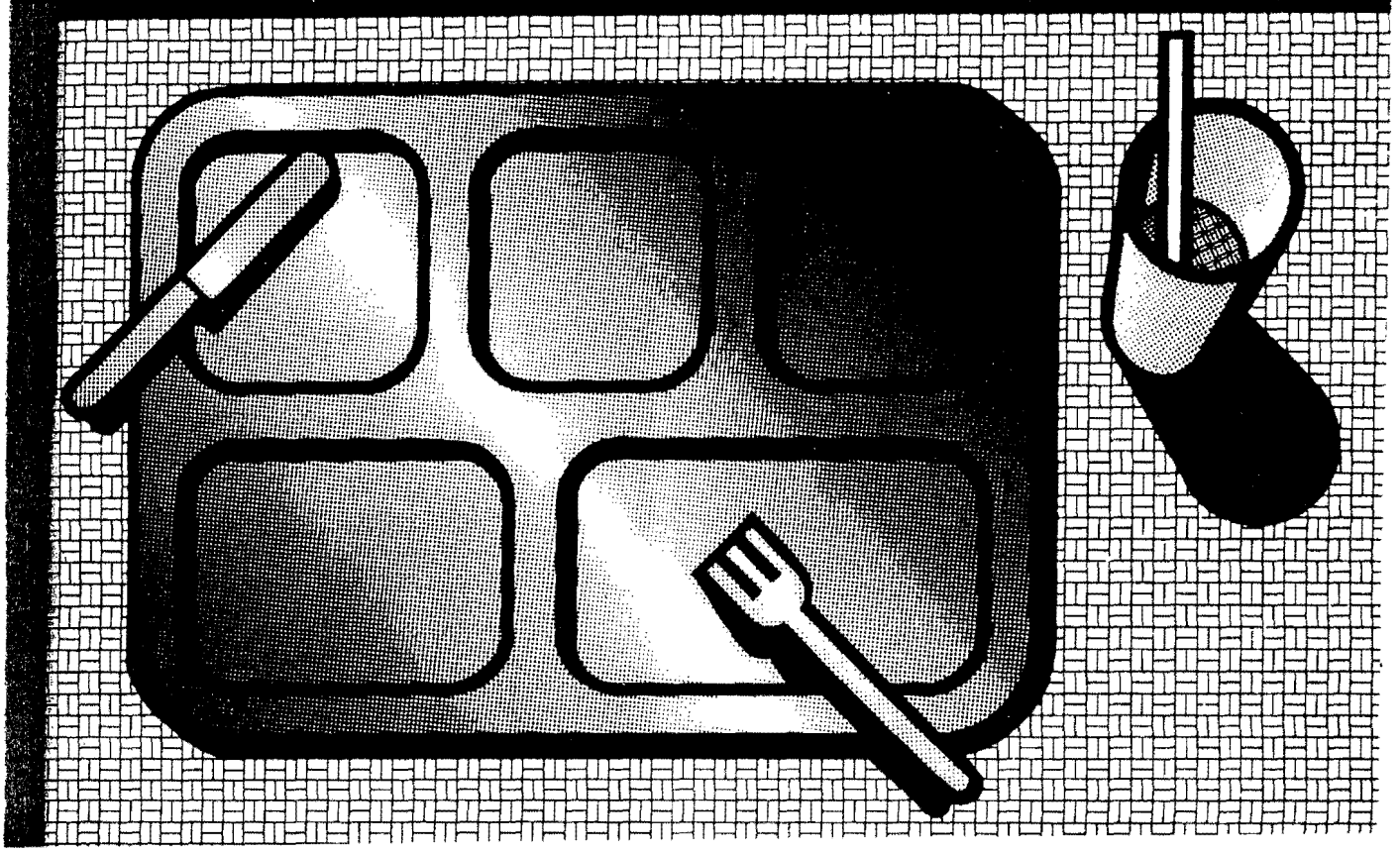
The Case of the Unreturned Cafeteria Trays

An Investigation Based Upon Theories of Motivation and Human Behavior.

Lloyd S. Etheredge



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Foreword

Among the major activities of the American Political Science Association, the publication of the *American Political Science Review* and the Annual Meeting provide for exchange of information about research. Other major activities aim to adapt research to teaching needs, particularly at the undergraduate level.

Since the Association's establishment in 1904, there has always been a committee concerned with undergraduate education and, in each decade, an education committee has issued a report recommending instructional goals and strategies. Today, we have a different concept of useful educational activity; the Association is helping prepare instructional materials that can be utilized by teachers and students. The regional seminars for college teachers in the 1960s, supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation, were a notable first effort of this sort. The seminars helped teachers locate and use new sources of course materials and different methods of instruction. Several hundred political scientists participated in these seminars.

At the end of 1972, with the support of a grant from the National Science Foundation, the Association established a Division of Educational Affairs and began to develop publications providing teachers and students with instructional guides and useful materials. DEA NEWS for Teachers of Political Science, a newspaper received by all Association members; SETUPS, the student learning materials that introduce data analysis techniques and the Instructional Resource Monographs are the initial publications.

Each Instructional Resource Monograph is a guide to source materials or a method of instruction, and is designed primarily for faculty. The fifth monograph, *U.S. Census Data for Political and Social Research*, is accompanied by a manual for students. *The Case of the Unreturned Cafeteria Trays* is another student manual designed to facilitate faculty presentations of source material.

As political science selectively adapts theories and analytical techniques from other social sciences, it is appropriate that political science students learn theories of human behavior, from psychology, social psychology,

sociology, and even economics. In *The Case of the Unreturned Cafeteria Trays* Lloyd Etheredge poses a problem and alternative solutions by way of engaging students in explorations of alternative interpretations of motivations. *The Case* includes readings and exercises for students to apply theories to analyze problems in political life.

Evron M. Kirkpatrick
Executive Director
American Political Science Association
June 1976

Acknowledgments

An early graduate seminar with Harold Lasswell helped to clarify and direct my developing interest in the policy science approach to improving American society. Teaching undergraduate courses in social and political psychology gave me the opportunity to develop the present monograph as a series of lectures. My colleagues Ken McVicar, Geoff Nelson, Jeffrey Pressman, Hayward Alker, and Martha Weinberg aided me with critical comments and useful advice. Eleanor Benson, Jacki Baizley, and Gail Lopata typed the manuscript.

Among the catalysts of this monograph was the pleasure, several years ago, when I read Robert K. Merton's *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript.* More recently, Graham Allison's *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* illustrated the benefits of explicating the images used in policy decision-making.

I want to express a personal debt of gratitude to the M.A.S.C. workshops and to their creator and first director, Felix Simon. The friendships and experiences during my eight years of association were deeply rewarding and were an important catalyst in my understanding of human behavior and the problems of effective leadership.

Finally I want to express my appreciation to the National Institute of Mental Health. Their fellowship support to me through Yale's Psychological Study of Politics program was instrumental in facilitating the interdisciplinary work that was an important part of my education. My thanks as well to Robert E. Lane and John B. McConahay, two men who helped to create and shape that program.

Introduction

Some people hope that "better human understanding" will eliminate coercion and inhumane practices in our world as well as alleviate a wide range of social problems: academic underachievement, use of hard drugs, drunken driving, alcoholism, crime, mental illness, sexism, racism, industrial pollution, and war are but a few examples where the hope has been expressed that better knowledge will help. Perhaps it will. But, if this is to come to pass, we must direct the knowledge of the social sciences toward fashioning better practical alternatives for the organization and conduct of our society.

I have chosen a simple problem to analyze in this way, an example from high school. It has seemed rather easy for my students to identify with the problem: high school is a shared experience in our society, and most high schools seem to have a cafeteria problem. But the analysis presented here is also a prototype of thinking that can be applied (with modifications and elaborations) to many of our social problems. This kind of thinking is, I would submit, useful: a more humane society will be simply the aggregate of all of us finding ways to be more humane and effective in our lives. Perhaps we can profit from stepping back and thinking about how to design institutions and create practices that make this possible.

Over ten years ago, when I was President of my high school Student Council, I was confronted with a problem in human behavior which I still find mysterious. I did not know what to do at the time and, as I have learned more about the complexities of human behavior and about the different theories and viewpoints for analyzing it, I still am not sure about the reasons for the problem, or what I, as a social scientist, would now recommend if I were called upon to give advice.

The situation was this: at my high school it had developed that some students who ate lunch in the cafeteria (almost all of the 2,200 students) were not taking back their trays to the dirty dish room but instead were departing for their classes leaving collections of trays, dirty dishes, and trash on the tables. Not all students were doing this—it was only a

minority. But, by the end of the lunch shifts (there were six of them), the cafeteria was a mess. And, as the principal pointed out when he called me to his office, it did take several man-hours of work by the cafeteria staff to make the place respectable again. Quite naturally, the cafeteria staff was angry and pressuring the principal to do something. And he wanted us (the Student Council) to do something.

