual and collective dimensions of suicide, yet their conclusions are equally valuable for interpreting the relation between modern suicide and the ways in which subjects understand themselves in relation to others.

The Meeting of Moral States and Individual Perceptions

These theories present a partial understanding of suicide. The individualist approaches to the study of suicide tend to focus on the pathology of individuals' situations in the world. In other words, they focus on the ways in which their biological predispositions, psychosocial development, and environment contribute to the ways in which they typically respond to objective reality. Durkheim demonstrates a parallel evolution of societal forms and suicide. However, the patterns emerging from groupings of concrete cases documented by the statistical approach reveal little about individual characteristics. The ways in which the interaction between individuals and societies generate characteristics at the individual level and broad recognizable patterns at the collective level cannot be fully grasped through any approach that favours one or the other dimension. Anthony Giddens and Olivier Clain considered the necessity of developing a synthesis of these theories. Giddens' approach oriented Durkheim's typology of moral states toward the subject whereas Clain reinterpreted his typology according to structural dimensions of dialectical relations with other individuals, rather than responses to objective forms of collective constraint. Their work was significant in theoretically bridging these seemingly disparate approaches.

Within Freud's theory of depression, Giddens identifies two forms of "ego impoverishment," which could be associated with Durkheim's typology of suicide. As noted earlier, Durkheim had already intuitively linked egoism and melancholy in his exploration of individual types. Giddens found the tools in Freud's theory to set up a psychological type of suicide that corresponds with the frustration of expectations within Durkheim's conception of anomie.

Freud considers unattainable, yet highly cherished, ideals to be the psychological equivalent to object loss. However, Giddens suggests these generate different affective states in individuals, claiming that the ego-ideal was fundamentally different than the superego. Rather than imposing constraint on individuals, the ego-ideal projects constraints into the future and presents them with objectives. Giddens contends that the divergence of the ego's ideal from its actual performance generally results in feelings of shame and frustration whereas psychoanalysis generally considers tensions between the ego and superego to result in feelings of guilt. People whose personalities predispose them to shame and anxiety would thus be susceptible to insecurities surrounding the inadequacy of the ego in relation to its ideal. In addition, Giddens posits that these individuals are also driven by a constant need for validation and rely on others for a sense of worth, instilling in them a sense of urgency toward the achievement of their internalized ideals. He explains that this pathological predisposition is more common in children whose parents employed shaming techniques in their disciplining, as this attaches stigma to their failures. This results in people having abnormally high feelings of inferiority and worthlessness and needing to constantly prove themselves.

Giddens adds that frustrations generated by the perceived distance between the ego and its ideal provide the basis for expressions of aggression toward the inadequate ego-identity. These are the result of a lengthier process when compared with guilt-related suicides. The cultivation of feelings of frustration leaves these individuals in such a state of vulnerability that even a minor event is sufficient to trigger an explosion of energy directed at the self.

Within Durkheim's typology, Giddens incorporates the conception of the motivating forces underlying individual acts, in which guilt and shame represent distinct aspects of the conscience corresponding to different types of suicide. He links Durkheim's characterization of egoism with Freud's conception of depression, as they both explore individuals' isolation from close ties and freedom from role obligations. Psychoanalysts note these individuals' propensity for introversion and their difficulty forming stable and emotional bonds. He claims that this type of individual "tends to be extremely dependent upon an established relationship, but finds it difficult to function satisfactorily within it; and he has great difficulty in breaking relationships with former objects and in forming new object-attachments" (108). For Giddens, the link between the social and psychological dimensions is that both mutually reinforce individuals' isolation from the relationships on which they are dependent. In other words, particular social conditions and these individuals' personalities interact to exacerbate the conditions of their isolation. In psychoanalysis, depression and suicide both involve self-reproach and a withdrawal from the social world. Acts of suicide refer consciously or unconsciously to others who make up the superego. Giddens thus explains that egoistic suicides represent an attempt to atone for reintegration within a relationship or group through the satisfaction of demands imposed by others. In a sense, this form of suicide is aimed at specific persons or abstractions of them, whether it is an act of revenge, retaliatory abandonment or an attempt to unite with a lost loved-one.

Giddens argues that Durkheim's conception of anomie provides the social background for divergences between social norms and individual aspirations. Durkheim explains that individuals in specific sectors of activity are provided with ill-defined goals,

thereby increasing the frequency of their failures. The social and psychological dimensions mutually reinforce the individuals' distance from attainable goals. That is, the demanding ego-ideal imposes desires on individuals in contexts where these desires are not appropriate. These subjects then view themselves in terms of failure. Those displaying personalities characterized by an imposing ego-ideal and an abnormally high need for validation are exceptionally vulnerable. Thus, Giddens contends that the lesser extent to which individuals are involved in systems that set specific and realizable goals, the greater the possibility of fatal discrepancies between the ideal and actual conceptions of the self. Additionally, as the inadequacy of the ego results in feelings of shame, the projected ideal demands that a change take place in the ego. He argues that atonement and appeal are insufficient to calm the feelings of anxiety surrounding the self; these individuals seek to overthrow the damaged ego and seek a transformation of identity.

Giddens' synthesis comprises of a description of personality problems, on which he relies to couple his psychoanalytically inspired typology with Durkheim's. The socialization of modern individuals, which prioritizes their development of a sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency, places excessive emphasis on the superego and the potential problems related to the integration of this role into the personality. Likewise, the autonomy of goal-setting requires the ability to balance expectations and possibilities, revealing the necessity of socializing individuals in particular ways. Giddens' translation of societal features into socializing necessities highlights the possible problems related to the failures of socialization and thereby links the typical personality problems with the social context, in which these problems should ideally not occur.

Clain's synthesis differs since he explores the dialectical relations between individual and society through a reconceptualization of Durkheim's typology from a psychoanalytic perspective. Rather than interpret Durkheim's typology in terms of personality structures, Clain emphasizes the interaction between people's internalization of the demands of others and their perceptions of themselves in the world. Before proceeding to this discussion, he clarifies the inconsistencies between Durkheim's conceptions of anomie and fatalism, which hinders their treatment as complimentary types along a continuum of desire regulation.

Durkheim initially treated progressive and regressive forms of anomie as the same phenomenon. Clain argues that this is because he dismissed giving any primary signification to the actors' interpretations of these constraints and regarded suicide in terms of real constraints by society. Each of his types represents a form of collective constraint to suicide, and types emerge according to the particular social and historical contexts that engender new dominant forms of constraint (Clain, *Contrainte et suicide: notes sur la théorie Durkheimienne* 144). In other words, Durkheim's types of suicide represent categories of pathological moral states, which for him represent a constraint to suicide, but not necessarily the direct cause of suicide.

Clain argues that the distinction between regulation and integration demands a consideration of the ways in which society's values and limitations on expectations of satisfaction are internalized. The limits of Durkheim's epistemological stance are especially apparent when considering how he conceives of the anomic and fatalistic types. His conceptions of anomie and fatalism comprise two dimensions that he only partially articulates: individuals' idealization and their capacity to impose limitations on

their expectations of satisfaction. Clain postulates that the constraint weighing down on individuals' expectations of satisfaction is neither excessive nor insufficient in itself. Both types involve the subject's incapacity to internalize these rules. With fatalism, these rules remain external and unjustifiable to the subject; with anomie, they are insufficiently internalized because of their lack of a legitimate foundation justifying their incorporation (Clain, *Contrainte et suicide: notes sur la théorie Durkheimienne* 146). Clain suggests that as a result of his inconsistent metaphysical stance and his epistemological positivism, Durkheim saw these two types only in terms of external constraint and collapsed them into the same category. It was only upon his consideration of individuals' internalization of expectations of satisfaction that he came to distinguish them.

From this, Clain carries over Durkheim's typology into a dialectical scheme of recognition. That is, he reconceived of Durkheim's types, linking each with a structural dimension of dialectical relations with other individuals. He proposes a dialectic reconstruction of Durkheim's typology, relating collective causes with the typical meanings subjects attribute to their actions, in terms of real and perceived forms of constraint. His reconstruction gives a better sense of the ways in which individuals' socialization and their perceptions of their conditions combine to generate distinct types of suicide.

For Clain, egoistic suicide is the result of a significant void that comes from an absence of a shared horizon of values. The world, the generalized other, and the image individuals have of themselves are deprived of a collectively shared system of signification. Durkheim claims that in systems where social integration is low, the subject's passions lead him toward a languorous idealization of the void. This form

corresponds with a depressive type, not with the melancholic. Freud distinguishes between the two: the more acute melancholic type is seen as the result of the loss of an object on which the individual's ego depended and the more chronic depressive type is the result of prolonged isolation from meaningful social ties. The first type is the one in which individuals have identified with a lost object and turn against its abstraction within themselves because its loss has impoverished the ego. The second depressive form corresponds with Durkheim's characterization of melancholy.

Altruists, in Clain's view, assume a moral obligation to take their lives. This obligation, whether real or fanatic, is felt in response to the demands of another person, or the social norms. One possible motivation given is the search of some kind of fusion with the divine, and may be considered pathological if he seems devoid of any legitimate signification. A second possible motivation is the idealization of a projection of the self.

According to Clain, anomic suicide should be viewed as the result of an absence of any interiorized limitation on expectations of satisfaction that would constrain desire in the subject. As a result, the self ceaselessly searches for satisfaction and the self becomes an insatiable demand. In Clain's view, there is a psychopathic or insane logic to this type. This social type is identified by Durkheim using psychological connotations such as failure, defeat, frustration, aggression, and exasperation, which are all compatible with violence directed toward another person. This type is cultivated and aggravated by the hysteria of consumer society and the dissolution of traditional modes of legitimatizing inequality. A prime example is heredity under systems of transcendental authority. Again, Durkheim acknowledges an acute and chronic modality for this type. The first comprises of a crisis and corresponds with the sudden movement of a tyrannical

imperative of satisfaction coming from another person. The second refers to the institutional, continuous, collective deregulation of expectations of satisfaction and to the fixation of the self on the infinite demands of another, thus, infinitely aspiring to be other than what one is (Clain, *Les suicides des jeunes hommes au Québec, un cas de fatalisme?* 193).

Clain states that for fatalistic suicide, the anticipated impossibility of any future satisfaction is at the root of the suicidal act. This occurs either as a result of the rigidity of constraints or as the subject unknowingly projects onto the world or onto another the figure an illegitimate constraint, which is excessive and intolerable. The movement is between the self and the generalized other. In the first case, it is a constraint imposed by society or a natural constraint, such as illness or handicap, which intrudes into the subjects' spheres in the form of a real constraint. In the second case, the subjects themselves project this constraint onto the world or onto another, and his self-image adopts a position of submission in relation to this imagined constraint. In both cases the subject's desire and all the self's future possibilities are crushed.

