

## CHAPTER III

### HOLDEN CAULFIELD'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

As stated in *Lifelong Human Development*, Erik Erikson theorized that adolescence is a crisis among crisis, a period when old issues resurface from childhood and must be resolved once again and put into a newly emerging sense of self (412). Adolescence then can be understood as a crucial period that has to be passed through by everybody, in which the search for identity always becomes an important part of it. And this what actually happens to Holden Caulfield's life in which he has to search for identity in adult world with confusion, depression, and anxiety as most young adolescents are. Therefore, he is then considered to be the representative of adolescent group.

Holden is a young adolescent of sixteen, a native New Yorker, who has to stay at a 'rest home' after all he has experienced especially after drifting about in New York City for three days. Staying there Holden tells about all his experiences by composing a story in a long flashback as his way to express or convey what he feels and thinks especially to other young adolescents to share his experiences with them, and also to the psychoanalyst who always



keeps asking him with a lot of questions. Through Holden's composition, we know who he really is and what he has experienced. Therefore, everybody in his story meaning all characters in the novel including Holden himself are viewed or judged from his own point of view.

#### A. HOLDEN CAULFIELD AS A PORTRAIT OF AN ADOLESCENT

In *The Catcher in the Rye* Holden appears to be the representative of adolescent group. He emerges as the portrait of an adolescent that the ways in which he speaks, acts, thinks and judges are a reflection of the ways of the adolescents.

In Holden's composition which is also a flashback, it is told that he was a student of Pencey Prep, a very famous and good school in Agerstown, Pennsylvania, where he got the ax because he was flunking four subjects and not applying himself, and this was about the fourth school he had gone to.

Actually, one of Holden's reasons for not applying himself is that in his ideal mind school is a place where people are seriously studying for devoting themselves to what is called knowledge or science. But what Holden always found in schools is "phonies" who come to school only for doing their own business, or ones who study with their own selfish-purpose that they will become rich and

have an expensive car some day if they are really smart or successful at school. Holden revealed this to Sally Hayes when they went out together for a date.

"You ought to go to a boy's school sometime. Try it sometime," I said. "It's full of phonies, and all you do is study so that you can learn enough to be smart enough to be able to buy a goddam Cadillac some day, and you have to keep making believe you give a damn if the football team loses, and all you do is talk about girls and liquor and sex all day, and everybody sticks together in these dirty little goddam cliques."

(170)

So, at this point, the reader can see that Holden actually finds the boredom of the school life which brings him to a condition of lack of motivation and self-esteem as a student. And in fact, this reason also makes us find so many of our adolescents skipping or even dropping out of school.

The reader, then, can also find that Holden has an intellectual problem of preparing himself for a vocation because he rejects the kind of career for which his schooling is preparing him and as yet he can conceive of no realistic substitute for it (French 109). Even though

he has been staying at the 'rest home', Holden still cannot tell the psychoanalyst whether or not he is going to apply himself when he returns to school. It is because Holden insists that he does not know *why* he is going to school or *why* he should apply himself.

In the story, Holden emerges as a pessimist. As most young adolescents who still have no clear description or picture of their future, Holden also feels nothing sure about his own future. He sticks on his opinion that people never know what they are going to do until they do it. The reader can find this opinion through Holden's way of speaking and thinking.

I'd never yell "Good luck!" at anybody. It sounds terrible, when you think about it. (21)

I mean how do you know what you're going to do till you *do* it? The answer is you don't know. I *think* I am, but how do I know? I swear it's a stupid question. (276)

Holden also claims himself as a "terrific liar." This behavior is actually produced by a mind that is troubled and hurt. In the description of his train trip to New York, Holden says that he told Mrs. Morrow, a classmate's mother, that her son was too modest about his achievements. Holden admits that he had this woman to whom he was speaking "in a trance" and that he could "go on

lying for hours" ( 73,76 ). And when Holden visits Mr. Spencer, his history teacher, he tells him that his lectures were "very interesting" (17) although Holden himself found them boring. This proves that Holden's motive for lying is not merely to create excitement or pleasure, or even for the need to escape boredom like the young usually do, but also to please others and/or prevent hurting others' feelings.

Through his composition, Holden admits that he reads a lot. He even makes aesthetic judgements about several books. He likes *The Return of the Native* because he likes Thomas Hardy and his heroine 'Eustacia Vye.'

I'm quite illiterate, but I read a lot....I read a lot of classical books, like *The Return of the Native* and all, and I like them,.....What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it....I'd rather call Thomas Hardy up. I like that Eustacia Vye. (25)

Through his confession and judgement about books, Holden tries to convey his literary hero to his readers. He wants to equalize himself to 'Eustacia Vye', a character in

Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native*. Eustacia is passionate and rebellious. She rebels against her environment which is so gloomy and repressive. She cannot escape from her environment; she cannot change her environment. Therefore, Eustacia finally commits suicide (Daiker et al. 556). On the contrary, in the beginning of his story or composition, Holden lets us know that he is not going to give a history of his childhood; he is not going to start with "all that David Copperfield kind of crap." What he means is that he does not like the classicboy hero. *David Copperfield* itself is a classic novel telling about a poor growing-up boy who struggles against hardships and villainy. At first 'David' is weak and passive because he is afraid of the world. But, he eventually asserts himself and overcomes his enemies. He achieves his success and even makes a mature marriage. He becomes "the hero of his own life" (ibid). This hero achieves a happy ending and adjusts to society, therefore, Holden does not identify with this hero. His heroes are different; they are outsiders and remain outsiders. They cannot accept things as they are, so they die in the end.