Here, then, is our puzzle: what are the causes of this behavior? And what could be done to resolve the problem? The reader should be alerted that I now intend to illustrate a range of plausible answers to these questions by drawing systematically upon theories which social scientists use in thinking about behavior. This is, however, a theoretical paper: it does not solve the mystery of the unreturned cafeteria trays—that is a task for research. There will be no climax or grand finale. The characters and scenery along the way are all there is.

I. The Cybernetic Model

The cybernetic model imagines man as a goal-seeking animal who guides his behavior on the basis of information *feedback* from the environment. The notion of feedback can be illustrated by the example of a radar-controlled missile fired at a moving airplane: as the plane alters its course, radar impulses from the missile, bouncing off the plane, tell the missile how it should correct its flight so it will hit the target.[1]

It is possible, of course, to think of a variety of goals which a human being might try to achieve. For the sake of simplicity (and because the assumption is often made in applying cybernetic theory) let us assume that human beings would act laudably (return their trays) except for faulty feedback.

1. Ignorance of Expectations

The first explanation suggested by the cybernetic model is that students who do not return their trays might be ignorant of the expectations of the school. Perhaps they do not realize (because no one ever told them) that they should return their trays. Students would go along with the desires of the school administration if they knew what the expectations were, if the "lack of feedback" were corrected. The solution would be simple: tell them of the expectations.

2. "They Know Not What They Do" (Ignorance of Consequences)

A second and related explanation suggested by the cybernetic model is that students who do not return their trays might be unaware of the *consequences* of their behavior (the accumulated piles of trays, dishes, and trash at the end of the lunch shifts, the extra work for the cafeteria staff).

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[1]See Norbert Weiner (1962) *Cybernetics,* 2nd ed. Cambridge, New York: MIT Press and Wiley: and Karl Deutsch (1963) *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication,* New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

If this explanation is correct, then the problem could be ended by a different policy choice–for example by taking classes on tours of the accumulated mess or by presenting the cafeteria manager to explain the situation over the public address system.

I have titled this second idea, "They Know Not What They Do," because the phrase is reminiscent of the last words of Christ on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."[2] Cybernetic theories, as they are usually employed, are very *forgiving* theories. It is not something about individuals which should be blamed, rather it is something about the faulty information feedback mechanisms of their environment.

I should tell you that the cybernetic model was the one adopted by our student council. We did not believe the first hypothesis was true, that students were unaware of the school's expectations. But we were *hopeful* that, if they became aware of the problems caused by tray-leaving, most students would take back their trays.

I have stressed the word *hopeful* in the last sentence because I must confess that we were unsure that better feedback would be a cure. In part our advice was purely political: we did not want to be a "lackey" of the administration or have any role in policing other students. Yet we had to make some response to the principal's request for assistance if we were to maintain a good working relationship with him. The cybernetic model was a creative compromise to the pressures we were under. We would appear to be doing something without getting involved in coercion.[3] Then too, we were young, idealistic, and had an esthetic aversion to coercion.[4]

It might be useful to point out, in passing, that cybernetic theory does have a certain resonance with the assumptions of liberal political views, for example with the belief that people will act well if they are given enough education. Scientists and teachers generally, I think, have this kind of model in the back of their minds in justifying their work: they implicitly assume (as I do, in a way, in writing this monograph) that if people have better differentiated and more sophisticated "maps" of their social environment, if they know what effects are brought about by what causes, then they will act more humanely in the long run.

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[2]Luke 23:34.

[3]On the way in which such role conflicts can produce attitudes see, for example, F. X. Sutton et al., *The American Business Creed* (1956) Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[4]On the place of esthetic sensibility in generating an aversion to coercion see Sigmund Freud (1933) "Why War?" *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* vol. XXII, London: Hogarth Press, 203-215.

My high school principal, as you might guess, did not think well either of our recommendations based on cybernetic theory or of our faith in the good will of human nature. He was, centrally, a social learning theorist (by instinct, I think, rather than as a result of any knowledge of the experimental literature). Let me turn, then, to this behavior reinforcement model.

II. Social Learning

The social learning model imagines man as a hedonistic, reward-seeking punishment-avoiding animal. Behavior is the result of the rewards or punishments a man expects in the situation that confronts him, an expectation resulting partly from his past history of reinforcement (behavior which has been rewarded continues, behavior which has been punished decreases).[5] In research with animals it is usually assumed that food is a positive reinforcer if the animal is hungry, that electric shocks are punishment. It is more complex, in dealing with ordinary human behavior, to determine what will be a reward and what will be a punishment—but usually such things as money, praise, and social acceptance are thought to be rewards while economic costs or criticism from other people are punishments. The model suggests several explanations:

3. Too Permissive an Upbringing

Those students who do not return their trays come from homes where they always were rewarded whether they took their dishes back to the kitchen or not. The student tray-leavers, overly pampered and spoiled as children, were not properly conditioned.

4. "What's In It For Me?" (or) "Virtue Doesn't Pay"

Closely related to the preceding hypothesis is the hypothesis that those students who have not been "properly conditioned" also see a net cost in

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[5]See for example Morton Deutsch and Robert Krauss (1965) *Theories in Social Psychology,* New York: Basic Books, chapter 4; Albert Bandura and R. H. Walters (1963) *Social Learning and Personality Development,* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston; B. F. Skinner (1948) *Walden Two,* New York: Macmillan, (1953) *Science and Human Behavior,* New York: Macmillan, (1971) *Beyond Freedom and Dignity,* New York: Knopf; George C. Homans (1974) *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms,* New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, rev. ed.; and Evelyn MacPherson et al. (1974) "A Comparison of Three Methods for Eliminating Disruptive Lunchroom Behavior," *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis,* Vol. 7:2, 287-297.

taking their trays back: they are not paid to do it (it does take effort to walk to the other end of the cafeteria and stand in line for a minute or so). Some sages have argued that "virtue is its own reward" but these people are not going to be conned: to them, virtuous conduct requires more than the reward it provides.

My principal, very much a social learning theorist, decided the solution lay in increasing the costs to be incurred by wrongdoers. He adopted a random terror approach. Teacher monitors were placed in the cafeteria; these teachers were most annoyed at spending their lunch hours in a noisy, crowded cafeteria on monitor duty, and they let the students they caught know—in no uncertain terms—what socially objectionable persons they were for not returning their trays. In addition to this criticism, repeat offenders were also subject to the familiar repertoire of high school discipline (detention, suspension, parent conferences, etc.).

This attempted solution to the problem did have a modest effect in getting trays returned. It had this effect, however, at a certain cost—an increase in the irritability of teachers and a police state atmosphere in the cafeteria. The most important benefit, from the principal's point of view, was probably political and symbolic:[6] the cafeteria staff felt he was acting firmly, that he was "doing the best he could" in the situation. His seemingly decisive action made the cafeteria staff more willing to put up with clearing the remaining trays.

I think it would be unfair to behavior reinforcement theorists, however, to suggest that they would all endorse my principal's actions.[7] In general, behavior reinforcement research suggests that *rewards* may be more effective in changing behavior than punishments. But, even if my principal knew this, I think he would have chosen the punishment route because he simply had no rewards he could offer: certainly he had no money to pay students, and parents would not have accepted the solution of giving "good" students time off from school or higher grades. In fact I am at a loss, even now, to imagine what rewards a high school principal could give that his students would want: I do not picture the people I went to high

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[6]Murray Edelman (1964) *The Symbolic Uses of Politics,* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

[7]It is interesting to note, as an aside, that the broad application of behavior reinforcement principles in the classroom now seems to be well underway, albeit at a time when the cutting edge of research shows major problems with such applications. A recent review concludes: "The past 2 years have been bad ones for those of us who attempt to apply traditional principles of learning to instruction. Thorndike's principles of learning seem to be crumbling. . . . In fact, each one of the principles confidently enumerated by Skinner in *The Science of Learning and the Art of Teaching* now turns out to be untrue—at least in as general a sense as he believed at that time." Wilbert McKeachie (1974) "Instructional Psychology" in Mark Rosenzweig and Lyman Porter (eds.) *Annual Review of Psychology,* Vol. 25 Palo Alto: Annual Reviews, 161-193.

school with being highly motivated by the principal standing in the dirty dish room and praising them when they brought their trays back.

Perhaps my principal chose coercion only because he had no rewards. In fact, I think he also chose coercion because he was angry and because he *felt* that coercion would produce more change than rewards. (There now is some experimental evidence that individuals who use coercion to produce change *feel* more powerful than individuals who produce the same amount of change through rewards.[8]) Like many other people my principal seemed to believe implicitly that sticks were more effective than carrots.

