

# Project Renewal — Part II

## Teen-Age Mothers and Drop-Out Fathers

By Marvin Bienstock  
*The Effect Of The Life Pattern  
Of Adolescent Girls*

The pressure for early marriage is extreme and comes from both peers and parents. The latter include parents of the girls and parents of eligible husbands. Believing their parents to be acting in their best interests, the girls accept the arranged marriages and move in with their husband's parents. If they have an intention of continuing their schooling, it is typically discouraged or vetoed by the mother-in-law whose word is law.

Education is compulsory in Israel only through grade 10 (age 15). The Gruzini go to school in their neighborhood through grade 6 then must continue at a school in another location. This move out of the neighborhood is threatening to the protective parents of Gruzini girls, so, married or not, they are typically forced to quit school after grade 10. If they become pregnant, before completing grade 10, the school itself expells them. Under this pattern, a Gruzini girl becomes a woman at age 13-14. It is almost a logical outcome that, among those girls who do not marry, there will be some who will see themselves as adults sexually and who will drift into prostitution.

For the married girls, life becomes a routine of child-

bearing, child care and taking care of the home of their in-laws. Their husbands are often of age for the required 3 years of military service and may be absent from the house. The social life and contacts of these quasi-women are carefully controlled by the mother-in-law and they can only look forward to the time when they will be of age to go to work in one of the two factories.

One of the programs we visited (Tehila) is an education program for a group of these girls (15-22) who have found the courage to break the patterns and to try and continue their education.

Dressed in "high fashion" because it is their weekly highlight, some 15-20 of them gather three times a week at the community center to study basic skills in reading and writing along with secretarial skills as a resource for future employment. When asked what else they would like to study, the universal answer was "English". The instructor is attempting to introduce new courses including hairstyling, but must obtain permission from the educational system, and this can take considerable time.

These women are swimming against the current of their community. They represent the first of their group willing to risk rejection in order to change life patterns. It will

take them years of part-time study to complete high school. Of course, because they are married and parents, they will not be able to go into the army which serves as an education resource for so many young people. For those who do not marry, they must remain at home, isolated by their parents and separated from their married peers. Some of them participate in the program we visited. They, along with the married girls, all openly state they would not compel their children to marry early. However, they add, they would not oppose a child who wished to marry young.

*The Effect Of The Life Pattern  
Of Adolescent Boys*

Boys, ages 13-18, who come from Gruzini homes become an isolated and self-dependent peer group. This occurs just at the time of adolescent rebellion and could not constitute a worse condition. From about the 8th grade on, adolescent girls are removed from their lives. When they have to attend schools in another neighborhood they not only feel their cultural difference but they feel a lack of parental encouragement for learning and a strong mandate from their parents to return immediately back to their own neighborhood after school.

For these youth, the years from 13-18 constitute a kind of

limbo between compulsory schooling and compulsory military education. All the adolescent socialization skills between the sexes are denied to them because the girls have been withdrawn from their society. They are essentially rootless and without purpose. Under these circumstances a drift into anti-social behavior and casual drug use is to be expected. It might be taken as a sign of the strength of the Gruzini society that more severe behavior patterns are not seen. Just as we saw a program designed for the young women, so we observed one for this age group. The participants are not volunteers. They are adjudicated delinquents along with others recruited by professional social workers who work with the street groups. This small program of some 12 young men provides work on a compensated basis. The pay is almost as good as in the factories.

One project consisted of fixing up an apartment to be used as a senior adult center. Upon completion, the seniors, as a sign of gratitude, bought the boys tickets to a pop concert at the main center in an adjacent neighborhood. The boys scalped the tickets.

There are, of course, exceptions in every population. One 8th grader approached us to ask that we fight for a tutorial

program in the neighborhood. He attends the school in the other neighborhood and is unable to remain after school for tutoring. He and his family have had to pay for a tutor out of their pocket and the resources are very limited. By his description, there are other Gruzini boys in the same situation. Their level of school work is neither so high or so poor as to attract special help and they are in danger of dropping out for lack of assistance.

*The Effect Of the Life Pattern  
On The Children  
of Early Marriage*

One of the most heartwarming yet heartbreaking programs we viewed in NI was the Home Environment Shelter. Some 20 boys and girls, ages 5-12, gather each and every day from after school till 8 p.m. They play, study, do homework, eat, bathe, etc. In fact, they do everything short of going to sleep. For that they return home for the briefest of moments before bedtime. The program is supervised by a man and a woman who represent parents in the most positive sense of the word.

These are the children of abuse, mostly from Gruzini homes, and we were told that the 20 represent one third of those who should be in such settings. Were these children

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## BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR

### Manischewitz Brand

- Matzos
- Soup Mixes
- Borscht
- Soups
- Matzo Ball Mix
- Bakit
- Matzo Ball Soup
- Matzo Ball Broth
- Gefilte Fish
- Whitefish & Pike
- Potato Kugel Mix
- Matzo Meal

### Empire Frozen Kosher Food

- Pie Crust
- Potato Latkes
- Natural Cut Potatoes
- Challah Dough
- Chall-ettes
- Rye Bread
- Chopped Liver Spread
- Chicken
- Breaded Mushrooms
- Pot Pies
- Pizza
- Bagels
- English Muffin Mix
- Frozen Blintzes
- Bagel Pizza
- Garlic Bread

### Kineret Kosher Frozen Food

- Onion Rings
- Puff Pastry Dough
- Ready To Bake Challah
- Blintzes
- Potato Latkes

### Others

- Noodles by Goodman, Greenfield and Mrs. Weiss
- Soups by Carmel, Croyden House, Goodman and Telma
- Mother's Schav
- Mother's All Whitefish
- Rokeach Old Vienna Fish
- Rokeach Tomato & Mushroom Sauce
- Wolff Groats/Kasha
- Joyva Halvah Candy
- Kedem Grape Juice
- Rokeach Pareve Coffee Creamer
- Sweet-Touch-Nee Tea Bags
- Panni Shredded Potato Pancake Mix
- Panni Bavarian Potato Pancake Mix
- Mrs. T's Pierogies
- Athens Fillo



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11446 E. Independence Blvd. Matthews	2118 W. Roosevelt Blvd. Monroe	715 E. Innes Street Salisbury	2651 E. Franklin Blvd. Gastonia	2375 Cherry Road Rock Hill	Hwy. 51 at Park Rd. Ext. Pineville