At this point, Holden's attitude implies one of typical characteristics of the most young adolescents who usually need or seek a figure or a model that fits them to be followed or imitated. And in Holden's case, he identi-

fies himself with "Eustacia Vye" because he finds his life reflected in that of the heroine.

In the story Holden's attitude is ambivalent. His judgement that his brother D.B. is "prostituting" himself in Hollywood, for example, shows that Holden does "hate the movies like poison" (38). Yet he also imitates them, as he does on several unlikely occasions : after the elevator operator beats him up and after Carl Luce abandons him in the bar. After Maurice beats him up, Holden projects himself into a movie hero. He imagines that he has been shot, that he is a "tough guy," that he is crawling to the bathroom for a drink which will give him the impetus to real resaction. Even while he indulges in these fantasies, he is aware that they are fantasies : "The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I'm not kidding" (136). And after Luce leaves him in the bar, Holden imagines himself gets a bullet in his guts and keeps putting his hand under his jacket, on his stomach, to keep the blood from dripping all over the place (195).

Holden's mixed feelings are also shown by his remark that the movie at the Radio City Music Hall was "so putrid he could not take his eyes off it" (179). He displays similar ambivalence towards other exhibitions : bleeding after Stradlater has beaten him, he finds that the gore

"partly scares" and "partly fascinates" him; watching the "perverts" in the hotel where he is staying, he observes that "the trouble was, that kind of junk is sort of fascinating to watch, even if we do not want it to be" (87).

In another part of the story, the reader finds that Holden claims himself as "sort of an atheist". He has his own attitude toward religion. He likes and admires Jesus but he does not care too much for the content of the Bible including the Diciples. In this instance, Holden still views religion intellectually like the way in which he judges the Diciples that they should not make any mistakes which let Jesus down. Because the Diciples are picked by Jesus Himself so they should have not made Jesus disappointed; they should be the example of all people. But, in this case, Holden fails to see that the apostles are also human beings who can make a mistake.

Moreover, the reader can find several scenes in the novel pointing to the fact that what Holden rejects is not exactly religion but religious hypocrisy--which, in his confusion and naivety, he fails to distinguish from the former. He is repelled by the gaudy Radio City Christmas Show, remarking that "Jesus would've puked if He could see it" (178). Holden shows similar disdain for two men who curse about the Christmas tree they are unloading from a truck. Clearly, it is society's commercialized version



of Christmas and religion which Holden detest, and it is this disgust that has brought him to his rather naive conclusion that he is an atheist.

From another point of view, the reader can catch something that Holden's attitude toward religion is basically a reflection of his life which has no religious guidance, even not from his parents.

Old Childs said the trouble with me was that I didn't go to church or anything. He was right about that, in a way. I don't. In the first place, my parents are different religions, and all the children in our family are atheists.

(131)

As a matter of fact, religion provides the adolescent with a moral framework against which behavior can be compared. It acts in a sense as a behavior stabilizer. Religion acts to explain one's existence and one's purpose in being on the earth (Adams and Gulotta 374). Unfortunately, Holden like most adolescents who live in modern society, never gets this religious touch from his parents, not in his adolescence nor even in his childhood.

Holden has quite a bit to drink during his journey through New York City. Here, Holden's behavior reflects his feelings of alienation, pointing out that he drinks

solely to escape his loneliness. He drinks as the most young adolescents do when they have to face some problems, problems at home, at school, or their personal problems. But this habit does not make them successful in solving their problems; they even sink into despair, loneliness, and fear. As described in the story, Holden's drinking does not make him mature or worthy of respect--hence, he gains no friends from it. Nor getting drunk help him forget about his problems. Conversely, he is at his height of intoxication that Holden is falling into despair, stumbling through Central Park at night, fearing that he will die alone in the cold.

Sex is perhaps a very complicated problem which the adolescent must deal with. In the story, Holden admits to us that he has sexual desires. He even submits, to some degree, to society's demand that young men be sexually adroit : he thinks that a prostitute might provide him with the "practice" he needs for marriage (Frangedis 74). This seems to be the reason for Holden, then, that several times he allows himself to accept a prostitute : When he stays at the Edmont Hotel, he calls a girl named Faith Cavendish whose address he got from a Princeton guy he met at party; she "wasn't exactly a whore or anything but that didn't mind doing it once a while" (83). And the night when Holden gets back from Ernie's to his hotel, he also

accepts the elevator operator's offer to get him a whore (119). So these prove that Holden is trying to be "sexually adroit" but he himself is not ready yet to get involved in that kind of sexual experience.