I should add, I think, that my principal was conservative and probably felt a *moral obligation to society* to do something about the callous "what's in it for me" attitude he perceived. Conservatives and moralists often seem drawn toward coercion.[9,10] And a social learning theorist like my principal would tend to take tray-leaving more seriously, to view it as representing an attitude that would continue throughout life if it were not stopped.

It is interesting to note, in passing, that the discipline of economics is built upon the assumption of a "what's in it for me" calculation on the part of hedonistic individuals. The economists' perspective would suggest a rather elegant and simple solution to our problem—a market mechanism: all you need do is charge each student a 25¢ deposit on his tray when he buys his lunch. He receives the deposit back when he returns the tray. If he does not return the tray, he loses the deposit—*and* it becomes in the interest of other students to become entrepreneurs and cart it back.

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[8]W. R. Kite (1964) "Attributions of Causality as a Function of the Use of Reward and Punishment" Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University; Barry R. Schlenker and James T. Tedeschi (1973) "Interpersonal Attraction and the Exercise of Coercive and Reward Power" *Human Relations* 25:5 427-439.

[9]Studies of American public education show that a strong conservative leaning is typical of its employees. See, for example, H. Ziegler, M. K. Jennings and G. W. Peaks (1974) "The Decision-Making Culture of American Public Education," in Cornelius P. Cotter (ed.) *Political Science Annual: An International Review,* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, Vol. 5, 177-226; also the evidence for high percentages of System 1 information processors in O. J. Harvey et al. "Teachers' Beliefs, Classroom Atmosphere and Student Behavior" (1972) reprinted in A. Morrison and D. McIntyre (eds.) *Social Psychology of Teaching,* Baltimore: Penguin Books, 215-229.

[10]It is of course not a common practice in our culture to reward people who act morally: the official version is that ethical conduct should be its own reward. However Montaigne in his *Essays* remarks that: "In China, a kingdom in which government and the arts, though they have had no contact with or knowledge of ours, contain examples that surpass them in many excellent features . . . the officers deputed by the prince to inspect the state of his provinces, when punishing those guilty of abusing their office, also reward, out of pure liberality, any whose conduct has been above the common level of honesty." M. E. Montaigne (1580) *Essays,* translated by J. M. Cohen (1958) Baltimore: Penguin Books.

I am not at all certain, however, that my principal would have found such a market system attractive even had he thought of it. As I said, he believed that there was a matter of morals at stake, a moral obligation toward other people. I think he would have been most reluctant to install any system which implied that one could legitimately ignore moral obligations by paying money.[11]

5. Small Group Rewards ("Evil Companions")

One elaboration of social learning theory would be to look at the groups to which individuals belong. Our research hypothesis would be that in some friendship groups there are *rewards* for leaving trays (e.g. appearing "tough," "courageous," or "independent"). This reference group notion is particularly interesting because it implies that individuals may be relatively insulated from direct influence by the administration. Moreover, it suggests that, for some reference groups, what the administration regards as punishment (e.g. detention) may actually be a reward, a kind of badge of courage, a source of respect and acceptance from other group members.[12] Perhaps breaking up such groups (by rotating lunch shift assignments) would work. Or you could attempt to exert peer group pressure through the student government.

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[11]There are additional ethical problems in that such a market solution would favor rich kids—who presumably could better afford to "buy" the services of poorer kids. This kind of ethical problem is, of course, fundamental in the present use of an economic market system in American society.

[12]A useful discussion of such an approach in the light of juvenile delinquency research is Derek Wright (1971) *The Psychology of Moral Behavior,* Baltimore: Penguin Books; see also S. Glueck and E. Glueck (1965) "Varieties of Delinquent Types," *British Journal of Criminology,* Vol. 5, 236-248.

III. Psychoanalytic Theories

Both the cybernetic and the social learning perspectives are relatively well organized; hypotheses seem to flow in a straightforward way from the image of human behavior. This coherence is not characteristic of the psychoanalytic model. In fact about the only common element among psychoanalytic theories (when applied to a specific situation) is their tendency to emphasize unconscious dynamics and to use a specialized vocabulary. I have organized the following illustration of psychoanalytic theories in three categories: traditional theories which emphasize individual characteristics, traditional theories which emphasize a group and the individual's relation to it, and developmental theories.

A. Traditional Theories—Individual Characteristics

6. Sadism ("Sexual Thrill")

It might be said that those individuals who do not return trays are sadistic. That is, they seek and receive a kind of perverse sexual thrill from an act of aggression. Assuming that the act of aggression is against the administration, not returning trays would be somewhat like teasing a caged animal: the principal could snarl about the situation over the public address system, but this expression of anger or frustration on the part of the principal would only encourage tray-leaving. Perhaps the best he can do is to expel the student offenders.

7. Masochism ("Asking for Punishment")

A reverse interpretation could also be generated from a psychoanalytic image of man: perhaps the individuals who leave their trays unconsciously *want* to be punished. Hence they transgress: as Freud put it, the masochist, "In order to provoke punishment . . . must act against his own interests, ruin the prospects which the real world offers him, and possibly

destroy his own existence in the world of reality."[13] As another psychoanalyst has put it, "Unconscious wishes to be raped, punished, beaten or devoured may all contribute to rebelliousness."[14]

This interpretation is somewhat similar to the psychoanalytic idea that crimes may be motivated by an overpowering existing sense of guilt, a desire to be punished.[15] The individual not only receives relief and gratification from the realistic criticisms he now can direct at himself, his deviant acts also involve the external world in a kind of ploy to assist him in self denigration. Perhaps ignoring the behavior would be effective—the masochist would seek his punishment elsewhere. (Although, perhaps a refusal to punish would make tray-leaving especially gratifying to the masochist—as in the old joke: "Hit me," said the masochist. "No," said the sadist.)

8. Narcissistic Gratification ("Attention-Seeking")

It is also possible, of course, that neither aggression nor sadism is involved at all. We have all heard parents say of children who misbehave or are fussy that they are "just looking for attention." Perhaps it is so in this case as well: desiring recognition from his environment, and unable to obtain it in other ways, a lonely or troubled individual might commit deviant acts so that he can at least obtain some sort of personal relationship with someone. Providing alternative sources of attention and recognition might work.

10. Inadequate Identification with Parents

In psychoanalytic theory conscience is formed by identification with the parents. It may be that those individuals who do not return their trays tend to lack a conscience—in other words, they would have sociopathic tendencies and simply be "out for themselves." Inadequate identification with parents, then, is a companion theory to the earlier "virtue doesn't pay" explanation of the social learning perspective. It differs only in suggesting that inadequate identification with parents (rather than a permissive upbringing) is involved.[16] Perhaps therapy would help, although it has not proven too helpful with people with sociopathic tendencies.[17]

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[13]Sigmund Freud (1924) "The Economic Problem of Masochism" *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Vol. XIX, London: Hogarth Press, 1957, 157-170.

[14]Ludwig Eidelberg (ed.) (1968) *Encyclopedia of Psychoanalysis,* New York: Free Press, 369.

[15]Sigmund Freud (1916) "Some Character-Types Met With in Psychoanalytic Work" *The Standard Edition,* Vol. XIV, op. cit., 332-333.

[16]See Wright op. cit., Glueck and Glueck op. cit.

[17]Robert Martinson (1974) "What Works?—Questions and Answers About Prison Reform," *The Public Interest,* Vol. 35 (Spring 22-54.

11. Identification with Irresponsible Parents

Tray-leaving would not be predicted only by inadequate identification. It may arise because the same sexed parent (with whom the child presumably identified strongly in childhood) did not take the responsibility for his own behavior, or was cruel, harsh, unprincipled, or self-serving.[18] Both this theory and the preceding one would suggest that, in the long term, the school system should seek to induce parents to change their child-rearing practices.

B. Psychoanalytic Group-Centered Theories

12. "Us Against Them" (In-group solidarity supported by displacement of aggression (scapegoating) against out-groups)

The traditional energy model of the human mind in psychoanalytic theory posits the existence, within each individual, of a fixed quantity of aggressive and libidinal energies. These energies are thought to be *conserved* in the sense that they are always present and cannot be added to or destroyed. An individual's personality structure is constituted from how he apportions and organizes these energies. For example, he may express some in direct action; he may use some energies to keep the lid on other energies or impulses (repression); he may express some of them in a modified form (a mechanism called sublimation), or he may express them against some person or object other than their original target (a mechanism called displacement).

Freud, in his analysis of the psychic economy of groups, proposed that unalloyed group morale, cohesion, and loyalty were supported by the tendency of group members to displace their fund of aggressive tendencies toward outside groups. The love of group members for each other, in other words, becomes more pure as their aggressive energies are redirected more exclusively against outsiders and as love is withdrawn from the outsiders and diverted to members of the in-group. Freud put the sobering matter this way:

> When once the Apostle Paul had posited universal love between men as the foundation of his Christian community, extreme intolerance on the part of Christendom toward those who remained outside it became the inevitable consequence.[19,20]

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[18]See Wright, op. cit., Glueck and Glueck. op. cit.