The works of Giddens and Clain provide a theoretical link between the individual and collective approaches presented throughout this chapter. These works appear to be the final efforts presenting theories of suicide that attempt to link psychological and sociological approaches, as growing concern over the increasing prevalence of youth suicide resulted in the placement of greater emphasis on stopping the phenomenon rather than understanding it. In the following chapters, two important works are presented that continue the work of understanding suicide, through synthetic approaches to the study of youth suicide, and enlighten the ways in which youth suicide should be approached.

Chapter Two: Youth Suicide and Persistence Problems

Until recently, youth suicide was a rarely documented phenomenon. Within the past few decades, the suicides of youth have surpassed those of all other age groups. Baudelot and Estable elucidate the magnitude of this transformation:

> Parmi toutes les transformations qui ont affecte le régime du suicide depuis deux siècles, la plus spectaculaire concerne l'âge. Le dernier quart du XXe siècle a bouleverse une relation que plus de cent cinquante ans de statistiques mondiales avaient incite a considérer comme une donne universelle: la croissance régulière du taux de suicide avec l'âge. Depuis le début du XIX^{e} siècle et dans le quasi totalité des pays disposant de statistiques, la tendance ne souffrait aucune exception. (Baudelot and Establet, *Suicide, l'envers de notre monde* 135)

The recent reversal of what was considered a universal trend suggests that the emergence of youth suicide is being witnessed and documented for the first time in history. Today, interest in suicide is renewed, mainly as a reaction to this reversal of the previous trend: the positive correlation between age and suicide. The novelty of this phenomenon necessitates a re-conceptualization of suicide since the older theories were devised based on different trends and are thus incapable of explaining this new one.

The suicide of youths, occurring in the period of adolescence, suggests a pathological relation between individuals and their situations in the world. In this light, theories should be explored that look at both the developmental problems that typically occur in adolescence and how these cause the contemporary condition. This approach to the problem of youth suicide begins with the work of Michael Chandler.

The most thorough and conclusive attempt to significantly link the community and individual levels in understanding youth suicide was elaborated by the Canadian developmental psychologist Michael J. Chandler, along with his students and colleagues, through patient research and reflection spanning over twenty years. Addressing the issue of contemporary youth suicide in Native communities, Chandler and his colleagues succeeded in providing the conceptual tools capable of bridging the gap between the macro sociological and psychological dimensions of suicide's study. In brief, they argue that the problem of continuity, both personal and cultural, needs to be reflectively addressed and resolved at the individual and communal levels. They also succeeded in applying their theoretical intuitions and in validating their hypotheses.

Since this developmental approach follows the footsteps of Erik Erikson, his work on identity and youth crisis is also presented separately. Writing in the sixties and working to understand youth crises, this Danish psychologist may well have cured the problems that extended to the rank-and-file youth in a clinical setting. Nevertheless, Erikson's reflections on the youth crisis, and those of James Marcia which elaborate on particular aspects of these reflections, profoundly resonate with contemporary research on youth suicide, namely Chandler's research on Native suicide and Dagenais' research on youth suicide in Quebec.

Identity Crises and Continuity

Erikson is perhaps best known for his eight stage model of psychosocial development, in which he describes the necessary phases of cognitive and physical

development that a growing person must ideally navigate in order to attain their full development. Most crucial to his psychosocial life-stage model is the identity stage, which for him marks the period of adolescence. Erikson explains that when facing the demands of the adult world, adolescents are typically required to negotiate the conflicts of their past experiences and incorporate what they have learned into an enduring sense of self. Successful completion of this critical phase results in these individuals achieving a sense of mastery over their conditions and orienting themselves toward the future with the confidence and optimism that helps them become a unique and successful person. He also maintains that failures at any of these phases hinder the development of a working sense of identity, or personal continuity. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is crucial to an understanding of how a youth's establishment of a continuous sense of self might be hindered.

Erikson argues that the development of a continuous sense of identity is foundational to participation in adult life as a unique and successful person. Identity is not ascribed at birth, but it emerges out of interactions between the individuals and their environment, particularly during childhood. Based on years of anthropological work, Erikson devised a model of the life cycle around the development of the ego, loosely based on Freud's theory of sexual phases: oral, anal, phallic, and latent. In a manner similar to Freud's account of sexual development, Erikson created his psychosocial phases as necessary stages in the process of seizing a successful adult identity. He argues that the achievement of a successful identity usually demands the renegotiation of past stages since new circumstances sometimes conflict with previous views. In other words, those who lacked the cognitive tools to effectively adapt when faced with difficult

conditions often regressed to earlier stages to complete them with greater success. According to Erikson, successful identities are capable of more easily coping with changes while retaining a consistent sense of self. People must be sufficiently flexible to adapt to fluctuations within their environments. Erikson provides the following criteria for an identity, which typify the modern reality and foreshadow Chandler's discovery pertaining to the existential problems of today's youth:

1. A conscious sense of individual identity.
2. An unconscious striving for continuity of personal character.
3. The maintenance of inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity (Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* 109).

Essentially, Erikson conceives of identity as an individual's self-image, which should endure in some way while simultaneously sharing a group identity:

> The growing child must derive a vitalizing sense of reality from the awareness that his individual way of mastering experience (his ego synthesis) is a successful variant of a group identity and is in accord with its space-time and life plan.
> (Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* 21)

In order to ensure continuity, identities should represent variants of the group identity. Erikson sees identity as confidence in one's sameness and continuity in relation to the sameness and continuity of the environment. His work emphasizes that identity formation is an on-going process in which people construct and reconstruct themselves according to their experience and to the changing ways they are identified by others. Continuity strengthens both the individual and collective identities. Individuals socialized within communities with a weak collective identity have a greater difficulty

establishing a sense of continuity and are more often required to renegotiate their sense of self. People who do not develop a sense of collective identity and communities with a weak sense of unity reinforce this discontinuity.

Erikson found that youths typically worked at establishing a sense of identity when it was necessary for them to move beyond their immature forms of identification, which mainly consisted of adopting the attributes of idealized others. At this stage, youths must prepare themselves, as autonomous and self-sufficient persons, to adapt what they have learned to uncertain future conditions. Their repetition of past images is insufficient. Erikson explains that a sense of identity arises from the selective denial and incorporation of past childhood identifications into a new configuration oriented towards the future. This is achieved by successfully navigating the self through critical conflicts:

> Each stage becomes a crisis because incipient growth and awareness in a significant part function goes together with a shift in instinctual energy and yet causes specific vulnerability in that part... Each successive step, then, is a potential crisis because of a radical change in perspective. (Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* 56-57)

From the successful resolution of these developmental crises, he claims, individuals acquire the necessary values with which they can establish and maintain social ties, as well as help others with their continuity and assure the continuity of the group.

In Erikson's discussion of specific conflicts at each stage of ego-identity development, he explains that individuals who achieve a balance between the opposing dispositions acquire the virtues to successfully construct a working and united sense of identity. When facing conditions that challenge their emerging sense of self, they may need to revisit earlier stages to incorporate these new elements into themselves. In other words, experiences that present these developing youths with contradictions to their sense

of identity may cause a temporary break in their continuity. These conflicts are resolved by incorporating the elements of their particular social surroundings, these youths are capable of achieving a sense of continuity.

In his clinical work, Erikson found that people's frustrations experienced in early development correspond with dysfunctional personality traits that appear to stunt their capacity to grow and adapt. In essence, he suggests that a person's failures to resolve a key conflict could hinder the development of a sense of identity. These failures might hinder an individual's capacity to find a balance between consistent identification and inevitable change. The stages leading up to identity achievement represent different dimensions of people's future orientations. From these conceptions of their temporal orientation, youths progressively develop a sense of self-sameness for themselves and others. Erikson observes that the development of a continuous sense of identity demands the successful resolution of specific conflicts.

For Erikson, identity development was a process that reached a plateau at the settling on a sense of self. The sudden onset of physical and sexual maturation, puberty, causes a break in the continuity of the self established in childhood. Adolescence represents a temporal boundary or discontinuity between childhood and adulthood. In his view, childhood ends for those who have learned to incorporate the various roles and skills developed in their youth into a stable identity. Erikson relates that adulthood begins when the individual recognizes a discontinuity between the child self and the new, persistent self. He contends that youths must integrate the forms of self-concept acquired through their identification with others in the previous stages and then establish their autonomous, living identity.

> The integration now taking place in the form of ego identity is more than the sum of childhood identifications. It is the inner capital accrued from all those experiences of each successive stage, when meaningful identification led to a successive alignment of the individual's basic drives with his endowment and his opportunities... The sense of ego identity, then, is the accrued confidence that one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others.
> (Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* 94-95)

Erikson argues that in order to be a successful person, individuals must derive a sense of personal unity for themselves and others. This aspect of Erikson's conception of identity is entirely modern, as it assumes the possibility of an enduring state of balance between the individual and his environment.

> It is this identity of something in the individual's core with an essential aspect of a group's inner coherence which is under consideration here: for the young individual must learn to be most himself where he means most to others – those others, to be sure, who have come to mean most to him. The term "identity" expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others.
> (Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* 109).

Although Erikson views the development of an identity as an adaptation process, he interprets the environment as being relatively fixed and the individual as more dynamic. In this sense, Erikson's conception of the relationship between the individual and society resembles that of Durkheim, since both emphasize the unity provided by persistent and homogeneous collective identities, though Erikson does so implicitly. Durkheim explains in more homogeneous groups, in terms of norms, values and customs, individuals are more likely to be bound by the commitments and responsibilities of communal life. For him, subjects who share a sense of continuity and futurity find hope or purpose greater than themselves, protecting them from their personal difficulties. However, Durkheim's

allusion to continuity serves to integrate, or buffer from potential isolation, whereas Erikson views it as a reflective way of making sense of one's life.

During the identity-crisis stage, Erikson explains that youths typically spend years experimenting with group membership with the expectation that they will reach a sense of identity. Certain rites of passage marking the transition into adulthood necessitate particular roles and responsibilities that tend to endure, facilitating their identification with persistent qualities. However, many of these transitions, such as leaving the parental home, finishing school, building a family, getting married, and having children, tend to be prolonged. This leaves adolescents in crisis for a longer period of time. In addition, the fragility of these institutions diminishes the significance of these rituals.