For most Western teenagers, being a 'virgin' is something awful and shameful. The boys usually try to "practice" their first sexual experience with a prostitute. At this point, Salinger is successful to portray Holden as a young adolescent who tries to fulfill the society's demand to be 'sexually adroit' by trying to have some sexual experience. But, in this case, Holden also appears as the one who is still stuck on his own strong sense of what is right and what is wrong. He admits that he himself has frequent opportunities to lose his virginity but when girls request that he 'stop', Holden really stops.

If sex is a very complicated problem which the adolescent must deal with, suicide is one increasingly common reaction to the problems of adolescence. Suicide may seem like the only out to adolescents who feel hopeless, powerless, and without options. Some adolescents try suicide after they have been isolated for a long time, after they have failed repeatedly at things, or when they have been feeling unworthy, desperate, and hopeless. Others attempt

suicide because they want out of a destructive family, or have problems with members of the other sex, problems at school, problems with brothers and sisters, or problems with friends (Tishler, McHenry, and Morgan qtd. in Clarke-Stewart, Perlmutter and Friedman 432).

Holden's condition which is so complicated actually drives him to commit suicide easily. His problems at school, problem with peers, his not-so-well relationship with parents, his feelings of loneliness and alienation, and the behaviors of people around him which make him depressed have become a good reason to lead him to commit suicide. As what happens to him after Maurice beats him for the extra five dollars, Holden really feels like committing suicide by jumping out the window. But his thought that nobody will take care of his body down there has finally failed him.

It took me quite a while to get to sleep--I wasn't even tired--but finally I did. what I really felt like, though, was committing suicide. I felt like jumping out the window. I probably would've done it, too, if I'd been sure somebody'd cover me up as soon as I landed. I didn't want a bunch of stupid rubbernecks looking at me when I was all gory. (136)

One quality of Holden that brings him to be so close

and familiar to the young is his usage of language. As the narrator of the story, the way in which he expresses himself reflects his thoughts and his state of mind. Thus, because Holden is troubled young adolescent, his language is frequently profane, demonstrating his negativism.

Salinger himself creates Holden as an individual character with the exact speech of teenagers in general. He gives Holden an extremely trite and typical teenage speech, replete with adolescent or teenage slang, therefore, he speaks in a recognizable teenage language. It is common for teenagers, for instance, to end thoughts with a loosely dangling "and all," "or something," "or anything" like Holden did in the story, just as it is also common for them to add an insistent "I really did," "It really was" and "if you want to know the truth" (Costello 267).

Holden's informal, schoolboy vernacular is particularly typical in its 'vulgarity' and 'obscenity' (ibid 269). In the story the reader will find Holden's constant use of "goddam." Of course, this word is used with no relationship to its original meaning or, in other words, it is clearly not intended to take the Lord's name in vain. But it simply expresses an emotional feeling toward the object : either favorable, as in "goddam hunting cap";

or unfavorable, as in "ya goddam moron."

Holden's slang is exactly rich and colorful, for example, Holden's slang use of "crap" which is used in different ways can mean foolishness, as "all that David Copperfield kind of crap," or merely miscellaneous matter, as "I was putting on my galoshes and crap." Similarly Holden's slang use of "crazy" is both trite and imprecise. "That drives me crazy" means that he violently dislikes something; yet "to be crazy about" and "killed me" mean just the opposite.

Holden's slang is really typical teenage slang : versatile yet narrow, expressive yet unimaginative and imprecise (ibid 271). Holden's use of the adjective "old", for instance, that he appends this word to almost every character, real or fictional, mentioned in the novel, from the hated "old Maurice" to "old Gatsby," to "old Phoebe" and even "old Jesus." He uses this term only after he has previously mentioned the character; he then feels free to append the familiar "old." Holden's choice of adjectives and verbs is indeed narrow, with a constant repetition of a few words : *lousy, pretty, terrific, quite, old, stupid*--all used, is the habit of teenage vernacular, with little regard to specific meaning. Thus, most of the nouns which are called "stupid" could not in any logical framework be called "ignorant," and, the adjective "old" before

a proper noun has nothing to do with age (ibid 272).

All these points, then, leads us to see that what Salinger actually tries to do is not only to depict or portray Holden as a typical discontented and depressed young adolescent, but also to present him as the hero of the young especially of the adolescents from whom they can take a lesson to undergo their lives.

#### **B. HOLDEN CAULFIELD'S EXPERIENCE IN HIS SEARCH FOR IDENTITY**

Adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. In this period, an adolescent must face a major task, that is resolving his/her identity crisis--the struggle to define and integrate one's sense of self and what one's attitudes, beliefs and values should be (Erikson qtd. in Gerow 423). So what Holden goes through in the story is basically an experience that is also gone through by other adolescents in their developmental stage of life in which the task for resolving the identity crisis must be dealt with. But the problem, then, seems to lie on Holden's condition that he has to pass through this crucial period alone. No one guides him and gives him a deep understanding in his search for identity. Hence, he faces a lot of difficulties and frustrations in

undergoing his adolescence.