[19]Sigmund Freud (1930) *Civilization and Its Discontents,* in *The Standard Edition,* op. cit. Vol. XXI 114-115.

[20]See also the excellent review of other theoretical approaches to the in-group out-group problem in Robert A. LeVine and Donald T. Campbell (1972) *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes, and Group Behavior,* New York: Wiley.

More recently, in the case of Nazi Germany, it has been proposed that the high morale and unity of the German state was sustained by "scapegoating" the Jews, the invention of a common enemy helping to unify the German people. A familiar theme in science fiction movies during the Cold War was based on the same notion: the threat from outer space dissolves normal political conflicts as all nations unify in joint effort against the common alien enemy. In a somewhat attenuated form this same dynamic often can be seen in high schools: nothing, it seems, is associated with high morale or school spirit as much as a football team or basketball team which regularly defeats opposing schools.

This body of speculation, the "in-group solidarity sustaining aggression against out-groups" hypothesis, suggests that the individuals who leave trays will be found to be close friends of other individuals who leave trays. Their common aggression against others would be in the service of sustaining their bonds with one another.

If this "we-against-them" dynamic is the explanation of tray-leaving the most obvious policy recommendation, similar to that discussed earlier under social learning theory—("Evil Companions")—would be to adopt a policy that would alter these associations (e.g. rotation of lunch shift assignments).

13. Inadequate Identification With the School or Principal

A second group-centered hypothesis utilizing psychoanalytic theory would focus upon the school itself and posit that students who do not return their trays have an inadequate identification with the school. In other words, they do not feel the welfare of the school as their own welfare, they are not personally concerned when the school has a problem.

I said earlier that my high school principal implicitly used a behavior reinforcement theory when he put teacher monitors in the cafeteria to catch students who did not return their trays. In fact he also adopted an "inadequate group identification" theory. He felt that deviating individuals had insufficient pride in their school and so, at the time he announced the creation of teacher monitors over the school public address system, he tried to increase identification with the school and to utilize this dynamic to change behavior. He spoke *glowingly* of the great history and high ideals of Walter Johnson High School. He spoke *darkly* of "those few individuals," that "minority of students," who did damage to these ideals. He spoke *fervently* of his hope that all of us could once again feel pride in our school and strengthen its great traditions and ideals.

I must confess that, at the time, I felt somewhat embarrassed for the principal when he made this speech. My friends and I were too cynical—and, in our own minds, too intelligent—to be taken in by this kind of emotionalism. We were highly sensitive to being manipulated, and we suspected that he cared far more for getting those trays taken back than he genuinely cared about the "traditions" of a relatively new suburban high

school which had been in existence only seven years. But probably he truly believed what he said: it seems to be characteristic of conservatives to assume that social institutions have great traditions and high ideals.

14. Too Strong an Identification with the School (Identification with the Aggressor)

The previous theory argued that tray-leaving could arise from *weak* identification with the school. However the same behavior could also result from the opposite process, a *strong* identification with the school if individuals felt the school to be hostile or indifferent to them.

An illustration will make this dynamic clear. Bruno Bettleheim[21] reported on the behavior of other inmates he observed in Nazi concentration camps. He found that, far from opposing the brutality of the guards, there were some prisoners who actually began to imitate (identify with) the guards. Bettleheim interpreted this behavior as "identification with an aggressor," a psychological defense: rather than feel defenseless victims of their oppressors, the identification made inmates feel at one with them, a participant in their brutal power.[22]

If the "identification with an aggressor" hypothesis is correct we should think of those students who do not take back their trays as manifesting the same indifference and callousness toward the welfare of others as they feel the school system expresses toward them. The school system should become more benevolent.

C. Psychoanalytic Developmental Theories

By now we have crossed through two of the three groups of psychoanalytic hypotheses. Developmental theories, particularly focusing on adolescence, are relatively new (i.e. post Freudian) with the exception of the first to be considered (rebellion against authority).

15. Rebellion Against Parental Authority

In this perspective the school administration is seen as a parent surrogate (via "transference") and resentments against parental authority are expressed within the school. The "real" sources of tray-leaving would have to be sought in the home and the effective elimination of conflict in the home. Schools sometimes adopt this theory in recommending family counseling in the case of "behavior problems."

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[21] B. Bettleheim (1943) "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* Vol. 38, 417-452.

[22] See also Anna Freud (1946) *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* New York: International Universities Press.

Psychoanalytic theory might also suggest, however, that rebelliousness is not an attempt to overcome *current* difficulties with authority in the home but, rather, an attempt to win old un-won battles from earlier in life which continue in the unconscious of the individual. Thus individual therapy might be required.

16. Deviation in the Service of Individuation

Deviant acts (like tray-leaving) may actually be committed by the individual in the service of obtaining a sense of himself as an individual who can act separately from the wishes of authority. In this sense tray-leaving, like other delinquent acts of adolescence, might be in the long term psychological interest of some individuals. Unlike a social learning approach (which would see anti-social behavior as something which the individual will continue if he "is allowed to get away with it") this ego development perspective would suggest that minor deviant acts are really a passing stage of development and may be quite beneficial in relation to the actual gains in a sense of personal identity and integrity which can accrue. It is sometimes argued that one of the benefits of juvenile gangs or friendship groups is the service they perform in this way by encouraging the individual to commit minor deviant acts, and by freeing him to commit these acts (reducing his guilt by sharing it).[23] Other unfortunate side effects (e.g. inhibitions in performing school work) have also been attributed to passive rebellion stemming from the same desire on the part of the individual to obtain or retain some sense of himself as a separate being.[24] We should note that, clamping down hard, the school might achieve short term gains but at longer term costs to the individuals' development.[25]

17. Separation Anxiety, Regression, and Structure Seeking (Anomie)

Rather than manifesting a positive developmental trend, however, adolescents who leave trays might do so from developmental difficulties and a cry for help. Progressing through adolescence involves a reduction in the external structures of life. An adolescent may face considerable

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[23]Erik Erikson (1966) "Eight Ages of Man" reprinted in Leon Gorlow and Walter Katkovsky (eds.) *Readings in the Psychology of Adjustment* (1968) New York: McGraw Hill, 297-317.

[24]Howard Halpern (1964) "Psychodynamic and Cultural Determinants of Work Inhibition in Children and Adolescents" *Psychoanalytic Review,* Vol. 51, 173-189; also Halpern (1969) "Psychodynamic Correlates of Underachievement" in Gloria and Monroe Gottsegen (eds.) *Professional School Psychology,* New York: Grune and Stratton, Vol. 3, 318-337.

[25]Note the considerable evidence suggesting the importance of providing an adult-influence, peer-influence *balance* in the interests of long term development of altruism and moral autonomy in Derek Wright, op. cit.

anxiety about the prospect of moving out on his own, choosing a college, getting a job, many may face a decision about marriage. If the individual is rushed into more freedom than he can handle, he may become increasingly anxious; he may have difficulty in concentrating or "getting it together," he may feel adrift or that he is sinking, unable to cope. For at least some people behavior can become bizarre, disorganized, or antagonistic without faith that someone else's firm hand is at the tiller. In this perspective the leaving of trays would be both a symptom of this kind of regression and a desperate, inchoate call for help—a desire to have benevolent authority step in, set down definite rules and structure, and thereby relieve the individual from his sense of being deserted.[26] If this theory is correct, then the principal should make rules and insist that this structure be adhered to: he will get his trays returned and also help his students.

18. Depression

The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry has presented a psychoanalytic interpretation of depressive tendencies during adolescence in the following developmental perspective:

> The withdrawal from the parents normally causes a kind of mourning reaction or episodes of depression in the adolescent. Psychologically this is similar to mourning the actual loss of a loved person. Since the parents in fact are present, however, the cause of the depression is obscure to both the adolescent and his parents and is likely to be labeled simply as "moodiness."[27]

The GAP views these depression episodes as a consequence of growing independence, an increasing psychological separation from the parents. This depression could account, in turn, for why some people do not return their trays. It is not (as suggested earlier) that they are preoccupied, their energy directed elsewhere. On the contrary, they have no energy or desire to do anything.

Retrospect on Psychoanalytic Theories

I have not elaborated extensively on the separate policy implications of psychoanalytic theories. In large part this is because they bring very few good ones to mind except for sending tray-leavers to psychotherapy where they could learn more about their unconscious dynamics. Psycho-

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[26]Robert K. Merton (1957) "Social Structure and Anomie" reprinted in his *Social Theory and Social Structure,* rev. ed; New York: Free Press, 131-160.

Sebastian DeGrazia (1948) *The Political Community: A Study in Anomie,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Marshall B. Clinard, ed. (1964) *Anomie and Deviant Behavior,* New York: Free Press.