Erikson's model of psychosocial development highlights the transition from childish forms of identification, in which selfhood is conceived solely in relation to others, toward self-actualization and an other-centeredness. Youths develop a faithful optimism towards events, navigating between trust and mistrust, in their relationships with their primary caregiver. In conflicts between autonomy, shame, and doubt, they gain self-esteem from the approval of others when they begin to explore and assert themselves. Through their resolution of initiative and guilt, they derive a sense of orientation and purpose from the projection of images of themselves into the future according to established and socially accepted roles. Finally, especially at school, Erikson claims that youths must navigate senses of industry and inferiority, as they tend to evaluate themselves in terms of their value or the value of what they do for others. Successful resolution of their identity crises means that they rely less on others for a sense of self. Jane Kroger writes about Erikson's conception of self-continuity:

> Despite changes in interpersonal relationships, social roles and contexts, an attained sense of identity enables one to experience a continued sense of self and role commitment across time and place.
> (Kroger 62)

Erikson argues that successful adult identities should be capable of enduring while the childhood forms of these individuals dissolve or mutate with the passage of time. Nevertheless, when facing unstable conditions, people can anticipate the difficulty or impossibility of achieving and maintaining such an identity. Essentially, those who define themselves according to the relatively transient qualities of their experience would be more likely to have fragile identities because the external conditions on which they rely are unstable. The constant challenge of identity development is to resolve the tensions between internal and external influences in a way that leaves open the possibility of further revision. A person must constantly rediscover his or her orientation in the world while being sensitive to their surroundings.

Erikson's theory postulates that adolescents must break from the forms of identification composed of concrete visions of the future; people's expectations and the actual unfolding of events tend to deviate from one's expectations. Instead, they should develop a sense of self, as well as a sense of desire, that can adapt to the unforeseeable events of the future. Durkheim clarifies, in his conceptualization of anomie, the possible consequences of having too little self-restraint and self-control. For him, this generates an unquenchable thirst and interminable frustration. Erikson suggests that this kind of impulsivity occurred more commonly in youths who had been given too much freedom, or those who simply rejected the constraint imposed by authority figures.

The ways youths typically resolve their crises of identity and set up a continuous identity, were further elaborated by James Marcia (1966). He describes four identity statuses that individuals might encounter in their negotiation of continuity, according to adolescents' exploration and commitment toward social and personal traits, like career choice, religion, and political ideology. His work clarifies the typical problems associated with the establishment of self-continuity, and, as shown by Dagenais, helps clarify the identity problems of today's youth. Like Erikson, Marcia argues that over-identification with particular role models and groups cannot serve as the foundation of a successful identity. He contends that individuals need to develop complex persistence strategies that unify the past and future, and inner and outer qualities, through an enduring and adaptive self-concept. At the poles of this crisis, Erikson defines fidelity as representing achievement, and diffusion for those who had not yet committed themselves to an identity. To this, Marcia adds the statuses of "moratorium" and "foreclosure", concepts that were not fully developed in Erikson's work.

On the lowest end of the scale, identity diffusion characterizes those who have not seriously broken from immature forms of identification and have not yet experienced a crisis. Marcia describes them as being limited in their capacity for intimate relationships and being ideologically uncommitted (Marcia, *Development and the Validation of Ego-Identity Status* 552). He observes that these people tend to lack a definite self-concept, have no definite career plans, make little preparation for the future, and rely entirely on others for a sense of self.

In Marcia's view, foreclosed individuals are committed in important areas of life, but they adopt these commitments mainly from their childhood idols, primarily parents.

These individuals circumvent the crisis by idealizing the roles presented to them by others. From Erikson's characterization of diffusion, these individuals are intolerant and exclude those characterized by minor differences as a defence against identity confusion. Marcia observes that "a certain rigidity characterizes [their] personality; one feels that if he were faced with a situation in which parental values were non-functional, he would be extremely threatened" (Marcia, *Development and the Validation of Ego-Identity Status* 552). Marcia finds that these youths' self-esteem is extremely vulnerable to information that threatens their self-concepts. In addition, they tend to respond unrealistically to failure, continuing to maintain lofty goals to which they are unsuited. They have a rigid sense of self rooted in the fragile idealizations of others.

The moratorium status characterizes those actively struggling in crisis. Marcia observes that these youths tend to explore alternatives, but they remain uncommitted. These individuals have yet to successfully negotiate the demands of their social surroundings, especially their caregivers, with their own needs and potential. They develop persistence strategies, but are required to abandon them and renew their search because they are insufficiently adapted to their surroundings to undergo simple revision. They briefly cling to their beliefs, which then disappear. These youths tend to be stuck in crisis. Marcia finds that these individuals are unable to make sense of change. Marcia claims that these youths give the impression of struggling for orientation, but often appear overly anxious and overly preoccupied with themselves. He clarifies that "His sometimes bewildered appearance stems from his vital concern and internal preoccupation with what occasionally appear to him as irresolvable questions" (Marcia, *Development and the Validation of Ego-Identity Status* 552). As well, Erikson notes that

youths in crisis occasionally suffer from an exaggerated introversion or self-consciousness:

> The growing and developing young people, faced with this physiological revolution within them, are now primarily concerned with attempts at consolidating their social roles. They are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect earlier cultivated roles and skills with the ideal prototypes of the day.
> (Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* 94)

Marcia suggests that individuals with the achieved status have explored alternatives in ideological and occupational domains and are committed to self-chosen orientations. They re-evaluate their past beliefs and achieve resolution. Marcia explains that these youths have a sense of continuity through a balance of themselves and their environment.

Marcia's work allows us to infer that those who are actively in crisis and those who have circumvented the crisis by adopting idealized identities are unprepared to provide an enduring account of their identity. These findings are important for interpreting the implications of Chandler's research, as well as for discussing the family and identity in the third chapter. Marcia's work points to some of the problems inherent in being obliged to the understanding of others concerning the existential possibilities constituting the self and in ascribing to a fixed identity that conflict with the surrounding environment.

Inheritance and Investment as Conditions of Temporality

In a 1987 study, Chandler, Boyes, Ball and Hala found that disruptions in the maintenance of individuals' self-continuity coincided with their lack of commitment to their futures. That is, those who fail to achieve a sense of personal persistence - being the same person despite change - display less concern for their own future well-being. Postulating that actively suicidal youths lack this very concern, Chandler and his colleagues applied this hypothesis to their study of youth suicide.

In their monograph entitled *Personal Persistence, Identity Development and Suicide* (2003), Chandler and his colleagues contend that those with weak commitments to their futures are more willing to commit suicide. On the other hand, those who do not commit suicide have future prospects that they are unwilling to forgo, regardless of problems. In their view, youths' commitments to their future selves come from their development of an enduring sense of identity. They argue that the successful development of an identity requires that one will always have a workable personal or collective persistence when facing inevitable change. They claim that as social beings, we are required to simultaneously embody sameness and change. They conceive of identity as a reflective account of one's own life uniting these notions. For Chandler and his colleagues, persistence serves as the foundation of personhood. They explain that all individuals must develop strategies to resolve the paradox of time and existence. In their view, understanding oneself as the same person through time is necessary for social life:

> Although our lives are composed of innumerable episodes, each with its own viewpoint and focus and role, we are, nevertheless, all seemingly geared in whatever ways are necessary to allow us to 'hold various things constant' and to 'see ourselves as transcending our singularities' in

> whatever fashion is required to render such different time-slices as all episodes in the career of one and the same person.
> (Chandler, et al., *Personal Persistence, Identity Development and Suicide* 6)

Chandler and his colleagues contend that continuity is deeply vital to what it means to be a person. They argue that "without some way of connecting past events with the future, commitments and promises would be meaningless" (Chandler et al., *Personal Persistence, Identity Development and Suicide* 8). They claim that when disconnected from past meanings, people are disoriented in the present and apathetic toward their futures. In their view, without an enduring conception of self-identity, individuals might feel so detached from future versions of themselves that they would lose the conviction that they are being harmed. They explain that when social conditions undermine personal continuity, ownership of the past is lost, and all future prospects lose their appeal. In their view, losing oneself in time occludes the future, meaning becomes transient and weightless, and death becomes trivial. Without a sense of continuity, life may not be worth the effort it requires. Chandler et al. argue that identity holds individuals responsible for their past actions, and pushes individuals and communities alike toward future prospects. In addition, individuals may have difficulty seeing beyond their present conditions when facing an obstruction of future prospects. They might extend their temporary feelings forward and backward over the course of their existence, and reduce themselves and their lives to impressions that legitimate these feelings.

From Erikson's conception, identities are evolving forms that emerge out of the negotiation between a subject and his environment. Developmental psychology emphasizes the significance of early childhood in the formation of persons as well as the

mode in which modern man achieves self-continuity. Because of a string of personal or collective mishaps, over time, certain individuals develop poor conceptions of themselves. Chandler et al. argue that what keeps most individuals from impulsively turning against themselves when life does not seem worth living are the responsibilities they owe to a past that defines the present and their optimistic expectations for the future. That is, individuals who successfully maintain a sense of personal persistence are shielded from the suffering of human life, and therefore choose life over death. Chandler and his colleagues explain that most people cling to life because they have an abiding stake in the future well-being of the person they are in the process of becoming. They claim that youths with only an ephemeral sense of their own persistence are incapable of fully conceiving their deaths. That is, they suggest that certain individuals, in whom the temporal link, which orients people toward the fulfillment of their commitments, is severed or non-existent, and these people are more vulnerable to abandoning life when faced with seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

* * *

In short, Chandler supposes that youths who commit suicide and those who do not may differ in terms of their concern for their own futures. Given the high suicide rate among Native peoples throughout North America, whose culture has been ravaged, Chandler argues that this relation between identity and youth suicide affects individuals and communities alike. He does not go so far as to say that dis-continuous communities manufacture individuals with identity problems; rather, he conceives of an analogical bridge between these dimensions. He discusses that due to personal or cultural difficulties, individuals or communities may lose track of themselves over time. As a

result, they may lose the capacity to successfully resolve the paradox of sameness and change, inhibiting the development of an enduring sense of identity.