Holden's condition is complicated, however, by emotional problems. His mother is always ill and nervous since the death of Holden's brother, Allie, and his father is so busy being successful that he never discusses things with his son.

My father's quite wealthy, though. I don't know how much he makes--he's never discussed that stuff with me--but I imagine quite a lot. (140)

Holden is thus without the kind of parental guidance, an adolescent urgently needs during this crucial period. Parents' role is completely needed since they continue to influence their children during adolescence. The amount of emotional support they provide influences how successfully adolescent children resolve their identity crises (Clarke-Stewart, Perlmutter and Friedman 436).

The school to which Holden has been sent, unfortunately, fails to take the place of his parents. It even leads Holden to choose to run away from his prep school as the climax of his long protest, an adolescent's protest against the school life and its system that fails to understand him. We can also find that Holden's complaint is not that Pencey Prep like those schools which are overbearing or destructive of individuality, but rather that "they don't do any damn more *molding* at Pencey than



they do at any other school" (4). What Holden means here, is that his school is more concerned about how to entertain prospective donors than about how to take care of their students who have problems at school or the like.

Being disappointed with his school and not getting any guidance from his parents, Holden tries to get a sympathy and understanding from his history teacher, Mr. Spencer. Regrettably, he even lectures Holden about things he already knows but he cannot answer one important question that Holden plaintively asks.

"Look, sir. Don't worry about me," I said. "I mean it. I'll be all right. I'm just going through a phase right now. Everybody goes through phases and all, don't they?"

"I don't know, boy. I don't know." ( 21 )

So, what Holden actually needs here, is a kind of understanding from the adult to guide and help him pass through his adolescence. But they seem to be merely concerned about Holden's failures at school and keep trying to discover the causes of Holden's discontent rather than what he really needs.

Holden's schoolmates aggravate his condition : Ackley will move only if yelled at; Stradlater is not interested in a person's "lousy childhood," but only "very sexy



stuff". Both give Holden "royal pain" by running down the few accomplishments that may give other people some vitally needed self-confidence (37). Adolescents usually feel closer to their peers than to their parents or to other adults. With friends they talk, joke, and hang out. They are spontaneous, open, and free of adult restraints. They feel excited, friendly, sociable, involved, and motivated. Boys especially feel more open, free, involved, strong, and active when they are with their friends (Clarke-Stewart, Perlmutter and Friedman 421). Unluckily, Holden does not find all these in his friends. They are too obsessed with their own business; they are too busy with their own pimples or their good looks, and not interested in trying to figure out what may really be troubling a friend who they know is flunking out. It, then, becomes one of Holden's reasons to run away from his boarding school and choose to drift about in New York City.

Holden's flight from his prep school is also part of the climax of his boredom of "phony" and "phoniness" in the world around him. All these times Holden has tried to stand living in such world but he fails since he even finds much more phonies and phoniness. He tells us, for example, that the reason he left Elkton Hills is because he was surrounded by phonies. One of them is his own headmaster, Mr. Haas, who always treats the students' parents

based on their social classes. Mr. Haas always pretends giving a deep respect to every students' parents who drove up to school on Sundays. Holden finds out that his headmaster actually neglects the parents from the lower classes but he, on the contrary, will treat well the students' parents from the middle or the upper classes who, of course, always look good in their expensive clothes and shoes. Thus, there is only pretense, and therefore lack of love, care, and true respect in the actions of the headmaster.

There is also the pretense of love and care in the rich alumnus undertaker who comes back to Pencey Prep to give a chapel speech and tells the boys that they should not be afraid to pray to God.

He told us we should always pray to God--talk to Him and all--wherever we were. He told us we ought to think of Jesus as our buddy and all. He said *he* talked to Jesus all the time. Even when he was driving his car. That killed me. I can just see the big phony bastard shifting into first gear and asking Jesus to send him a few more stiffs... (23)

And it is the harshness and brutality of school life that brings a boy at Elkton, James Castle, to choose to

die rather than to take back what he said about this conceited boy, Phil Stabile. Stabile with about six other dirty boys went into James's room and locked the door and pushed him to take back what he said, but James would not do it. And finally, there was James Castle laying right on the stone steps. He was dead, and his teeth, and blood, were all over the place, and nobody would even go near him. All they did with these boys that were in the room with him was expel them. They did not even go to jail.

Holden is then disappointed and shocked by this incident since what he finds is not only brutality but also injustice of the school life.