[27]Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, *Normal Adolescence: Its Dynamics and Impact* (1968) New York: Scribners, p. 67.

analysts themselves are notably reticent when it comes to suggesting policy alternatives other than psychotherapy.[28] I suspect, however, that much more could be done, reliably, in these directions. At a minimum, the trend toward including psychology as a part of the school curriculum seems hopeful.

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[28]A useful discussion is Gaston E. Blom (1972) "A Psychoanalytic Viewpoint of Behavior Modification in Clinical and Educational Settings" *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry,* 11:4 (October) 675-693.

IV. Dramaturgical and Role Theory ("All the World's a Stage")

Dramaturgical and role theories, as their names imply, imagine that people are continually playing roles. These roles are *clusters* of behaviors and perspectives. In the role theory perspective, an individual does *not* perform a given action because he enjoys it (although he may), rather he acts the way he does because that is the role he is playing. And individuals do not necessarily adopt their roles because they find the roles, in sum, more gratifying than alternative roles. Rather they simply feel that it is *their* role or the *appropriate* role, a part of their identity.

19. Act/Scene Ratio

Most of the dramaturgical or role hypotheses to be discussed here invoke the name of different roles. One hypothesis, however, differs from these. This is the notion advanced by Kenneth Burke[29] that:

> From the motivational point of view, there is implicit in the quality of a scene the quality of the action that is to take place within it. This would be another way of saying that the act will be consistent with the scene.

If we pause to reflect on the scene provided by my high school cafeteria it is apparent that there was considerable impersonality, a rather objectionable institutional air about the long rows of formica topped tables and nondescript (sometimes broken) wooden chairs: it was noisy, the walls were made of cinder block with a dreary light green glaze. Burke would suggest that we would be more likely to find rather callous impersonal behaviors (like leaving trays) in this impersonal, institutional setting.

We would need, to be rigorous, to identify some other characteristic to go with Burke's hypothesis since people differ in their actions in the same setting. One avenue might be to explore personality factors that cause

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[29]Kenneth Burke (1945) *A Grammar of Motives,* New York, 6-7.

individuals to differ in their susceptibility to being influenced by the scenes in which they are a part.

If Burke is correct, then the solution to our problem would lie in introducing a degree of *elegance* into high school dining. Tablecloths, noise dampening materials, flowers, carpets, etc. would provide different cues and produce a setting where people would be more inclined, automatically, to return their trays.

20. "Loser"

It is said that people can come to play the role of "Loser" in their lives. In formal language, we would say that they have developed a "negative identity" and that they go through life always calibrating their behavior so that they will be looked down upon by other people.

Jeanne Maracek and David Mettee[30] recently published experimental work which substantiates the concept of a "loser" syndrome. Subjects performed an experimental task and were told that they had done exceptionally well. The subjects then had a chance to perform the task again and, consistent with a loser syndrome prediction, those subjects who already had a strong sense of low self-esteem did make substantially more errors on the second performance of the task. In other words, knowing what the standards for success were, these losers unconsciously modified their behavior so they would tend to fail.

The possibility of a loser syndrome has also concerned Kai and Erik Erikson,[31] and they have applied the idea in recommending changes in policies for dealing with juvenile delinquents. Their concern is that if an adolescent is caught and punished he may develop a negative identity—he may begin to think of himself, in other words, as a loser or as a criminal or an outcast. Having labelled the adolescent a "loser," then, society is engaging in a self-fulfilling prophecy because the adolescent will tend to act out this identity in the future. (Women's Liberation writers have used a similar idea in criticizing the constrained roles and self-fulfilling prophecies inflicted on women in our society.)

There is, in fact, some intriguing additional evidence which supports the idea that you can establish a negative identity in a transgressor by catching him and punishing him and that, as a result, he will transgress more in the future than if you had not caught him and punished him. For example, a study in a British boarding school for boys compared two groups of boys with identical past histories for smoking. The only difference between the groups was that the boys in one group had, at one time or another, been

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[30] J. Maracek and D. Mettee (1973) "Avoidance of Continued Success as a Function of Self-Esteem, Level of Esteem Certainty, and Responsibility for Success," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 22:1, 98-107.

[31] Erik Erikson and Kai T. Erikson (1957) "The Confirmation of the Delinquent" *Chicago Review,* 15-23.

caught smoking (which was against the rules of the boarding school) and had been punished for it. In this group which had been caught smoking and punished for it, a great number of boys were *still* smoking several years later.[32]

Research bearing on the "loser" syndrome suggests two ideas. First, the school itself may bear responsibility for establishing these negative identities. If so, we would expect to find that those individuals who do not return their trays have been given a great many negative cues over the years by the school system: low grades, for example, could establish negative identities, roles which individuals then act out in the cafeteria.[33]

The second idea a loser syndrome suggests is that the use of coercion and punishment will be a serious error. For, if tray-leavers are caught and punished, this can strengthen a sense of negative identity. Perhaps the school administration would succeed, to some extent, in getting the cafeteria problem under control—but it might do so at the cost of increasing other behavioral, academic, and developmental difficulties for those whom it punishes.

21. Peter Pan Syndrome

Peter Pan did not want to grow up. He wanted to stay young forever. If we infer from the story, we might imagine that he conceived growing up as equivalent to becoming like the awful Captain Hook, and his wish to stay young was a desire to avoid playing this kind of role.

I have chosen the illustration of a "Peter Pan Syndrome" deliberately because one of the major observers of modern youth, Kenneth Keniston, has proposed something quite similar. Young people today, he writes, believe that "beyond youth lie only stasis, decline, foreclosure, and death."[34] Young people balk at joining the "establishment" because to them this means playing a role which has extremely negativistic connotations. Responsibilities, in short, are seen as burdens; being mature is no fun.

The Peter Pan Syndrome suggests that those individuals who do not take back their trays confront a choice, in their own minds, between two

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[32]J. W. Palmer (1965) "Smoking, Caning, and Delinquency in a Secondary Modern School," *British Journal of Preventive School Medicine,* Vol. 19, 18-23.

[33]In Sennett and Cobb's analysis "losers" tend to band together in friendship groups where they establish their own standards for recognition separate from—and often antagonistic to—the school's values (e.g. toughness, recalcitrance, etc.). The "losers" thus establish an insulated counterculture which salvages some degree of self-regard. A similar esteem enhancing function may occasionally be served on college campuses by some drinking fraternities: not everyone can make A's in class; but anybody can get plastered and brag about all of the silly things he did. See Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972) *The Hidden Injuries of Class,* New York: Knopf.

[34]Kenneth Keniston (1971) *Youth and Dissent,* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 17.

roles. The first role, the one they elect to play for themselves, is a role of freedom, moderate irresponsibility, emotional spontaneity, variety, and fun. The role they reject is a role which they see as oppressive, deadening, mechanical and rather boring and tiresome. In the choice between life and death those who leave their trays have elected life.[35]

Perhaps, if the adults in the school were to become more alive and fun-loving, they would provide models different from Captain Hook. Few of them, at least in my high school, seemed very joyful about their work.[36]

22. Game Playing

One additional hypothesis illustrating a role theory perspective is the notion of a game in which students and administration are each playing a part according to certain time-honored but unwritten rules. In this perspective the game "Who Will Return the Trays?" is a fun-filled pastime for the students involved. They leave trays, the principal growls about it over the public address system, teacher monitors are put into the cafeteria. But students continue to play the game with their own countermoves: watching for when the teacher monitor is looking in the other direction before exiting for their next class (leaving their trays behind them). Of course the student knows that, if he is caught leaving his tray, nothing particularly serious will happen—he might get an angry word, or, at worst, he might have to go to a detention study hall: it would be like a game of ice hockey in which an offender can be caught in a transgression and will go to the penalty box briefly but knows he will rejoin his teammates in the game after awhile. The "Return the Trays" game the students play with the administration could be seen, in this light, as similar to other games students play in high school classrooms with teachers—for example, the "Who's Done Their Assignment for Today?" game (in general, in my high school, few students had done their assignments—and the ball then was back in the teacher's court and he or she had to figure out a countermove).

Note that it is not necessary for both students and administration to play the game. What is necessary is only that students see it as a game. In fact, if they do see "Who Will Return the Trays?" in this way, I am not

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[35]Some psychologists would see the Peter Pan Syndrome as calling for psychotherapy. Through it, Pearce and Newton argue, "The grim concept of social responsibility is transformed into pleasure in the privilege of social participation on as wide a base as the person's capacities will permit." See Jan Pearce and Saul Newton (1963) *The Conditions of Human Growth,* New York: Citadel Press, 444.

[36]What may be involved is a special case of the distinction sociologists draw between "up front" and "back stage" behavior. Restaurant managers, for example, can be quite irreverent and fun-loving when they are behind the scenes; but they become somber and a bit stiff when they appear before their official audience of customers. See, for example, Erving Goffman (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* New York: Doubleday, 119.

sure what the administration could do about it. If the principal were to announce over the public address system, "Look, I'm not going to play games—I want those trays taken back," he might have little effect. Students (at least at my high school) would likely have seen such a statement by the principal as a particularly clever countermove, only a shrewdly calculated attempt to win the game by pretending there was no game.

V. Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic psychology views men as having an innate tendency to "grow," a term which is usually taken to mean becoming more humane, altruistic, productive, loving, and so forth. If we view not returning cafeteria trays as indicative of some blockage in the growth process, Abraham Maslow's work suggests two hypotheses:

23. Lower Need (e.g. Sexual) Deprivation

Maslow views men as being motivated by a hierarchy of needs—the "higher" needs motivate only when lower needs are satisfied.[37] If returning trays is seen as indicative of a "higher" (more altruistic) motivation, then not returning trays might arise from the deprivation of any of the "lower" needs—of which sexual satisfaction is, in Maslow's view, one. Thus we would expect that the students who do not return trays are those who are more sexually frustrated and deprived, and a high school administration which wanted to deal with the cafeteria tray problem would have to concern itself with facilitating adequate sexual satisfaction for its students. I suspect, however, that it will require higher consciousness on the part of school administrators before they are willing to consider this theory seriously. They were most reluctant, at least in my day, even to acknowledge the existence of what one of them called (privately) "the ultimate relationship."[38]

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[37] Abraham Maslow (1970) *Motivation and Personality,* New York: Harper and Row, revised edition.

[38] An excellent study of some of the political problems connected just with providing accurate sex education is provided by Mary Breasted (1970) *Oh! Sex Education,* New York: Praeger. See also Lester A. Kirkendall (1969) "The School Psychologist and Sex Education," in Gloria and Monroe Gottsegen (eds.) *Professional School Psychology,* Vol. 3, New York: Grune and Stratton, 148-171.

24. The Jonah Complex

Maslow also writes that many people fear their highest potentialities.[39] They do not feel *strong* enough to feel too good about themselves, too noble or virtuous or competent. Counter to what Keniston would say (The Peter Pan Syndrome) or what a social learning theorist would say, taking back trays *is* seen as psychologically rewarding by these people but they avoid the behavior because they could not stand that much gratification.

[39]Abraham Maslow (1968) "The Jonah Complex" in Warren Bennis et al. (eds.) *Interpersonal Dynamics,* New York: Dorsey, rev. ed. See also Sigmund Freud's related discussion of people who are destroyed by success, (1916) "Some Character Types Met With in Psychoanalytic Work" in *The Standard Edition,* Vol. XIV, op. cit., 316-331.

VI. Specialized Theories

There are six rather specialized theories that can be applied to the tray problem: emotional contagion, reduced altruism from sensory overload, equity theory, Kohlberg's theory of moral development, depersonalization theory and frustration-aggression theory.

25. Monkey See/Monkey Do (Emotional Contagion)

Classic analyses of human behavior in large groups point to a range of phenomena which occur in these settings.[40] One is the phenomenon of emotional contagion—behavior and feelings spread more rapidly. If this mechanism operates in the cafeteria (perhaps with some being more susceptible than others) then we would simply say that, somehow, the act of not returning trays got started—and it spread. If emotional contagion of this sort occurs in the high school cafeteria one solution might be to partition the single large room into a series of smaller rooms, thus reducing the extent to which individuals are part of a large mass.

26. Sensory Overload and Reduced Altruism

One of the traditional hypotheses about life in large cities is that there is so much sensory stimulation (e.g. noise, large numbers of people, activity), that people have to reduce their emotional involvement with (and concern for) most of the people they meet in order to retain some kind of equilibrium.[41] Thus we would expect (assuming some individuals reduce their emotional involvement with their environment more strongly than others) that not returning cafeteria trays would be a result of the

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[40]See for example Gustav LeBon (1903) *The Crowd,* London: Unwin.

[41]Georg Simmel (1950) "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in Kurt W. Wolff (ed.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel,* New York: Free Press, 409-424.

Stanley Milgram (1970) "The Experience of Living in Cities," *Science,* Vol. 167, 1461-1468.

crowded conditions in the cafeteria (and perhaps in the school in general). The effective resolution of the tray problem, by this theory, would be to reduce crowding, install sound deadening materials, etc.

27. Kohlberg Moral Development Theory

Kohlberg has advanced considerable evidence for a new theory which sees moral development occurring in a sequence of six stages.[42] He has studied moral *reasoning* (how a person explains or justifies an act as moral or immoral), but the stage theory seems also to predict to moral *behaviors* as well.[43] One of the lower stages of moral development is hedonistic morality (i.e. moral appropriateness is derived from the "what's in it for me" attitude identified earlier as an assumption in social learning theory).

The highest stage is the stage of individual ethical principles (the individual makes up his own mind in a principled way about what is right or just), and greater altruism and sense of individual responsibility seem to be associated with this stage as well. Kohlberg's theory would tell us that those who leave their trays may be at a lower level of moral development. The solution to the problem then would be careful attention by the school to curriculum innovations that would move students to higher stages of moral development. (This task apparently cannot be done by simple exhortation.)[44]

28. Equity Theory (Golden Rule Psychology)

Equity theory is probably best expressed, in its basic form, by the *lex talonis* of antiquity, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." In other words, it is the proposition that, to the extent they can, people are motivated to repay others, to behave toward others the way others behave toward them. If you treat others with kindness and respect, the theory proposes, they will treat you with kindness and respect. Give them a hard time and they will tend to give you a hard time when they have the opportunity.[45]

In the case of the unreturned cafeteria trays equity theory would tell us that students were expressing a basic and situationally-induced resentment

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[42]L. Kohlberg (1969) "State and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization" in D. A. Goslin (ed.) *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research,* Chicago: Rand McNally.

[43]N. Haan, M. B. Smith, and J. Block (1968) "The Moral Reasoning of Young Adults," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* Vol. 10, 183-201; James Fishkin et al. (1973) "Moral Reasoning and Political Ideology," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 27:1, 109-119.

[44]See Derek Wright, op. cit., chapter 10; also, E. Turiel (1966) "An Experimental Test of the Sequentiality of Development Stages in the Child's Moral Judgements," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* Vol. 3, 611-618.

[45]Elaine Walster et al. (1973) "New Directions in Equity Research," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 25:2, 151-176.

against the school: the regimentation, low marks, boredom, large classes, and a somewhat authoritarian structure are inducing them to repay the school for the hassles and indignities to which they have been subjected.

It is interesting, in this connection, to observe that equity theory would predict that the only way to resolve the problem would be to make high school a place where students are treated with respect and dignity, a great many rewards are forthcoming, and so forth. Only if the administration lives up to the Golden Rule will students do likewise. Note that the use of coercion or punishment is very unwise if equity theory is correct since these will only motivate further student underground resistance in either the classroom or the cafeteria.

29. Depersonalization

An increasing number of studies point to the possibility that depersonalization and anonymity tend to dissolve the obligations and humanizing restraints in individual conduct.[46] If so, we would expect to find those leaving their trays to be students who receive less recognition from the school, to be the "forgotten," ignored students, the ones for whom neither teachers nor administrators have time.[47]

Interestingly, there is now some general evidence for a depersonalization theory. Not only are students "depersonalized," it appears that school administrators and teachers are not seen as fully human, at least by high school students—a condition which may further promote callousness and indifference toward them.[48] If depersonalization theory is correct then a principal should concern himself with reducing the impersonal, bureaucratic atmosphere of the school. Students must feel known, recognized, and cared about; and they should feel those who run the school are "personalized" human beings engaged in honest human relationships rather than role performances.

30. Frustration-Aggression

If we think of leaving trays as an aggressive act, then perhaps frustration-aggression theory can help us to understand it.[49] What might

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[46] L. Festinger, A. Pepitone, and T. Newcomb (1952) "Some Consequences of Deindividuation in a Group," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* Vol. 47, 382-389; P. G. Zimbardo (1969) "The Human Choice: Individuation, Reason and Order Versus Deindividuation, Impulse and Chaos," in D. Levine (ed.) *The Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, 1969,* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

[47] Paradoxically, the large modern high school was developed, in part, from a desire for efficiency—yet this very "efficiency" of bigness may carry with it depersonalization and larger costs in vandalism and anti-social behavior.

[48] Derek Wright (1962) "A Comparative Study of the Adolescent's Concepts of His Parents and Teachers," *Educational Review,* Vol. 14, 226-232.