Chandler explains that youths who negotiate a sense of identity typically develop strategies of increasing complexity to understand their persistence, which he describes according to a five-phase model. If these youths encounter threats to their sense of identity, they may be forced to abandon their project or strategy until they have devised a more complex and adaptive one. For example, people whose sense of self is rooted in transient features of their social environment will likely be forced to re-conceive themselves when the foundations of their sense of self fail. This occurs most often when they encounter contradictions that undermine their sense of identity. However, before a new strategy is in place, Chandler postulates that these youths briefly inhabit an in-between phase, in which they have no means of accounting for their persistence. In his view, it is at the moment when youths have only a weak sense of identity that they are most vulnerable to suicide.

Correlating Youth Suicide and Persistence Problems

Chandler and his colleagues wanted to test their hypothesis about the connection between youths' discontinuity of identity and suicide. They conducted two pilot studies (Chandler et al., *Personal Persistence, Identity Development and Suicide* 45-49) to determine the most appropriate means of accessing and interpreting their respondents' understanding of their own and others' continuity. They attempted to approach their respondents with various questions: "Tell me how you were five years ago, and tell me

how you are now" and "Please explain to me how you are the same in spite of the important changes." Of course, such accounts depend a great deal on the extent to which these individuals were capable of reflecting upon and expressing their self-sameness. Hence, they decided to indirectly get to these accounts by asking similar questions about the sameness and change in others, namely characters from films and literature. The individuals were presented with condensed versions of *A Christmas Carol* and *Les Misérables* and questioned about the characters of Scrooge and Jean Valjean. Based on the respondents' accounts of the characters' apparent transformations, Chandler and his colleagues felt they had achieved a sufficient measure of their capacity to resolve the paradox of sameness and change, assuming that the subjects would employ the same strategy for their own identity.

Chandler and his colleagues devised a scale according to the complexity their respondents' strategies. They found a strong correlation between their scale of personal continuity and Piaget's model of cognitive development, as well as their subjects' school-level, which they submit confirms its validity. Their findings suggest that as people age, their cognitive skills improve and they develop increasingly complex and adaptive strategies for accounting for their continuity.

Chandler et al. found evidence permitting the classification of two distinct types of default strategies employed by the respondents. These types differ according to the manner in which they provide a biographical unity for the subject's identity. The "essentialist strategy" is characterized by an attachment of special significance to one or more enduring attributes that are imagined to persist. They observe that immature essentialists tend to focus solely on sameness, the concrete and enduring qualities of the

self, and discounted change as mere illusion. In contrast, the "narrative strategy" embraces change, supposing that sameness can be satisfied by linking together distinct time-slices through the continuity of their meaning or the purpose they serve. For these individuals, meaning is conferred through the construction of stories, whereby past, present and future are integrated into a cohesive narrative structure. Chandler and his colleagues find that immature narrativists tied their stories to particularly significant events and established their biographical continuity through them. Their respondents tend to consistently use the same type and level of complexity in their accounts.

Chandler et al. then conducted a study that longitudinally compared the types of persistence strategies employed by various aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations. The interviews were standardized by having participants comment on shorts films and literature of Native and Euro-American content with themes dealing with character development. They found that their participants' continuity-assurance practices were primarily culturally determined and were in no way influenced by the type of story they were presented. Importantly, they observed that over time, their subjects tended to maintain the same type of strategy, and the majority of them developed strategies of greater complexity. Again, they found a positive correlation between age and level score.

After developing a model for assessing the respondents' persistence strategies, Chandler and his colleagues then reversed their approach and tested whether failures in developing persistence strategies do indeed contribute to the suicides of youths. They tested the hypothesis that youths exhibiting suicidal behaviours have temporarily lost their conviction of their continuity, having fallen between strategic stages. They had previously interviewed more than 80 non-suicidal adolescents who had all demonstrated

an account of how they and others remained the same person throughout drastic personal change. Since the demographics of their previous studies were extremely varied, they were required to match these non-suicidal adolescents with each member of their suicidal sample according to age, sex and socioeconomic status. Their suicidal youth sample of 41, between the ages of 12 and 18, was taken from an inpatient psychiatric unit, and enrolled if their screening judged them to be of normal intelligence and free of significant brain damage. These hospitalized patients were classified according to high or low suicide risk: 23 were deemed "low risk" and the rest, who had been placed within the past 3 months on "active suicidal precautions," were classified as "high risk".

Following a presentation of comic book versions of *A Christmas Carol* and *Les Misérables,* Chandler and his colleagues conducted a relatively similar "Personal Persistence Interview" as in their previous studies to assess the respondents' capacity to resolve the problem of personal persistence. The respondents assigned to the category representing no strategy all willingly participated in the discussion of the problem of persistence but "threw up their hands," according to Chandler, having failed to find what they found to be an acceptable solution. Some participants referred to their previous solutions, which they realized were no longer sufficient. Basically, they tried and failed to develop a lasting solution for the problem of persistence.

Their data indicated that 83% of the actively suicidal patients failed to find any serviceable way of understanding themselves and others as continuous in time (Chandler, et al., 2003 pp. 56-60). That is, the majority of respondents could not demonstrate even a basic understanding of continuity. Those most actively struggling to negotiate a sense of identity were also those with the greatest risk of suicide, and who had already made

serious attempts on their lives. All of their non-hospitalized respondents and all but two of their hospitalized and non-suicidal patients were capable of providing an account of their own and others' continuity. Therefore, the researchers concluded that failure to deal effectively with the paradox of sameness and change has a profound impact on youth suicide. Thus, being caught between childhood identification and the achievement of a mature and continuous sense of self leaves youths vulnerable to suicide. Youths caught in transition between two phases without strategies for making claims of persistence appear most susceptible.

As seen with Marcia, moratorium characterizes those who are actively searching but are unable to settle on a continuous identity. They are unable to balance the demands imposed on them and effectively break from their adolescence. They find themselves in limbo when they are unable to conceive of their own persistence throughout change. Chandler finds that this in-between phase correlates with youth suicide. Foreclosure, characterized by an unreflective adherence to a concrete identity ascribed by another, may be associated with the employment of more simplistic persistence strategies. Being derived from less mature forms of identification, these strategies are more likely to encounter contradiction, leaving youths without the means of accounting for their identity.

As Marcia demonstrates, navigating the phase of an identity crisis can be a long and difficult process, in which youths might oscillate between phases for years until they formulate a concept of themselves that endures despite changes in conditions. Chandler et al. demonstrate that as youths work through this critical period of development, they may encounter as many as four distinct transitional moments in which they are devoid of

the necessary resources for resolving this paradox of selfhood. It is in these periods of transition - moratorium status, to use Marcia's terms - that Chandler claims youths lack the appropriate concern for their future well-being. The past and future collapse on the present and the only thing that matters is their momentary suffering.

> Bereft of the usual identity-preserving connections that keep all of us centered in moments of despair, you may suddenly find yourself at risk of throwing everything away, of putting yourself out of your current misery, all over events that, should you live to tell the tale, may later seem of little consequence (Chandler, *Personal Persistence, Identity Development and Suicide* 53).

As commitment to the future serves as a buffer against self-harm, Chandler postulates that there is a greater risk of suicide during these transitional moments. These youths may be unable to envision a future that is different from the present, or, worse, they cannot envision a future at all. Youths who do not take their lives seem committed to a future prospect that they are unwilling to forego.

After demonstrating a connection between individual discontinuity and the risk of suicide, Chandler and his colleagues looked to the collective dimension to show how measures of ensuring the continuity of a collective identity protects against youth suicide. From the results of their previous studies, they hypothesized that communities that have successfully worked to promote a measure of cultural continuity, linking their past with their construction of a collective future, might have low rates of youth suicide. Cultural continuity, like individual continuity, is not necessarily an insistence that some qualities endure or that traditions be preserved. Both levels imply a reflectivity of one's unity by incorporating change into oneself.

To assess cultural continuity, Chandler et al. chose to study a number of Native populations since these have the highest rates of suicide of any distinct cultural group. The Aboriginal cultures of the Americas have suffered centuries of cultural un-training that has branded their traditional norms irrelevant and severely disrupted their commitments to future prospects, effectively dissolving the fabric of their culture as well as their identities. The researchers looked at "efforts not only to preserve, restore and rehabilitate the remnants of their collective past, but to regain control of their own future and destiny" (Chandler, *Personal Persistence, Identity Development and Suicide* 65). They looked to these efforts as measures of cultural continuity. In studying the individual dimension, they tested the continuity aspect of identity in positive correlation with suicide. That is, they tested the direct correlation between continuity failure and suicide risk. At the communal level, they looked at how continuity strategies when in place protect, and how their absence correlates with suicide. In other words, they looked at how measures of cultural identity help ensure the survival and prosperity of the group.

Using three methods of categorization for the Aboriginal populations of British Columbia – 196 bands, 29 tribal councils and 16 language groups – they tested the relation between the presence of various "cultural continuity markers" and youths' suicide rates. The markers under consideration were self-government, land claims, education, health services, cultural facilities, and police and fire services. Since the publication of their monograph, they have included two additional variables: women in government and child services (Chandler and Lalonde). In every case, they found lower rates of youth suicide in communities where these markers were present; conversely, they observed the highest rates in communities that presented none of these markers.

These markers of cultural strength, which represent a community's responsible actions for seizing their own destinies and assuring their own continuity, permitted Chandler not only to relate dis-continuity with youth suicide, but also demonstrated the protective value of these efforts. On both individual and communal levels, those who have no stake in their futures and who are unprepared to confidently orient an identity toward it leave open the possibility of suicide. In contrast, those who have made preparations to ensure a future for themselves, with a collective identity, help protect their youth from suicide. This conception of continuity resembles Durkheim's conception of integration.

Negotiating Constraint and Continuity

The implications of Chandler's work are profound. There is a marked similarity between Durkheim's work, which relates suicide, the lack of integration into a group identity, and that of Chandler's research, which related youth suicide with problems of achieving a sense of continuity. Both Chandler and Durkheim emphasize the protective value of a community's cohesiveness. Both contend that communities maintained by a strong collective identity, sharing values, beliefs, norms and goals, more often ensure a commitment to life for their members. They consider the collective identity a defence against suicide.

Durkheim spoke of integration in relative terms while Chandler addressed the question of continuity in absolute terms. For Chandler, continuity is either achieved or not achieved. Though the various "markers of cultural continuity" represent varying

degrees of continuity, Chandler is more concerned with a dualism of success versus failure, assuming that total continuity was a possibility. Identity development may involve a life-long process, but it is generally concentrated around adolescence. Durkheim views integration on a scale, without absolute success or failure. For example, he describes the ways in which Catholic societies were more integrated than Protestant societies.