By studying at Pencey Holden has hoped to live in a new world which is free from phonies but what he finds is the same experiences as before. As a matter of fact, Holden himself finds "Pencey Prep" to be one of the worst phonies. It has advertised in so many magazines showing some hot-shot guy on a horse jumping over a fence. And underneath the guy on the horse's picture, it always says: "Since 1888 we have been molding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men." But the fact shows that the school is more interested in collecting money from the donors rather than in molding their students into splendid and clear-thinking young men as the motto always says. Therefore, it is not surprising that Holden figures out

somebody had stolen his camel's-hair coat right out of his room. He learns that "Pencey is full of crooks. Quite a few boys come from very wealthy families, but it is full of crooks anyway" (7). Holden also learns how bad Pencey educational system is, as he told to Mr. Antolini about this *Oral Expression* class he flunked which makes him uninterested to apply himself. It is a course where each boy in class has to get up in class and make a speech spontaneously. And if the boy digresses, the students are supposed to yell 'Digression!' at him as fast as they can. This matter drives Holden crazy. For him it is unfair to keep yelling 'Digression!' at the boy when he is excited telling the class about a story he is interested in. And Mr. Vinson, the teacher of this class, should not ask his students to yell 'Digression!' when his student digresses. He should find another way for it, something wiser that does not make the students feel that the way he handles the course will ruin their creativity and finally brings them to flunk the course, as Holden did.

By leaving his school early, Holden has hoped to get "rested up" in New York after his frustrating experiences. Many students are similarly tempted to run away because of conflicts with their associates and failures in their work. When Holden runs away, however, he finds not peace

but only more intense forms of the same kind of problems and frustrations he has already experienced.

When he has to stay at this hotel, for example, in a very crummy room, with nothing to look out of the window at except the other side of the hotel, Holden discovers that the place is full of "perverts and morons." In the rooms across the building, a female impersonator is dressing, and a couple of people are squirting water at each other (80). And when he cannot sleep and decides to go to Ernie's, a Greenwich Village nightclub, he finds that Ernie is playing the piano but it seems that he is playing some fancy additions to the tune and including many extra notes. The audience is quite impressed and cheers for a long time. Holden finds this to be very phony and he nearly gets sick. He concludes that even Ernie himself does not know when he is playing well anymore, and this thought depresses Holden (110).

Back to his hotel, Holden accepts the elevator operator's offer to get him a prostitute which then leads him to be beaten up by this elevator operator, Maurice, since he and Sonny, the prostitute, want the other five dollars and Holden refuses to pay it. This scene is a repetition of the earlier scene in which Holden is also beaten up by Stradlater, his roommate, just before he leaves the school that night. So, again Holden is incapable of dealing with

physical brutality. Again, Holden is reduced to tears and profanity.

Going out with Sally for a date, Holden shows his feeling that he is disappointed and sickened by the material values and the inhumanity of the world around him. He, through the course of his search, is repulsed and frightened, not by what people do to him but rather by what people do to each other, and to themselves. He learns that most people are more interested in "things" instead of human values.

"Take most people, they're crazy about cars. They worry if they get a little scratch on them, and they're always talking about how many miles they get to a gallon, and if they get a brand-new car already they start thinking about trading it in for one that's even newer. I don't even like *old* cars. I mean they don't even interest me. I'd rather have a goddam horse. A horse is at least *human*, for God's sake..." (169-170)

In the course of his wanderings around New York, Holden is constantly running into walls that separate people--from each other and from themselves--and shut out love. He goes to Radio City Music Hall for the Christmas pageant, and there, as in so many other places, pretense

has become common and emotion therefore paralyzed.

It's supposed to be religious as hell, I know, and very pretty and all, but I can't see anything religious or pretty, for God's sake, about a bunch of actors carrying crucifixes all over the stage. When they were all finished and started going out the boxes again, you could tell they could hardly wait to get a cigarette or something. (178)

It is plain to see that pretense is always present in the world around Holden. It is what he means by "phoniness," that is the absence of love and humanity in every instance, while he calls "phony" for the things that he finds so deeply repulsive. As in his way to go to see Phoebe at her school, Holden finds another form of phoniness. He is depressed and shocked by the obscene words he has found scribbled not only in Phoebe's school, but in the almost sacred halls of the Museum of Natural History, since he cannot imagine what is going to happen if the children read them. But Holden has realized that "he cannot ever find a place that is nice and peaceful, because there is not any" (264). He has resigned himself to the phoniness of the world; and as far as he himself is concerned, he can simply reconcile it.

From Holden's experiences in New York, it appears



that Holden himself is actually guilty of nearly all the things or the faults he finds in others that make him call them 'phony.' He is especially guilty of overgeneralizing. Although he complains that everybody--especially his father--"think something's all true" when it's only partly true, he concludes with his own generalization that "people never notice anything" (13). He also comments "people never believe you" (48), women always leave bags in the aisle (70), "all those Ivy League bastards look alike" (112). Holden obviously fails to see that his criticisms apply to himself. He even does precisely what he objects to other people's doing. He displays the vain irresponsibility that he criticizes in Stradlater who never cleans his razor when he himself loses the fencing team's equipment. He stands in another's light just as he complains Ackley does. He lectures Ackley in the same way that he objects to the history teacher's lecturing him. Like Ackley, Holden himself will do what others want only when he is shouted at. Like Carl Luce, Holden will discuss only what he feels like talking about (188,71). Although it is "against his principles," Holden allows Maurice, an elevator operator, to send a prostitute to his room (119). And although he finds the scene in the rooms across the hotel building disgusting, Holden admits that "that

kind of junk is sort of fascinating to watch, even if he does not want it to be" (81).

