Applying to school

Typhoons are hustling across the Institute as seniors begin the tedious process of applying to graduate schools. MIT students will expand the number of applicants, cursing lists, and recommendations collected. The procrastination which now marks the effort will turn to frenzy by the winter and evolve into object neuroses should you fail to apply for admission.

The two categories of students currently attempting to reduce their life histories to fit the common denominator: 11-inch-page fact completely different pros and dilemmas, however. Graduate school is undoubtedly an important phase of a person's life, a sort of finishing preludes before breaking into the real world of work. While graduate school focuses primarily on professional development, however, undergraduate education significantly affects personal development.

Most high school seniors understand the importance of the next four years. He should be as nervous now as they are. Any student whose personality remains wholly unchanged after four years at MIT or elsewhere was either extraordinarily mature upon arrival or will remain hopelessly immature for years after departure. High school seniors must select a place to which to give as a person in addition to one where to evolve as a scholar.

By the time you are beginning to fashion the implications of their decision, your MIT. Most will be correct with the outcome—a few will excel, a select few will falter. Some students find their own evolution process a much more difficult and important one than others. What this means translates into seniors applying to graduate schools. Now is the time for seniors to relax, and freshmen in brace for the changes.

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opinion

Stephanie Pollack

Applying to school

The holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are traditionally occasions for Jews to "take stock" of themselves—to reflect on what they have done in the past year, and through "tashkof" (prayer), "tashvihah" (repentance), and "tzedakah" (charitable works) to embark upon a course of self-improvement. As anyone attending holiday services will find, however, the holiday season provides more than just an opportunity for introspection: it provides an opportunity for Jews to congregate, to chant familiar prayers, to re-establish friendships, and to re-dedicate themselves anew to the principles and practices of the Jewish faith. The sense of cohesion and common purpose which these holidays restore has several pragmatic ends.

Most important among these is a reminder to each Jew that he believes in a higher power, an individual who shares common values and beliefs and who will, in time of need, offer spiritual support and moral guidance. There is no better illustration of the latter point than the Service of Remembrance— Held during Yom Kippur, In which both mourners and non-mourners participate. Yet this sense of cohesion and common purpose which is felt by Jews during this holiday season seems to be lacking in the secular world, at least among the generation of American youth now entering adulthood. It is not hard to speculate on why this might be the case. Historically, unified and purposeful activity has centered around foreign pressures and crises. The Vietnam War and its mis-handling by the federal government certainly provided the nucleus around which the drive for social change, centered by the American youth of the 1960's, crystallized.

Today, however, we live and work in an era of relative peace, comfort, and prosperity. Indeed, the US seems relatively powerless to do anything about events abroad. Some of which—save for the Iranian hostage affair—has affected the United States with any urgency. Furthermore, the US public has shown tremendous resiliency in dealing with a barrage of foreign and domestic economic and social problems. One of the consequences of this diminished sense of common purpose has been that individual goals and concerns have supplanted social and civic roles. Among college students today, one rarely hears debate on issues of widespread social concern such as Middle East policy, rising divorce rate, or rising cost of health care. With diminished awareness about important public issues and problems, intelligent debate and discussion about them will no longer occur, leaving problems to go unsatisfied.

The emergence of self-sufficiency and autonomy as major elements of human activity has probably taken its toll in the workplace already. Declining productivity is a current threat to the growth and stability of the US economy and its persistence well may be related to the increased churning of effort toward personal fulfillment by workers in their jobs. Loss effort is expended in promoting corporate and institutional goals and priorities. Indeed, management and leadership in corporate life are becoming less formality, with members of each moving readily from firm to firm and institution to institution.

If a relevant lesson can be learned from biologist Lewis Thomas' recognition of the widespread natural phenomenon of "sympathy"—common interdependence—and the cell, is that individuals working together in a close and meaningful way are more productive and effective than individuals working together as individuals.

The means for dealing with this worrisome trend in our society are not manifest yet. But as flora Lewis, who recently wrote on a related subject, concludes, "recognizing the problem is the first step."