[49] John Dollard et al. (1939) *Frustration and Aggression,* New Haven: Yale University Press.

produce the frustrated students who, the theory holds, would be likely to express their frustration as aggression against the school? It *might* be that the most objectively deprived students would be the most frustrated. But the available evidence suggests that frustration may depend instead on *relative* deprivation, that is the gap between what a man wants or feels entitled to receive and what he actually does receive.[50]

As with equity theory, one possible solution is to increase the rewards to students, thus reducing frustrations. However if *relative* deprivation is involved, then several other alternatives become plausible depending on how students form their comparison levels:[51] one alternative might be to equalize existing rewards so that students would not face invidious comparisons with one another. Or the school might de-emphasize the achievement ethic: rather than dangle the carrot of an idealized academic success in front of many students who can never achieve it, the school could adopt a more humanistic set of ideals that everyone could meet; paradoxically, it may be that high standards, by inducing a sense of inadequacy and frustration, turn out to be counterproductive. Or the problem might be a lot simpler than this, a matter of providing better food in the cafeteria.[52]

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[50] L. Berkowitz (1972) "Frustrations, Comparisons and Other Sources of Emotional Arousal as Contributors to Social Unrest," *Journal of Social Issues,* 28:1, 77-91.

[51] Leon Festinger (1954) "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes," *Human Relations,* Vol. 7, 117-140; David Sears and John McConahay (1973) *The Politics of Violence: The New Urban Blacks and the Watts Riot,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

[52] It is possible that special privileges for teachers and administrators are sources of student frustration—in some high schools teachers are allowed to cut in the front of the long cafeteria lines, they have lounges where they can smoke, etc.

VII. Field Theory: Different Strokes for Different Folks?

I have reserved discussion of field theory until the end because it does not offer specific hypotheses. Rather it offers a general perspective on the hypotheses that have preceded.

Field theory asks that we imagine each individual as living in a psychological "life space," a psychological space which includes a variety of personal and situational *forces* that, in combination, determine behavior.[53] Field theory alerts us that our preceding theories are *not* mutually exclusive. In the same individual there may be a "what's in it for me" attitude, a tendency to be deviant in the service of developing a greater sense of his own identity, a mild degree of depression, certain sadistic tendencies, a loser syndrome, some susceptibility to emotional contagion (and so forth). *All* of these factors (and perhaps others affecting him in opposite directions) may be at work and, by their sum, produce the final behavior we observe.

By proposing the image of *separate* individual life spaces, field theory also alerts us that the relevant constellation of forces—the presence or absence of particular forces and their strength if present—may well differ from individual to individual. To account fully for tray-leaving, then, we *may* need all of the theories reviewed so far (not to mention others that might have to be discovered). We might need a somewhat different explanation for each individual.[54] And we might need to find a variety of "solutions," each of which will affect somewhat differently the behavior of different individuals.

It is important to emphasize, however, that field theory only *suggests* this maximum complexity might be present. It does *not* rule out, on

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[53]Deutsch and Krauss, op. cit.

[54]G. A. Kelly (1955) *The Psychology of Personal Constructs,* 2 Vols. New York: Norton.

theoretical grounds, the possibility that a few factors might actually account for most of the differences between the people who return trays and those who do not.

VIII. Thirty Theories in Search of Reality

Perhaps the reader is a bit dazed by now, finding that he has been forced to withdraw some of his attention as theories piled up and stimulus overload became a reality. It will be well, then, to call a halt at this point. I have diagrammed the thirty theories in Figure 1.[55]

A quick glance at the diagram shows that many linkages are still unstated, especially how background factors in individual development affect variations in fun seeking, certain unconscious dynamics, social conformity, and physiological responses. There are, of course, other theories about all of these things, but it would add little to go into them here: the purpose has been to inventory and introduce basic traditions of explanatory theory, not to write an exhaustive anatomy.

I do want to indicate, however, that there are several avenues I have not explored. There is the Marxist theory of a possible "haughty bourgeoisie indifference" of some students toward the working class employees of the cafeteria and the Maoist policy solution of decreasing depersonalization, altering rewards and punishments, and increasing identification by requiring the students to serve as workers and all members of the school to engage in public mutual and self-criticism sessions. More importantly, I have made the implicit assumption that returning trays is desirable behavior: reversing this assumption could turn up disquieting syndromes

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[55]A thoughtful, exceptionally useful map for the analysis of personality effects on politics is M. Brewster Smith (1968) "A Map for the Analysis of Personality and Politics," *Journal of Social Issues,* Vol. 24, 15-28.

My map, for reasons of simplicity, ignores the possibility that the factors which sustain behavior may be different from those that first start it (e.g. a "try it, you'll like it" mechanism). One one way in which behavior, once instituted, can change its psychological meaning see the discussion of cognitive consistency and self-attribution in Daryl Bem (1970) *Beliefs, Attitudes and Human Affairs,* Belmont, Calif.: Brooks/Cole. I am endebted to Gary Wolfsfeld for a discussion of these additional complexities that should be included in an exhaustive analysis of possibilities.

that might characterize some students who *return* their trays—e.g. automatic "authoritarian" obedience of anyone in authority.[56]

But I think we have surveyed the major theories. Taken together in the map they show the types of factors which potentially interact to affect a single behavior in one person: his *individual background*, the broader *context* of the society and social institutions of which he is a part, his *motives and inner states* in all their complexity, the many facets and dimensions of the *immediate situation.*

Anyone reading social science literature or the popular press will encounter different authors beating the drums for different theories: cost-benefit theories of voting, inadequate child-rearing as a theory of crime, theories of unconscious determinants of war and so forth. A map such as that in Figure 1 may be useful in keeping all of these different ideas in an organized perspective. And the complexity of the map demonstrates why the professional social scientist, although he values individual insights, nevertheless wants hard evidence before he will believe any one plausible theory is a major explanation.

Possibly it requires a sense of humor to consider a minor problem like unreturned cafeteria trays from thirty different points of view. But the important point is that most major problems of human behavior have an analogous structure: some people are criminals but others are not, some nations go to war but others do not, some people find society alienating but others do not, some students think and work up to their potential but others do not, some people are racially prejudiced but other people are not. The thirty different theoretical perspectives identified different policy alternatives and strategic intervention points which men of good will might use to solve such problems and make this a better world. These policy options are summarized in Table 1.

Some of these thirty theories might be called "conservative" theories: they attribute the cause of the problem to something about individuals and they recommend intervening to change individuals to solve the problem. Other theories could be called "liberal" theories: they attribute the cause of the problem more to the surrounding social structures and practices and they recommend intervening to change this environment to solve the problem. It is true, in America, that each individual has the right to advocate his ideology through an equal vote in the decision-making process. But embedded in liberal and conservative perspectives are theories of human behavior: from the viewpoint of a social scientist the best way to decide among theories is to assemble evidence, not dismiss them (or champion them) because they fit the relatively uninformed prejudices and partial insights that have been the traditional guidelines for resolving policy questions in our society.

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[56]T. W. Adorno et al. (1969) *The Authoritarian Personality,* New York: Norton.

Figure 1.