Holden calls others "phony" also resulted from his own attitude toward morality. Like other adolescents, Holden also bases his moral judgements on his own personal values and standards, not on social conventions or the persuasion of authorities (Clarke-Stewart, Perlmutter and Friedman 405). In this respect, Holden faces moral dilemmas that he finds it hard to accept the attitudes and behaviors of the adult since he compares them with those of the children rather than takes them as they are.

It can be noted, then, that Holden cannot carry out his plan in New York City since he cannot stand being alone. He needs someone to whom he can talk to about his problems. He really needs a company who gives him sympathy and understanding. If Holden were not constantly seeking company, he might have thought about his situation and his experiences but he is not yet ready to accept this demanding intellectual responsibility. However, Holden's failures generally result from his own desperate impetuosity. When he first fails to arrange a rendezvous with Faith Cavendish, he acknowledges that he "has fouled that up" (86). Although he finds one of the girls from Seattle whom he meets in the Lavender Room of his hotel to be a marvelous dancer, he rejects all of them because he

believes that they do not know any better than to drink Tom Collinses in the middle of December or to go to Radio City Music Hall (97-8), where he subsequently goes himself. He irritates a taxi driver with questions about the ducks in Central Park (107-8), and he leaves a night club because he does not want to be "bored to death" by an old flame of his brother's and her naval officer escort (114).

Even though it is against his principles, Holden allows Maurice, an elevator operator, to send a prostitute to his room, and feeling "much more depressed than sexy" (125), he attempts to engage this unwilling prostitute in conversation. When he refuses to pay an extra five dollars that she and Maurice try to bilk him of, Holden is beaten up, although his complaint is only that it would be different if they had asked for ten dollars to begin with.

Holden's girl friend, Sally Hayes, also proves no more understanding than the prostitute. Sally has evidently made her adjustment to the sophisticated life Holden hates. When he asks her if she hates school, she replies that "it's a terrific bore," but she does not "exactly hate it" (169). When he pleads with her to run away to the woods with him, she tries to reason with him by pointing out that his idea is "fantastic" and that there will be "oodles of marvelous places to go" if they get married.



after he finishes college (172). When he tells her that she gives him "a royal pain," she leaves in tears, and Holden rationalizes that he probably would not have taken her with him anyway. Obviously, from the way Sally attempts to change the subject from hating school and phonies, she cannot possibly help Holden because her own adjustment is still precarious, and it means that she cannot provide the understanding Holden needs.

Not getting the understanding from the people he has met, Holden then turns to a more mature ex-schoolmate, now a student at Columbia, Carl Luce. But Luce avoids discussion of the questions that most disturb Holden and finally even advises that Holden should see a psychiatrist. Luce himself is described by Holden in this way :

"...he'd make you describe the most personal stuff that happened to *you*, but if you started asking *him* questions about *himself*, he got sore. These intellectual guys don't like to have an intellectual conversation with you unless they're running the whole thing. They always want you to shut up when *they* shut up,..." (191)

It is obvious that Holden draws nothing from Carl Luce since there is no aid for the bewildered boy like him in such monologues.

Finally, Holden turns to a still older person, Mr.

Antolini--his best, favorite, and respected teacher. Mr. Antolini was Holden's teacher when he was student of Elkton Hills, to whom he usually talk. Mr. Antolini does not mind being disturbed late at night by Holden's call and even offers him a refuge. But this well-intentioned man fails as the others to provide what Holden needs. After lecturing Holden at great length about not dying nobly for a cause, but living humbly for it--especially by applying one's self in school--Mr. Antolini wakes Holden who has at last gone to sleep by patting him on the head which he interprets as perverted. This not only makes Holden embarrassed and frightened but also becomes more depressed over a great abundance of phonies in adult world. He then leaves Mr. Antolini's apartment as quickly as he can.

I woke up all of a sudden. I don't know what time it was or anything, but I woke up. I felt something on my head, some guy's hand. Boy, it really scared hell out of me. What it was, it was Mr. Antolini's hand. What he was doing was, he was sitting on the floor right next to the couch, in the dark and all, and he was sort of petting or patting me on the goddam head. Boy, I'll bet I jumped about a thousand feet.

"What the hellyya *doing*?" I said.

"Nothing! I'm simply sitting here, admiring-- "

"What're ya *doing* anyway?" I said over again.

I didn't know *what* the hell to say--I mean I was embarrassed as hell.