Moreover, in Durkheim's study, adults faced integration problems, which tended to increase with age. Presumably, these adults' identities had already been constructed, and they had experienced threats to its unity over the course of their lives. Chandler's personal continuity problems, on the other hand, are mainly experienced by youths. These youths faced the problem of achieving a sense of identity, not of resisting the manner in which institutional crises unhinged identity.

Contrary to Durkheim, Chandler clearly highlights the individual dimension of the problem. Chandler views, to a greater extent, the manner in which individuals take charge of their own continuity or collective identity, whereas Durkheim often treats integration as a property belonging to a particular society. However, Chandler does not seek an explanation of how cultural continuity problems impact individual efforts to achieve a sense of continuity. That is, he does not postulate that individuals from continuous societies find their identities supported and their own continuity assured in the process. He demonstrates that individuals and communities both face a similar problem: their temporal persistence. Durkheim, as we know, conceives of integration as a societal trait that carries down into the lives of individuals, uniting them and orienting them around collective goals. Adapting Chandler's findings to Durkheim, we might consider

that homogeneous societies are better at reproducing norms, values and beliefs, because these deviated little from one person to another. Hence, these kinds of societies generate more persistent individual identities.

* * *

Chandler's research reveals a relation between youth suicide and identity problems, mainly problems with establishing an enduring sense of continuity. Collective and individual identities alike are affected by these problems. At the individual level, as youths develop more complex cognitive skills, they also appear to develop increasingly complex strategies with which they account for their identity. However, the passage from one stage to the next is not necessarily smooth. Some youths experience their transitions as a crisis, in which they temporarily fall between strategies, and at this point, without a strategy, they are apparently most vulnerable to suicide. Marcia describes two forms of identity status that might correspond with Chandler's findings. Marcia uses the term "foreclosed" for youths who hastily adopt simplistic and immature identities. These identities often fail because they are not sufficiently adaptive for an enduring sense of continuity and thus more likely to encounter contradiction. On the other hand, the term "moratorium status" is used to describe those whose simplistic strategies fail and require reconsideration, or those who perceive only contradictory information inhibiting their development of a sense of identity.

These contemporary identity problems are twofold: first, youths appear to be inadequately prepared to develop a continuous and mature adult identity. Second, the conditions of contemporary society hinder and contradict the development of a

continuous sense of identity. It may well be that our conception of identity is ill-suited for the conditions of contemporary reality and that our insistence upon it only harms our youths. We are forced to ask ourselves two questions: what are the conditions that continually challenge these adolescents' conceptions of identity? Why do others cling to identities that are in contradiction with their environment, only to have them collapse?

Contemporary societies seem to demand identities of greater complexity and adaptability compared with the previous social types. Durkheim's work clarifies the ways in which more homogeneous forms of solidarity supported, to a greater extent, what psychologists might refer to as "immature identities." This term is defined as ego-identification with others for a sense of identity, rather than developing one that is individually capable of weathering change. These identities effectively reproduced particular roles and structured transitions from one phase to the next around objectively recognized rites of passage. Daniel Dagenais postulates that the two important dimensions of symbolic transmission, the assignment of concrete roles and the preparation for adulthood, took place primarily within the family. These dimensions help ensure commitment to the community and implicate youths in efforts to ensure their community's continuity. In the following chapter, I will present Daniel Dagenais' research which, from a sociological perspective, employs a synthetic approach that looks at the relation between contemporary transformations occurring within the family and the shape of contemporary suicide.

Chapter Three: Becoming an Adult in the Contemporary World

To bridge the gap between psychology and sociology, a case of sociological research can be compared to Michael J. Chandler's research and its focus on Native youth suicide. While the importance of youth suicide as an object for sociological inquiry is self-evident, whether it is because the study of suicide originated in sociology or because youth suicide emerged for the first time in the contemporary world, sociology has seemingly outsourced its popular object to suicidology. The first issue of any Canadian journal in over fifty years entirely devoted to revisiting the study of suicide, given the novelty of youth suicide, appeared in 2008 in *Recherches sociographiques* under the supervision of Daniel Dagenais. The presentation that follows shall be devoted to Dagenais' research[6] as it relates to understanding suicide's social traits through individual cases. These traits remain constant from year to year. The aim is to bring closer two different approaches to the study of suicide by drawing lines between Chandler and Dagenais' research. Before proceeding with a presentation of Dagenais' research and its comparison with that of Chandler, it is necessary to consider the broad features of contemporary suicide revealed in this issue of *Recherches sociographiques.*

In this issue of *Recherches sociographiques* (2007), Québec is treated as a kind of laboratory for understanding the phenomenon of youth suicide. The first relevant methodological principle in this attempt to interpret the meaning of youth suicide is the

[6]It is clear that this research is a collective one, originating in *L'École de Montréal.* This issue is a continuation of Olivier Clain's psychoanalytically inspired reflection, and it includes contributions from Gilles Gagné, André Tremblay, Jean Caron and some of their students, along with two texts written by Dagenais and followed by reviews by Concordia students. For the sake of simplicity, this research will be referred to as "Dagenais' research" as the theoretical component is most developed in his work. The documentation of cases of suicide is his own contribution.

assumption that the reality of this phenomenon is demonstrated by its social traits. These traits depict features that belong to particular forms of suicide. Suicide's historical personality comes from its contrast against previous forms. The historical novelty of youth suicide is sufficient to attest to it being a problem belonging to contemporary society. To get an impression of the contemporary physiognomy of suicide, which serves as a foundation of Dagenais' approach, some social traits associated with contemporary suicide will be enumerated from this issue.

Firstly, youth suicide emerged simultaneously from the 1960s to the end of the twentieth century in all western countries, aside from a few exceptions where its emergence was delayed by about ten years. This *emergence* asserts that youth suicide is a social phenomenon. In addition to the ascription of this feature to the simultaneous transformation of suicide, the fact that all these societies are dealing specifically with a *youth* problem means that the same feature can be attributed to this important aspect of contemporary suicide. Secondly, although youth suicide was unheard of prior to the 1960s, it is linked with the past since statistics reveal an amplification of a typically modern trend: the over-mortality of males by suicide. As this pattern was not observed in countries like China or India, for instance, this problem is associated particularly with western societies. Thirdly, while "Durkheimian" suicide was predominantly an urban phenomenon, contemporary suicide reverses this geographic pattern for all age groups. Today, suicide is more prevalent in rural regions. Fourthly, the sex ratio, a significant feature of contemporary suicide, is at its highest among those in the 20 to 24 age group. Finally, all these traits, which are typically observed throughout most of the western world, appear to be amplified in Québec. Throughout the twentieth century, the suicide

rate had previously been systematically lower in Quebec than in the rest of Canada. With the emergence of youth suicide, it became the highest.

In Dagenais' view, the reality of contemporary youth suicide is revealed by these traits. He states that these traits must therefore be the object of interpretation for sociologists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts. To ignore them and focus studies elsewhere amounts to denying that which they signify. Research today tends to overlook the historical significance of these features of contemporary suicide. With the intention of seizing the collective and individual dimensions of youth suicide, Dagenais' research comprises an interpretation of individual cases according to these patterns, which the cases collectively compose.

The Family and Transitions

For Dagenais, the patterns given by statistics partly depict the objective features of the phenomenon. Not only do these traits belong to a wider contemporary social context, but these particular trends could also be significantly linked to the crisis of the family. Referring to Durkheim's intuitions about the family's anti-anomic character, Dagenais interprets these trends according to the loss of the family's protection against suicide in contemporary society. He sees the increase of masculine suicide as a reflection of the loss of the family's provision of domestic protection: "C'est que la crise de la famille, croyons-nous, fait disparaitre le facteur de protection que la "société domestique" jouait à l'égard du suicide des hommes (rôle identifié par Durkheim, et jamais démenti depuis)" (Dagenais, *Recherches Sociographiques* 17).

Moreover, Dagenais contends that because the nucleus of contemporary suicide is composed of the suicide of youths, society faces an anthropological problem surrounding youths' preparation for the adult world. In other words, he considers youth suicide a symptom of society's failure to socialize youths according to their particular needs. He insists that the family institution is paramount for the socialization of youths in modern societies. In his view, youth suicide reveals the significance of the role the family plays in preparing youths for adulthood.

Finally, linking these two traits, he argues that the family provides many rites of passage that symbolically mark youths' maturation into adults. With the responsibilities this new state entails, youths are thrust them into the world of adults. The ages between 20 and 24 at which the suicide ratio between men and women is most imbalanced is the age that was until recently considered the age of marriage, reflecting the crisis of the family and the transformation of its anthropological role. Baudelot and Establet discuss the progressive extension of many rites of passage that demarcate youths' transition into adulthood, most of which are embedded in the family institution:

> À une insertion rapide sur le marché du travail coïncidant avec la fondation d'une famille et l'accès à l'autonomie résidentielle, succède pour l'immense majorité des jeunes un fort allongement des calendriers d'entrée dans la vie. L'âge de la fin des études, ceux du premier emploi, du départ chez les parents, de la mise en couple, de la naissance du premier enfant sont progressivement retardés, et cela dans toutes les catégories sociales. (Baudelot and Establet, *Suicide: l'envers de notre monde* 142)

Thus, the family no longer provides the support it once did in youths' passage into adulthood at this crucial moment when youths, especially males, are typically called upon to commit themselves to the world of adults.

According to these findings that link youth suicide with the crisis of the family, Dagenais argues that the problem specifically concerns youths' passage into adulthood. In his view, contemporary youths face identity problems, which are cultivated within particular family environments, which negatively affect their transitions. The coincidence of the transformation of the modern family and the problem of youth suicide, in his view, reveals the sociological and anthropological roles that the family played with regard to this transition and in the protection against suicide[7]. Anthropologically, it provided particular rites of passage that significantly mark this transition; sociologically, it provides the space for the development and maintenance of complimentary gendered identities that were structured around the conditions of industrial society. In his view, the crisis of the family has opened the door to certain identity problems that affect youths' passage into adulthood.

Dagenais' view of adulthood is similar to Erikson's view in some respects. Erikson sees development in terms of the process of tending toward an idealized self-actualized person who needs to possess particular traits. Similarly, Dagenais also sees this process in terms of the achievement of a particular status for oneself and for society. Both emphasize the involvement of a break in continuity during which people must distance themselves from their childhood. However, Dagenais also emphasizes the

[7]Dagenais does not speak nostalgically about the modern family. He explains how it reveals something we could not have observed previously. That is, the problem itself did not exist *a priori*, nor was the family constructed with the aim of providing this function.

importance of recognition in this process: this transition involves a symbolic transformation and would be meaningless were it not objectively recognized. For Erikson, the process involves a growth of cognitive potential. He views this passage mainly as the culmination of a process involving numerous stages of identity growth that need to be overcome in order for the transition to be possible, and the development of a sense of unity for oneself and a mature sense of identity in a way that will endure despite change.