A MAP FOR THE ANALYSIS OF ONE INDIVIDUAL'S TRAY-LEAVING BEHAVIOR

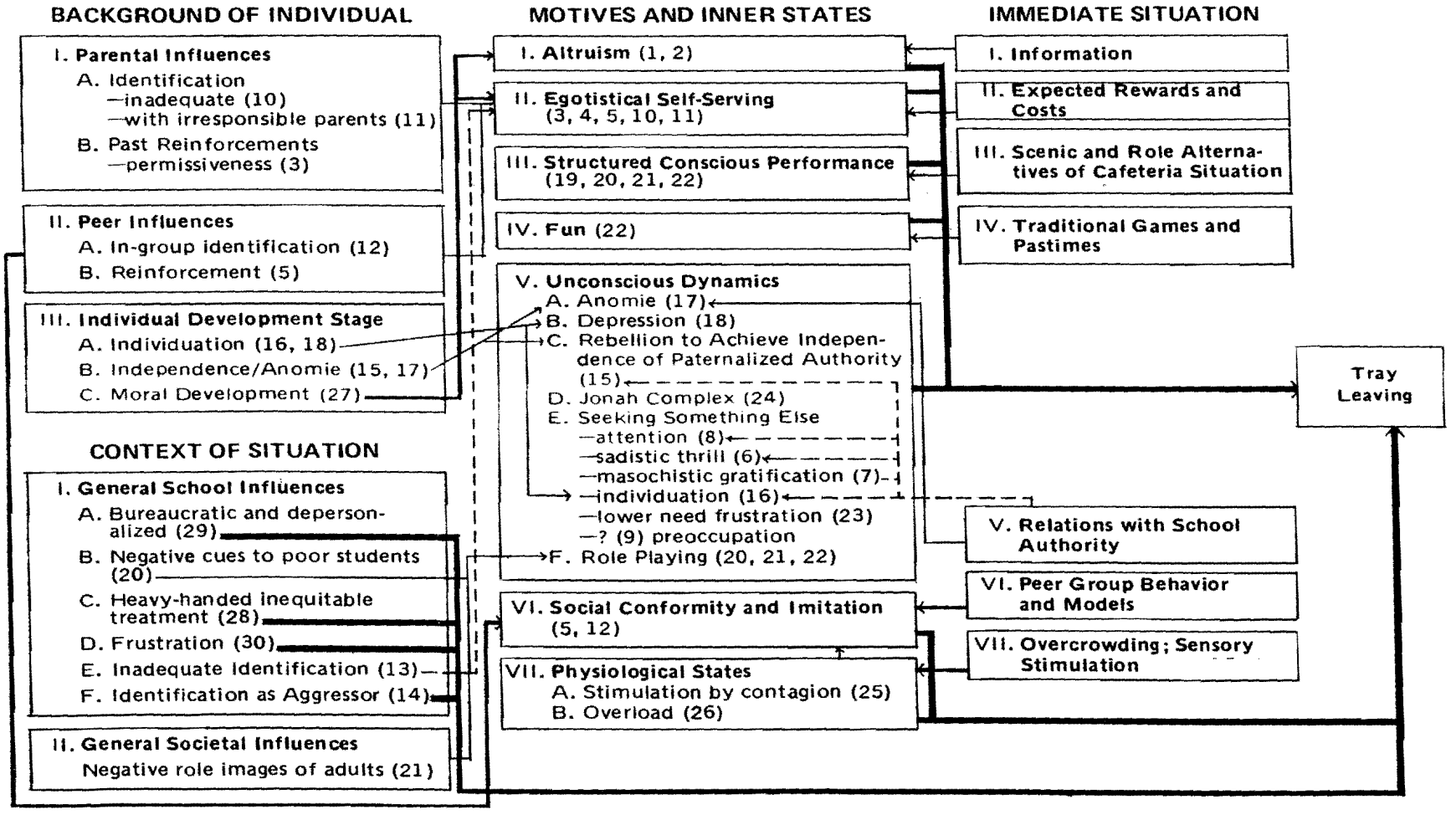

Table 1

Theories and Policy Options: A Summary

Theories	Policy for Behavior Change
I. **Cybernetic**	
1. Ignorance of Expectations	Information about expectations
2. Ignorance of Consequences	Information about consequences
II. **Behavior Reinforcement**	
3. Permissive Up-Bringing	Better reinforcement schedules by parents
4. What's In It for Me?	Deposit system; give rewards if possible; increase costs
5. Small Group Rewards	Breakup groups, use student government to exert peer group pressure
III. **Psychoanalytic Model**	
6. Sadism	Therapy; Expulsion
7. Masochism	Therapy; Ignore it (?)
8. Attention Seeking	Therapy; Alternative source of attention
9. Preoccupation	Reminders
10. Sociopathic Tendencies	Therapy (?); better child rearing
11. Identification with Irresponsible Parents	(?); better child rearing
12. In-group/Out-group	Break up groups
13. Inadequate Identification with School or Principal	Strengthen identification with school; better leadership
14. Identification with School as Aggressor	Increase benevolence of school system
15. Rebellion Against Parental Authority	Family or individual therapy
16. Deviation in the Service of Individuation	Therapy
17. Separation Anxiety, Regression, Structure Seeking (Anomie)	Strengthen and enforce rules; Therapy
18. Depression	Therapy
IV. **Dramaturgical/Role Model**	
19. Act/Scene Ratio	Add elegance to high school dining
20. "Loser"	Therapy
21. Peter Pan Syndrome	Better role models, (fun loving but responsibility, charisma)
22. Game Playing	(?)
V. **Humanistic Model**	
23. Lower Need (e.g. Sexual) Deprivation	Provide or facilitate meeting of unmet needs; sex; sex education
24. Jonah Complex	(?)
VII. **Specialized Theories**	
25. Emotional Contagion	Break large room into small sections
26. Sensory Overload and Reduced Altruism	Reduce pace of life, noise levels, crowding; break large room into small sections
27. Kohlberg Moral Development Theory	Design curriculum innovations to facilitate development of moral reasoning
28. Equity Theory (Golden Rule Psychology)	Provide more overall rewards from school system; better and more attractive food; *don't punish!*

Table 1. Theories and Policy Options: A Summary (continued)

Theories	Policy for Behavior Change
29. Depersonalization	Break up large schools; more personal interest of staff in all students; facilitate seeing cafeteria and other staff as individuals
30. Frustration/Aggression	More rewards from school system; equalize rewards; de-emphasize achievement ideals in favor of more humanistic ones; eliminate special privileges for staff.

Additional Readings

I. How Decisions Are Made in American Government

Charles E. Lindblom (1968) *The Policy Making Process,* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Aaron Wildavsky (1964) *The Politics of the Budgetary Process,* Boston: Little, Brown.

Graham Allison (1971) *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis,* Boston: Little, Brown.

John Steinbruner (1974) *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision,* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

II. How American Government Sometimes Uses Social Science Theories

Peter Marris and Martin Rein (1973) *Dilemmas of Social Reform,* Chicago: Aldine, second edition.

Daniel P. Moynihan (1973) *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income,* New York: Vintage.

III. Some Additional Case Study Material on Public Policy Formation

Theodore Marmor (1973) *The Politics of Medicare,* Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Eric Redman (1973) *The Dance of Legislation,* New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky (1973) *Implementation,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Eliot, Chambers, Salisbury and Prewitt (1965) *American Government: Problems and Readings,* New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.

IV. Theories in Social Psychology and Political Science

Morton Deutsch and Robert M. Krauss (1965) *Theories in Social Psychology*, New York: Basic Books.

Oran R. Young (1968) *Systems of Political Science,* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Mancur Olson (1971) *The Logic of Collective Action,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Thomas Schelling (1963) *The Strategy of Conflict,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 2.

Murray Edelman (1964) *The Symbolic Uses of Politics,* Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press.

Analysis Topics-
The Case of the
Unreturned Cafeteria Trays

I. Applying the Arguments of Different Theories

1. Social Learning Theory

A Marxist might say that a market mechanism solution to any social problem is inherently immoral because it sanctions individual selfishness and greed as the determinants of behavior. Would you agree or disagree?

2. Inadequate Identification and Depersonalization

A Marxist might find it significant that most students in my high school were middle class or upper-middle class; 85% went on to college. The cafeteria workers and janitorial staff were blue collar "functionaries." Do the actions of the students who leave their trays display an indifference and callousness toward these people that is a part of any class system? How does the Communist Chinese government attempt to prevent the development of "bourgeoise arrogance" in its citizens?

3. Game Playing

In a sense the student government in my case study was "playing politics." Were we morally right to do what we did, morally wrong, or do you think that perhaps moral judgements should not apply to "games?" What do you think about politicians who "play politics?"

4. Maslow Need Hierarchy Theory

Maslow would propose that a healthy and satisfying love life is one prerequisite for good citizenship. Does this sound far-fetched to you or does it sound accurate?

5. Moral Development Theory

For his book *Political Ideology,* Robert E. Lane conducted extended depth interviews with working class men. He found that those men who worried about their ability to control their own impulses favored strong, moralistic, law-and-order government. They seemed to be saying that they needed and wanted the threat and realistic fear of reprisal from government authority as an aid to deterring their own anti-social impulses. Kohlberg would agree that there are people like this. Clearly then the ideal of applying the same laws equally to all men is bad policy since the same laws and law enforcement practices can restrict unduly the people at the highest levels of moral development and be too lenient for those at the lower ends. Do you agree or disagree with this argument? Do you think police and courts already work on a rough-and-ready theory of this kind by giving out different punishments and enforcing laws differently for different groups?

II. Analyzing the Viewpoint of the Paper

1. The paper implies that liberals and conservatives are just deficient social scientists, that they advocate policies based on attitudes which embody theories for which they have no really good evidence. Is this characterization fair?

2. The paper implicitly argues that public policy should be based on good social science theory. What is the likelihood that such an approach would lead to totalitarianism or elitism? Is the approach anti-political?

III. Exercises in Thinking from Different Viewpoints

1. Some people in America make a very good living while other people are poor. Is poverty the fault of individuals or the fault of their environment? Propose three theories that would tend to blame the poor for their poverty and three theories that would tend to blame society.

2. Some people vote and others do not. Propose six alternative theories to explain this difference. (Note: do not automatically equate voting as a "good thing" analogous to returning trays.) On the basis of your political science courses, what theories are best?

3. Suppose that the Governor of your state appoints you to a special citizens' advisory committee on drunken driving. The Governor wants something done about the high loss of life due to the drunken driver problem. Your committee has $50 million to spend and a promise that the Governor will sponsor any constitutional laws that you propose. Outline five alternative approaches to solving the drunken driver problem.

4. Some people in other countries are revolutionaries opposed to "American imperialism." Other people are not. Propose five theories to explain this difference. Which theories do you think are best? What evidence can you offer to support your choice?

5. During the Kennedy administration the Russian government placed nuclear missiles on the island of Cuba. Propose seven alternative theories about why they might have done this.

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