"How 'bout keeping your voice down? I'm simply sitting here-- "I have to go, anyway," I said-- boy, was I nervous! (249)

In this respect, what matters is that Mr. Antolini is not really sensitive to Holden's condition; for, if he had perceived the depth of this boy's disturbance, he would have done nothing that might puzzle or upset him. He would have left Holden strictly alone until the crisis had past. Whatever Mr. Antolini's real purpose, his insensitivity drives Holden from his last refuge.

Facing the fact that Mr. Antolini, the best teacher he had ever had and the only unphony person he knew, is one of those perverts, Holden once again sinks into disappointment, frustration, and fear. His last hope for sympathy and understanding in the world of his peers and elders has failed him. He then can turn only to the memory of his brother Allie. Walking along the street alone, Holden pleads with Allie not to let him 'disappear'. Holden survives, and as he reaches the Sixties he is sitting on a bench, breathless and sweating, he decides that he will

run away, he fantasizes to be a deaf mute so he won't have any useless conversations with anybody and he will hide his children from the outside world. Society has failed him.

This decision has proved that all of Holden's requests for assistance have failed. The only hope for Holden now is his little sister Phoebe, who--when she learns that he plans to run away--insists on accompanying him. But Holden realizes that he cannot take the responsibility for her; he cannot accept the responsibility of hero-worship, because he will deprive her of too many opportunities open to her.

Holden finally decides at last that he must go home, not for his own sake, but for Phoebe's. He even emphasizes this to ensure the readers by saying "I really did go home afterwards" (274). Holden eventually finds the peace he has sought in the sight of Phoebe going around and around on the carousel. He does not understand why the sight makes him so happy; he only feels that "it was just that she looks so nice" (275). But it can be noticed that what makes Holden so happy is Phoebe's sympathy and affection it to him shown through her innocent gestures, a child's gestures.

Holden's experiences in New York City leads us to see

that he actually sinks into frustrations and despair more and more there. This condition results from Holden's own compassion and sensitivity. He is not only a boy who is full of tenderness toward his sister Phoebe and all children but he is also touched by persons casually met on his adventure. In New York, the more he is hurt, the sorrier he feels for others. Even though he does not like the girl whose presence makes him leave the night club, he feels "sort of sorry for her in a way" (113). He is still a virgin, because whenever he has tried to "make out" with girls and has been told to stop, he has stopped because he gets to feeling sorry for them. He even feels sorry for Jesus because the Diciples let Him down. He admits that he has to be careful about "calling certain guys bores," because he does not understand them (that is, he does not have time to go around analyzing them.) He is touched by the two nuns he met in the sandwich bar at station because of their very inexpensive suitcases and their breakfast which is only toast and coffee. During his interview with Mr. Antolini, Holden also admits that he does not hate too many guys and that, when he does hate people, it does not last too long. If he does not see people for a while, he 'sort of' misses them (243). Holden even thinks over what happened in Mr. Antolini's apartment and wonders if



"just maybe" he was wrong in thinking that Mr. Antolini "was making a flitty pass." Maybe Mr. Antolini "just likes to pat guys on the head when they are asleep." Asking himself, "how can you tell about that stuff for sure?," he replies, "You can't" (253). This answer leads directly to the end of the book, in which Holden reports that he has begun to "miss" everybody he has written about, even those that he has "hated" most--Stradlater, Ackley, and the worst of all, Maurice, the dishonest and brutal elevator operator. In the light of what Holden told Mr. Antolini, his "missing" them indicates that he has no longer "hates" them since he realizes that they, too, need understanding as he does.

The experiences of Holden drifting about in New York City for three days, finally, brings him to observe what "adult world" is really like and to accept the fact that there is no place for him. It seems that Holden himself is not ready yet to get involved with such world since he has no ability to distinguish between important and unimportant experiences or to realize that he cannot retain them all. Adult society, then, has not only failed him but also brings him at last to stay at a rest-home.

### C. THE INFLUENCE OF ADULT SOCIETY ON HOLDEN'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Adolescents tend to think that they are more important and unusual than they really are and to imagine that they stand before an audience attentive to their every word and action (Clarke-Stewart, Perlmutter, and Friedman 405). This reason makes society always have a big influence in the forming of adolescents' self-identity, especially because they affect adolescents' attitudes and behaviors by their demands, rules, and prejudices.

It is the fact that society always takes a big part in adolescents' life, especially because adolescents have to face their major task to resolve the identity crisis which takes time--time to find and fit together all the pieces, to find the roles, the work, the attitudes, and the values that will let the adolescent take a place in adult society. And this also happens to Holden's life in which people around him--the adult society--has influenced him badly. His adventure drifting about in New York City lets him see that adult world is evil, corrupt, and full of hypocrisy, a kind of world that he does not wish to enter. It then makes him feel disappointed, depressed and frustrated. It also drives him to reject to grow up since he realizes that no role for himself there.

It is not surprising, then, that Holden himself finds it difficult to leave his childhood's memories, his past experiences. He becomes closer to children than the adults and also feels happy and peaceful whenever he deals with them. When Holden gets depressed over the absence of love and humanity of adult world, for instance, he finds the peace in the little boy he meets in the middle of his adventure, who is a regular kid, happy, and innocently singing "Coming Through the Rye."