Although Erikson and Dagenais view adulthood from different dimensions, both implicitly suggest the necessity of socializing toward a particular end. Erikson's conception is more absolute as it involves the necessary development of certain virtues whereas Dagenais is more socially and historically relative. The views of adulthood can be brought closer considering that both of these comprise a reorienting of one's preoccupations from the self toward the community. For Erikson, the stages that follow the crisis of identity are centered on others; for Dagenais, participation among adults implies a responsibility for others. There is an overlap between the development of certain virtues and cognitive capacities, the reorientation of one's focus toward the community, and the objective symbols recognizing that a radical transformation has taken place. In Dagenais' conception of adulthood, he outlines two functions that the family plays that are revealed by the emergence of youth suicide. Following this, he proceeds with an interpretation of individual cases.

On the one hand, Dagenais argues that anthropologically, the modern family's primary aim is to socialize youths so that they may be self-sufficient and eventually find a family of their own: "Cela revient à dire que la famille nucléaire ne se reproduit pas

elle-même. Au contraire, elle vise, par l'éducation, à former des êtres qui lui échapperont, qui s'émanciperont de sa tutelage. Elle se réalise lorsque ceux qu'elle a nourris et aimés rompent avec elle" (Dagenais, *La fin de la famille moderne* 85). In his view, marriage, symbolizing the foundation of the family in modern societies, is an acceptance to carry out this task. He claims that the continuity of meaning is a necessary part of living in a society: "toute société doit s'assurer d'un dispositif qui pousse les êtres à en rejouer la donne" (Dagenais, *Recherches sociographiques* 23). It is in the family, Dagenais argues, that modern individuals find particular rites of passage that symbolically mark their break with childhood. These rites come with a number of enduring roles and responsibilities that orient them toward the symbolic continuity of their community and confer onto them statuses that recognize this capacity.

For Dagenais, youths are called upon to accept the symbolic system in which they are thrown and to play a part in its transmission, which is the primary socializing aim of the modern family. People who possess the capacity to reflect upon the consequences of their decisions are required to willingly accept the potential restrictions that result from their choices. They must consciously accept the consequences of living in a society with others. The crisis of the family, which has affected this ritual process, opens the door to anomie, and it no longer effectively persuades youths to accept the limitation of their expectations.

> L'effondrement de la famille en tant que rituel du devenir adulte permettant d'enterrer sa jeunesse en s'en faisant une raison, ouvre la porte à l'anomie virtuelle profonde de la société moderne industrielle. À certains égards, cette société a prétendu faire du monde une simple opportunité pour l'individu. Le mariage et la fondation d'une famille, équivalant à l'acceptation de rejouer la donne du symbolique et d'en assurer la transmission, ont constitué le rempart contre l'anomie dans la

> mesure où ils impliquaient l'acceptation, dans son identité propre, en l'occurence par le biais de l'identité de genre, d'une dimension qui pousse à la reproduction du symbolique. Cette attitude existentielle, cette acceptation ultime de l'introduction dans le symbolique est simplement le contraire de l'anomie.
> (Dagenais, *Recherches sociographiques* 17)

Through a dialectical approach to the subject and society, Dagenais, in a sense, solves the problem that Chandler avoids in his analogical treatment of the individual and collective dimensions. Dagenais explains the necessity for each to devise a means of accounting for their significative unity in time.

> If faut se departir de l'idée, archi-contemporaine, selon laquelle l'identité humaine serait simplement "choisie", alors que l'être au monde animal ne le serait pas. Car la possibilité qui est la notre de faire partie de ceux chez qui l'identité peut être mise en scène, ironisée, transformée, construite, etc., cette possibilité même n'est pas choisie, ou mise en scène; elle est donnée.
> (Dagenais, *Recherches sociographiques* 145)

In *La fin de la famille moderne* (2000), Dagenais argues that contemporary societies are witnessing a dislocation of children's education from the family and a transformation of the parent-child relationship. These particular transformations, he supposes, contribute in large part to the identity problems affecting youths' entrance into adulthood:

> Les principaux agents de la socialization, parents et éducateurs, ne sont plus assurés de la valeur de l'éducation moderne et leur autorité vacille. Nul besoin que les enfants se regroupent pour en revendiquer l'abolition: leurs parents n'y croient plus, eux qui dans les années soixante ont lutté contre elle! Il en a résulté une modification de la conscience de soi des enfants. À maints égards, ils considèrent avec mépris et arrogance ces adultes qui refusent de tenir leur place, qui préfèrent une illusoire relation d'égailté à une position de responsabilité dans la transmission du

> monde.
> (Dagenais, *La fin de la famille moderne* 204)

The second sociological function the family played is the support of particular gender identities embedded in the industrial world. This function is revealed by the reality of youth suicide, specifically the over-mortality of males. That is, the family institution was structured around the demands of industrial society and helped support these forms of identity. The male identity as the family's provider and the female role as educator and caretaker of children were complimentary. They adapted to the demands of the social-historical context. However, Dagenais argues, without the support of the family, the space in which these identities could meaningfully be put into practice disappears, leaving those who specialize in them feeling obsolete. Without the family serving as a support system for these gender roles that were put at the service of industrial society, it seems senseless to pursue them.

Dagenais contends that the French Canadians of the peripheral regions of Quebec especially specialized as providers. This was partly due to their slow insertion into industrial capitalism and to the relative weakness of their class consciousness. Regardless of the contributing factors, these regions still tend to maintain relatively traditional values compared with cities. As long as the family supports the provider role, men find meaning in their work, which often demands that they are away from their families for extended periods of time. Dagenais argues that without a family to provide for or return to, this lifestyle would be absurd:

> Le suicide contemporain révèle à un autre niveau à quel point la "société des individus" dépendait finalement du fait que ceux-ci étaient des hommes et des femmes. Et la chose prenait un tour particulier pour le

> monde ouvrier qui a produit la société industrielle sans qu'il en ait conçu le projet. La famille a constitué pour les hommes soumis à un monde qui leur échappait en partie une des seules raisons d'être d'un travail qui, laissé à lui-même, pouvait bien n'en pas avoir. Disons la chose pratiquement: quand la société industrielle vous invente un travail qui n'est ni un métier, ni une profession, ni une carrière qui exige que vous partiez trois semaines dans le bois pour revenir à la maison une semaine sur quatre, ce travail risque d'être dépourvu de sens s'il n'y a personne "à la maison". La société industrielle s'est construite en parasitant la société domestique. Il s'ensuit que le rôle de pourvoyeur (comme la culture ouvrière, comme la solidarité communautaire) était crucial pour les hommes afin de donner un sens à un "travail" qui pouvait ne pas en avoir.
> (Dagenais, *Recherches sociographiques* 17-18)

In brief, Dagenais explains that youth suicide reveals the identity problems youths face in their passage to adulthood. He explains that the family is significant in its provision of markers of the passage and in its provision of existential possibilities that were adjusted to the demands of their social environment. Families help carry children from one level of conscious experience to another, prepare them for the adult world, and facilitate their disassociation from the children they once were. Assuming that these youths at least have the capacity to be conscious of the deviant character of their existential pursuits, Dagenais views these as "pathological projects". As their pursuits deviate from those that would be considered realistic or sensible, these youths are partly aware of the impossibility of their project's future.

Given this view, Dagenais' analysis of individual cases seeks to understand how youths' problems passing into adulthood manifest themselves, which he suspects would come in the form of two types: one that would make sense of the typically masculine

problem and another that would account for the youth problem in general[8]. Considering the ways in which the family facilitates the passage into adulthood, evidenced by youth suicide's link with the family, Dagenais turns toward an investigation of individual cases hoping to explain how these transition problems typically occur.

Investigating Youth Suicide and the Family Structure

Dagenais' empirical work proceeds by way of qualitative analysis of individual cases, the manner Durkheim had originally intended, to make sense of the reality of suicide revealed by statistical data. Apprehending suicide in terms of identity problems affecting youths' transitions into adulthood, he sought to identify the individual passions of contemporary suicide that together form a collective portrait. Since the trends found throughout the western world are amplified in Quebec and since these trends are further exemplified in the Abitibi region, Dagenais looks specifically at this peripheral in his investigation.

Dagenais interprets a number of individual cases of suicide, viewing the problems youths face entering into adulthood in terms of existential projects that appear to run counter to the necessity of participating in their society's symbolic transmission. He aims to piece together a biographical account of these youths' existential projects that led them toward the taking of their lives, and he then links their common characteristics. He decided this could be best achieved by combining the information provided in coroner's

[8]Dagenais' typology actually comprises of three types, one of which does not deal specifically with youth suicide, but pertains to the male identity. This interpretation of his work seeks to explain both this type and the type of youth suicide also associated with an over-mortality of males to suicide.

reports with the detailed accounts of friends, family members, and teachers, acquired through semi-structured interviews. He looks specifically at these youths' preparations for becoming adults and the kind of male or female they were looking to become.

Dagenais' analysis of the youths' biographical histories reveals two distinct groups in which nineteen of the cases could be classified with certainty. The distribution of cases within these groups was almost even. From these groups, Dagenais developed a formal contrast, from which he formed a typology. These two groups, which he referred to as "youths" and "adolescents", differed in terms of numerous dimensions: the youth's age, their familial and social contexts, the existential paths they seemed to have been pursuing, and the circumstances of their suicides.

First, in terms of age, Dagenais noted a five to six year difference between the two groups' averages. The youths averaged 23 to 24 years of age and the adolescents averaged 18 years. Secondly, and significant to the causality of the suicide, their family environments differed significantly: the "youths" tended to come from families in which the parents were separated and the "adolescents" came from intact families. Thirdly, the latter group all lived at home, but none of the former did. Certainly, age played a part in their living situations, but this feature suggests a difference in maturity between the two and, for Dagenais, contributes significantly to the types of problems they faced in their coming of age.

Based on these characteristic differences and his investigation of these two groups, Dagenais developed two types according to the pathological existential projects these young people appear to have mounted against becoming an adult: first, the refusal

to become an adult, representing the "youths"; second, the fear of becoming an adult, representing the "adolescents".

In Dagenais' view, those characterized in terms of a refusal to become an adult displayed no preparation or commitments toward the transition into adulthood. None of them lived with their parents, yet they appeared to have no interest in taking part in the adult world. For Dagenais, they displayed aesthetic symbols of a systematic project of refusal in their clothing, the themes of their preferred music, and in their attitudes. This did not appear to be a political refusal; they simply refused to be a part of society. Dagenais observed that these youths tended to live in gangs, which were not necessarily street gangs as such, but rather groups of individuals collectively resisting becoming adults. Erikson makes a similar observation with regard to youths actively dealing with their identity crisis, noting that around this stage during which they are meant to develop a mature adult identity, youths tend to form collective identities in resistance against not having a continuous conception of self and tend to reject others who present minor differences. They do so in resistance against the added confusion this would generate. Employing Erikson's reasoning, these youths find comfort in the collective identity in a way that temporarily combats their anxieties toward their uncertain futures and discontinuous selves.

From what he learned of these youths' typical behaviours, Dagenais contends that these youths were "anomic." Unable to accept the cost of membership in society, they tended to occasionally live on the streets and participate in delinquent activities, such as vandalism, theft, and drug trafficking. To Dagenais, they appear to have been "on strike against society" (Dagenais, *Le suicide des jeunes: une pathologie du devenir adulte*

contemporain). Psychologically, these youths were insatiable. This was revealed in numerous accounts of friends and family members. To Dagenais' surprise, his respondents stated quite explicitly how the youths had no limits to their expectations.

Dagenais finds that they also appeared to display an existential anomie in the sense that they made little commitment to most aspects of their lives. They feigned signs of maturity and parodied adult roles without having made any preparations for adult life: none had school diplomas, few had jobs, none were married, and they seemed incapable of desiring or maintaining stable relationships. All but one of the men was on social welfare. They presented only superficial symbols of adulthood: they smoked at a young age, consumed marijuana and alcohol, and left their parents' home early. These youths' existential projects resemble those of Peter Pan and his lost boys.

Dagenais observes that all of the youths mounting this refusal to become adults come from broken families. Of course, many broken families do continue to carry out their functions with regards to the children's socialization. In these cases, Dagenais argues, the parental authority did not survive the separation. These youths basically had no parents. Most were from divorced families, and among the other cases, two had deceased fathers. By Dagenais' account, the parents unanimously admitted to having lost control of their child at a young age. The children had been allowed too much autonomy. Most of them seemed to have harboured feelings of resentment toward their parents and rejected their authority and, presumably, many other forms of "parental authority" outside the home. They often oscillated between their parents' homes, those of their grandparents, and life on their own in a display of ambivalence toward their families. In Dagenais' view, these youths developed a rejection of the adult world as a result of the

dissolution of family roles that once ensured the socialization of the child in ways that were appropriate for their social contexts. He refers mainly to the loss of parental authority and the dislocation of the provider of the child's education away from the family, two conditions that might hinder the child's orientation toward adulthood.

Dagenais explains that most of these cases were related to a social rupture or an abrupt change in the family's social condition. He links the dissolution of the parental authority with a sudden and obligatory shift from one system of socialization to another. Although the collapse of the parental function is a societal phenomenon, which for Dagenais has occurred in all societies as a result of the decomposition of the modern societal type, it has been particularly acute among French Canadians in the peripheral regions of Quebec. Dagenais claims that they experienced a number of changes within the family that contributed to their loss of parental authority, such as a shift away from the importance of the industrial sector, changes with regard to the family members' roles, the dislocation of education from this institution, and the transformation of the conjugal relationship. In many cases, men sought to maintain traditional roles while women wanted to expand their horizons and sought emancipation.

The adolescents, displaying a fear of becoming adults, were markedly different than the youths. By Dagenais' account, these youths set up projects for themselves in avoidance of adulthood, making no preparations for the adult world. The victims' families and friends revealed that these youths appeared to have been incapable of imagining themselves as adults. They tended to be overly dependent on their families for

comfort and security, and they presented signs of being afraid to leave the family, such as experiencing anxiety toward work, school, and people.

Dagenais' investigation reveals that their expressions of fear were primarily manifested in their divergence from reality. These youths displayed persistently childish behaviours: being overly affectionate with their parents, needing to be hugged constantly, wanting to be read bedtime stories, and displaying a childish eccentricity. For instance, one of the youths was still sleeping with his mother at the age of 15. Those interviewed described these youths' propensity to idealize reality and escape into fantasy. They idealized other people and imagined them to be perfect. They seemed committed to ideals that were unsuited for their circumstances, such as boys envisioning exaggerated male identities.

Dagenais observes that these unrealistic projects to which these youths committed themselves were also manifested in their attempts to exercise adult roles within their families. For example, some wanted to be the man of the house for their mothers, one sought to act as the father of his cousin, and another became an adult woman by being the housekeeper for her sister's family. These attempts to exercise adult roles within the family seem to suggest solutions to their not becoming self-sufficient adults or overcoming anxieties surrounding the adult world.

Dagenais found certain features within their family environments that appear to be at the root of these pathological projects to not pass into adulthood. Most of the families were intact. He observes that these youths tended to be over-protected, mainly on the part of the mother. Dagenais explains that in these cases, the father was

structurally excluded. They all share the lack of a father figure. For instance, the mother organized family vacations, budgets, and outings; the father was not informed and had no say. Dagenais also notes that during his interviews, a number of fathers needed permission from their wife before they could speak.

Dagenais asserts that the child's pathological idealization of an identity was certainly influenced by the negation of the father. This suggests that the mother has appropriated the role of the child's sole educator. He found, to his surprise, that many of these mothers employed child-care language consistent with that of social workers. Traditionally, especially in these old industrial sectors in the rural areas of Québec, the father-son relationship was one of master and apprentice. Now, the father is excluded and the son thus has little access to a male role model.

Dagenais' presentation of the family characteristic to which he attributes a number of cases displaying fears of becoming adults actually cultivates two types of identity problems that appear to both account for the masculine propensity to suicide and the youth problem in general: children lacking role models who construct unrealistic identities to emulate and those with domineering mothers who are unable to leave the nest without a tremendous expenditure of emotional energy. Dagenais intuits the distinction of a typically masculine third type, which he put aside in his more recent work to focus on the problems affecting both men and women. Nevertheless, based on Dagenais' research, these two problems seemingly tend to appear together and mutually aggravate these youths' identity problems. Both problems are connected in the way youths find comfort in their adoption of unrealistic identities and try to exercise them in inappropriate contexts. The problems are both concerned with the adoption of identities

that the youths know lack a future. For Dagenais, it seems that the precipitating events of their suicides confirm the suspicions that they have resisted for so long.

Dagenais supposes that under the protection of a domineering mother, the outside world would seem cruel and unjust. Small failures, like those immediately preceding the suicides, end up seeming catastrophic. Looking to Erikson's model of psychosocial development, two stages are compatible with this mixed type: "trust versus mistrust" and "initiative versus guilt". First, those who have failed to develop a basic sense of trust are described as fearing the inconsistency of the world; they feel anxious, insecure, and mistrustful. Also associated with this stage is an incapacity to act without the approval of others, going to excessive lengths to gain this approval, discomfort and hopelessness when alone, and difficulty reinvesting mental energy when required. As an attempt to combat these feelings of anxiety toward the outside world, these youths commit themselves to never leaving the safety of the family. Dagenais learned these youths tended to be soft and sensitive, which supports the potential association with this personality type.

The other aspect of this identity problem of adopting an idealized identity rather than negotiating one of their own could be linked with features of Erikson's "initiative versus guilt" stage. In this stage, children typically begin to project an image of themselves into the future. Through the idealization of others' roles, they attempt to discover who they are going to be. Normally, reality sets in and most youths realize the inadequacy of adopting idealized identities. However, incorporating the failures with regard to the development of a sense of basic trust, the youths may find that their idealized identities help combat their anxieties toward the world. In both, they seek

approval and employ this desire in their idealization and their identity projection. This appears to fall back onto a kind of oedipal relationship, where the child finds comfort in reproducing inappropriate patterns and in the safety of the nest.

* * *

Overall, through an investigation of individual cases, Dagenais' research shows ways in which the collapse of the typically modern parental roles is directly linked with youth suicide, specifically those pertaining to youths' socialization toward adulthood. Linking the individual and collective dimensions through the symbolic, Dagenais asserts that youths must be raised to eventually participate in symbolic reproduction. This is an anthropological necessity revealed upon consideration of the cases in which this passage into adulthood was systematically avoided. Confirming Durkheim's intuitions, Dagenais contends that the modern family's protective value is revealed by the forms of contemporary suicide.

Surveying the study of suicide, the intention was to bring two so-called irreconcilable approaches to the study of youth suicide closer together. Both Chandler and Dagenais set the goal of constructing such a link by incorporating psychological and sociological components in their works. However, the problem remains of how to link them. Lines have been drawn between them where certain elements of their works correspond analogically. They still employ two different conceptual systems that could possibly be joined.

Youth Development and Problems with Adulthood

Bridging the works of Chandler and Dagenais is difficult, as neither includes the other in their work. Despite the fact that both works seek to link the psychological and sociological aspects of youth suicide, they do not speak the same language. One deals with Native communities and the other with modern-western ones. Also, Dagenais looks at the identity problems that surround a single moment of transition whereas Chandler looks at problems related to developing a strategy to deal with "the paradox of sameness and change." Chandler links the individual and social dimensions analogically, and Dagenais does so in terms of their symbolic exchange.

First, in light of Chandler's finding of at least two identifiable persistence strategies, Natives and non-Natives may differ in terms of their youths' identity problems. At the individual level, he tested the relation between the ways in which non-Natives deal with the paradox of sameness and change. He then proceeded to show, at the communal level, that Native people's efforts to rebuild their cultural identity correlate with lower rates of youth suicide. Therefore it can be questioned if Native youths who are unable to account for their biographical unity are also at a greater risk of suicide or if non-Natives can work to ensure their protection through the strengthening of their collective identity. The answer may lie in the consideration of the essentialists and narrativists of Chandler's work as a unity.

The essentialists and narrativist approaches share the concept that identities are rooted in a particular symbolic system. In other words, people refer in the same symbolic way to others in the development of their identities. Both Dagenais and Chandler imply

that if people are not properly adapted to this the changes within this system, born of individual interaction, their identities cannot avoid collapse when they encounter a thought that contradicts the image or story they relied on in their self-conception. However, simple adherence is not ideal either. Nevertheless, for both individuals whose conception of themselves in the world is composed of enduring traits or for those strung together into a single story, the imperative, for grounding one's interaction[9] in the symbolic appears to be a condition of our humanity.