He had a pretty little voice, too...The cars zoomed by, brakes screeched all over the place, his parents paid no attention to him, and he kept on walking next to the curb and singing "If a body catch a body coming through the rye." It made me feel better. It made me feel not depressed any more. (158)

When no one of the elders can give him understanding and sympathy, Holden gets them from Phoebe, his little sister, who not only gives her affection but also peacefulness to him. And when he falls into disappointment and fear since he figures out that Mr. Antolini is one of those flits and perverted guys, Holden is saved by the memory of Allie, his dead brother.

It is plain to see, then, that it is difficult for Holden to move to adult world because he himself does not

want to enter to such "phony world" that always threatens to engulf him.

The readers can notice that Holden cannot accept the adult world for what it is and live in it. As he remarks that his brother, D.B., is now out in Hollywood, being a "prostitute," Holden actually tries to protest against him, who chooses to live in Hollywood and become a writer with a lot of money from his commercial stories rather than just to be a regular writer like he used to be, when he was home. Holden also rejects the notion of a conventional future in which he would work in an office, make a lot of dough, buy cars, ride in cabs, play bridge and play golf, drink Martinis or go to the movies. From his conversation with Phoebe, it appears that Phoebe's observation is right that Holden does not like *anything* that is happening. He rejects to be a scientist because he is not good at science, or a lawyer like his father because a lawyer is "phony" that one goes around saving people's lives without knowing he does it because he really *wants* to do so or just because what he *really* wants to do is be a terrific lawyer, with everybody slapping him on the back and congratulating him in court when the trial is over, the reporters and everybody. Holden prefers to be "the catcher in the rye." He has his own private vision in

which many young children are playing in a large field. Every time one of the kids comes close to the edge of the cliff, Holden is there to keep them from falling off.

Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around--nobody big, I mean--except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff--I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. (224-225)

The "crazy cliff" Holden has mentioned may be identified in many ways, but it is most obviously the border between the carefree innocence of childhood and the phony adult world that Holden himself does not wish to enter. His only ambition is the completely unrealistic one of keeping children from growing up so they would not enter the adult world.

In this case, what Holden actually wants is to prevent the innocence and the purity of childhood from being ceased or destroyed by the evil, corrupt and phony adult world. In his mind children should be left alone as the

way they are so their innocence would not be influenced or ruined by adult world. But Holden then realizes that it is impossible. People always change; children will grow up and move to adult world. As he visits the museum, he comments on the way the past is preserved in this Museum of Natural History. He points out the permanence of certain of the displays as opposed to the constantly changing nature of human beings.

Certain things they should stay the way they are. You ought to be able to stick them in one of those big glass cases and just leave them alone. I know that's impossible, but it's too bad anyway. (158)

Holden realizes that human beings always change, so it is impossible to keep them as the way they are meaning that it is also impossible to keep one's past experiences from the new ones.

From Holden's attitudes, it is obvious that society has affected him. He, for instance, accepts uncritically prejudices of his class. And examples of his unconscious acceptance of the prejudices of the upper-middle class are found in his criticism of the girls from Seattle he meets who "did not know any better" than to drink Tom Collinses in December (97), in his refusal to wear his beloved red

hunting cap into the hotel because he does not want "to look like a screwball or something" (79), in his acknowledgement that he finds it easy to be rooms with Stradlater only because "they both have good luggage" (142), in his statement that he never says "crude things" to girls (178), and in his constantly performing the trait of describing whatever is spontaneous in his behavior as "mad," because everybody especially Holden's father, has told him that he acts as if he were "only about twelve" (13).

Holden himself is actually removed from society. He always finds it difficult to communicate or contact with others. He tries to be independent not to rely upon society since he cannot trust people and does not want to deal with those "phonies." If he then does not want to apply himself at school, it is because he learns that it is full of phonies, besides he believes that to be a decent human being, it is no need to have education. If he has a difficulty to leave his past experiences especially his childhood's memories, it is because he does not wish to grow up and enter the evil and corrupt adult world which is full of pretense and lacks of love and humanity. If he prefers to dream of being a hero--"a catcher in the rye"--, it results from his failure in searching for such a hero that he never finds. And if he, finally, fails to attain or

create his own self-identity, it is because he has no one who can guide and help him through this terrifying period with deep understanding.

Society, then, has not only failed Holden in his search for identity, but also makes him hard to accept human condition for what it is and to resign himself to the existence of injustice, ugliness and pain. He becomes a rebel, either against the materialism and ugliness of "society" or against the realities of the adult world. And if Holden becomes a rebel, it is because he is suffering from the way things are, always and everywhere, in a corrupt world. He is the one who does not know how to distinguish between important and unimportant experiences, or how to accept or to ignore things that happen around him. Holden is, then, not simply a victim of society of modern life but, specifically, a victim of adult society.-



## CHAPTER IV

## CONCLUSION