The second major difference between these works that must be reconciled is the conceptions of youths' identity problems, which both Dagenais and Chandler link with youth suicide. For Dagenais, these identity problems are related to a single transitional moment surrounding youths' passage into adulthood. On the other hand, Chandler contends that problems can arise at a number of transitional moments as youths pass through stages of increased cognitive complexity. This process amounts to developing a sense of unity for oneself and others. As well, because people and their situations continually change, revisiting one's strategy is often necessary at some point in the future. In his focus on the development of a sense of self in relation to others, Chandler opens the possibility that this process will never truly end. However, both Chandler and Erikson argue that this particular stage, at which an adolescent may be without a sense of self as a new strategy is developed, is concentrated around the period of adolescence. For the most part, once a working sense of continuity is established, only minor revisions are

[9]Certainly the language used to describe individual identities has grown, contributing to the further objectification of ourselves as distinct individuals, but even in primitive societies people referred symbolically to each others' actions and to things they observed, which composed their reality.

necessary. For Erikson and Dagenais, the crisis of adolescence prepares youths for adulthood.

In Erikson's view, negotiating and achieving a continuous sense of identity, thus passing into adulthood, requires that adolescents develop a conscious self-image that is capable of weathering change while also referring to the identities of others. This implies a break from immature forms of identification, which are seen as an idealization of others and dependence on them for a sense of self. Having a continuous sense of self means having grounding while being able to adapt to change and orient oneself toward the future with confidence in one's ability to maintain a sense of unity. For Erikson, only once this state of psychological maturity has been reached are people capable of having mature and stable relationships with others and participating in the guidance of the next generation, which constitutes in part Dagenais' conception of adulthood. Linking Dagenais and Chandler, it seems that only once a degree of cognitive mastery is achieved are individuals prepared to adopt societal roles that amount to being responsible for oneself and others and participating in the reproduction and transfiguration of social norms.

An important area of convergence between Dagenais and Erikson is in their views of adulthood. For both authors, passage into adulthood comprises a reorientation of adolescents' interests away from themselves toward the community. Both stress the emergent possibility for the foundation of a family and the choice of an occupational identity. The later stages of Erikson's model of psychosocial development revolve around the possibility of developing mature relationships with others. Especially relevant for linking aspects of developmental psychology and sociology is his conception of

"generativity," which he defines as "the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation" (Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* 103). For Erikson, successful passage through the critical identity stage prepares youths for the foundation of families, "Sexual mates who find, or are on the way to finding, true genitality in their relations will soon wish (if, indeed, developments wait for the express wish) to combine their personalities and energies in the production and care of common offspring" (*Identity and the Life Cycle* 103). Likewise, Dagenais also stresses the necessity of preparing youths so they can leave the nest and build families of their own.

Finally, these authors bridged the individual and social dimensions of youth suicide in different ways. Chandler deals with these two dimensions separately, but he links them in his demonstration of the necessity of continuity in both of them. However, he does not broach the issue of whether continuous societies engender continuous individuals. What he demonstrates is a relation between individual continuity and suicide, and one with collective continuity and suicide. This issue is easily resolved with an examination of the way Chandler measures collective continuity. He shows that communities that are able to ensure their own continuity provide their members with protection against suicide. This implies an action on the part of individuals, mounting what might be considered a collective identity. Since the collective is composed of individuals who are actively engaged in assuring its continuity, collectives are similar to individuals in their need to continuously adapt to inevitable change. Both work to provide an adaptive yet persistent symbolic system with which they can identify. They help ensure its reproduction through their embodiment of the culture they are working to rebuild. Because they make an active effort to establish a continuous sense of cultural

identity, their collective identity's chances of survival are greater than those whose group identities are weaker due to their members resisting change.

Alternatively, we can view it from the communal to the individual level. More homogeneous collective identities are less likely to encounter contradiction than those composed of multiple conflicting viewpoints. Hence, communities in which individuals are more specilized demand adaptive strategies of greater complexity. Achievement of a continuous sense of identity is linked directly to the forms of solidarity uniting individuals as a collective identity.

* * *

Dagenais and Chandler assert that youths today face identity problems that engender the possibility of suicide. For Dagenais, the appearance of youth suicide reveals the contemporary family's problems of inadequately preparing youths for adulthood. In light of youth suicide's emergence, Dagenais contends that this anthropological role had previously been assured. Both researchers see the family as the primary locus of youths' socialization. In addition to preparing youths for participation in the transmission of the symbolic and to providing them with role models, the developmentalists consider the importance of the family for the development of cognitive and mechanical skills as well as a sense of self. Although Chandler does not specifically address the causes behind the psychological difficulties facing a number of youths, the societal necessity of helping youths develop a sense of continuity is implicit in Chandler and Dagenais' works.

Finally, one last point of convergence between these differential approaches is made evident through Marcia's work, in which he elaborates the ways that youths fail to achieve a sense of continuity. Marcia's conception of the ways in which youths fail to achieve a sense of continuity fits with Dagenais' typology of adulthood-avoidance projects. Both provide an illustration of the problem of meaning in contemporary society, which has a profound effect on the possibility of developing and maintaining a continuous sense of identity.

A number of similar features exist between Marcia's concept of foreclosure and the youths of Dagenais' fieldwork who appeared to have been afraid of becoming adults. According to Marcia, foreclosed individuals are those who appear to circumvent the crisis of identity by adopting the roles of childhood idols. The same was observed among those of Dagenais' sample. Overly dependent on the impressions of others, these youths hastily adopt idealized identities rather than risk the anxiety of the world outside the family. Both Dagenais and Chandler characterize these youths as immature and unprepared to develop their own realistic identities. These youths tend to have fragile identities as they cling to a rigid image that they are incapable of navigating through change. Marcia describes them as being extremely vulnerable to threats to their self-concepts and easily threatened by situations in which their parents' values are unsuited. These authors depict the problems inherent in attempting to resist change. Encountering contradictions to their identities, these youths appear to fall easily into the holes in which Chandler located those at greatest risk of suicide.

Likewise, there are also a number of similarities between those occupying the moratorium status in Marcia's study and those displaying a refusal to become adults in

Dagenais' work. Marcia observes an inability in these youths to negotiate the demands of their surroundings and an inability to commit to any important area of life. Dagenais also finds that his youths could not commit to intimate relationships, work or school. They were overly self-preoccupied and were unable to decide what they wanted. Although Erikson does not formally distinguish these statuses of identity diffusion, he provides an appropriate characterization of these youths that corresponds with Dagenais' observation that these youths tend to form gangs and ban together in their rejection of society:

> [...] they become remarkably clannish, intolerant, and cruel in their exclusion of others who are "different", in skin color or cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in entirely petty aspects of dress and gesture arbitrarily selected as *the* signs of an in-grouper or out-grouper. It is important to understand [...] such intolerance as the necessary defense against a sense of identity confusion, which is unavoidable at a time of life when the body changes its proportions radically, when genital maturity floods body and imagination with all manner of drives, when intimacy with the other sex approaches an is, on occasion, forced on the youngster, and when life lies before one with a variety of conflicting possibilities and choices. Adolescents help one another temporarily through such discomfort by forming cliques and by stereotyping themselves, their ideals and their enemies.
> (*Identity and the Life Cycle* 97-98)

In Marcia's view, these youths are unable to make sense of change. At the same time they embody a sense of failure and a rejection of the world. These illustrations represent problems with achieving a sense of continuity for oneself and others. These are similar to the youths of Chandler's study who are without a strategy.

Although Chandler and Dagenais have their foundations in different disciplines, both attempt to understand the same phenomenon. Through the problem of youth

suicide, the possibility exists of bridging the disciplines of psychology and sociology. One researcher examines the passage into adulthood and the other looks at the development of a strategy to resolve the paradox of sameness and change, but they similarly discuss the kinds of identity problems that are typical of contemporary societies. These works provide insight into the problem of youth suicide, and they enlighten some features from contemporary society and broaden our understanding of what is at stake.

Conclusion

My exploration of the study of suicide, which was prompted by a lack of works committed to bridging the psychological and sociological dimensions of study, led to a discussion of the identity problems affecting youths today. To satisfy my aim of joining these disciplines, I turned to a discussion of the symbolic as a normative system, which is dynamic and contextual, and in which all subjects find themselves. Individuals' identities are formed in reference to others and engendered by forms that appear to be meaningful. They are challenged to negotiate the many difficulties of interacting systems that are embodied and maintained by individuals. Contemporary subjects construct meaningful identities and must readily incorporate, rather than resist, the changes imposed upon them. Identification with form renders impossible this necessary adaptation. In contemporary societies, one typically discovers that the world of form should not be taken too seriously, as all forms (including thoughts, identities and physical things) eventually dissolve. Hence, the task of contemporary subjects is to somehow center themselves in a world that keeps changing and to navigate the infinite possibilities of the future. One should not, as we've seen, struggle anxiously or attempt to resist this reality. Contemporary conditions make more and more evident the limitations of form, and thus language, to which social life is bound. Yet communication and the possibility of social existence appear to demand a temporary incorporation of form into oneself. Such is the challenge of contemporary life.

The ways in which we view suicide, as with all phenomena, are subject to continually changing impressions of the world. Its problematization, which has its roots

in medieval Christianity's condemnation of it, fuelled our need to understand it. Although Durkheim's consideration of suicide as a normal collective phenomenon parted ways with the perspectives of his time that treated it as a form of pathology, these views were soon readopted. Today, the study of suicide has abandoned *understanding* as its primary aim and instead focuses on *prevention* by attempting to rid what they perceive to be inherently wrong. This is an attempt to cover up the problem that belongs to humanity. Disciplines such as these, which mediate practice for the state, seek to normalize restless individuals who are circumstantially formed by their context through drugs and counselling.

The project of unifying sociology and psychology, as well as other disciplines that were only circumstantially divided, should not end here. The works of Dagenais and Chandler, which both employ synthetic approaches to the study of youth suicide, are a step in the right direction toward grasping important aspects of the interaction between subject and society in the contemporary world. Moreover, the evolution of individuals and their situations demands that we constantly revisit our previous positions. Rather than theorizing about which phenomena represent the causes and which ones the effect, or investigating the efficacy of particular modes of intervention, future research should thus commit itself to an exploration of other analogical components that compose our contemporary reality.

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