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A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO THE SELF CONCEPT OF PRE-ADOLESCENTS

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology.

Johannesburg 1984

DECLARATION

This is to certify that this dissertation is my own unaided work and has not been submitted for any degree at another University.

L. N. Clark.

LESLEY N. CLARK

For the children of the world. May they come to love and accept themselves.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present research was to examine those variables which best predict the self concept of pre-adolescents. The children in this study were normal in so far as none had failed at school, their families were intact, and they had not presented at the time of assessment for any form of psychological intervention.

Theoretical support is presented for the multi-faceted nature of the self concept. The experience of anxiety, the quality of the mother-child relationship and the motivation to competence are considered primary variables in the development of the child's self conceptualisation.

A multi-dimensional approach to the assessment of the self concept was adopted. A standardised self-rating scale was used, along with a projective battery. From these two tests, a composite self concept score was obtained, incorporating conscious and unconscious aspects of the self. Central variables, anxiety, maternal acceptance and maternal ratings, as well as academic competence measures were then related to the three self concept measures. That is. the self-rated, projected and composite self concept scores.

Support was found for the use of multiple methods of assessing the self concept. Whereas the projected self concept related to verbal competence, the self rated self concept was found to relate to the maternal rating. These two self concept measures were not related to one another.

The strongest predictors of the preadolescent self concept were found to be trait anxiety, and state anxiety. Trait anxiety has it's roots in the early mother-child relationship, whilst state anxiety is experienced in

response to situational variables. The preadolescent self concept is found to be dependent on his experiences of his early relationship with his mother and his experience of his ability to cope with and adapt to his environment.

The implications of this study are two-fold. In the first instance, a multi-dimensional approach to self concept is useful and recommended. Secondly, the pre-adolescent might describe himself in terms similar to those used by his significant others, specifically his mother. However, his unconscious experience of himself relates more strongly to his verbal competence. Future research should examine the role played by fathers and peers in the psychological experience of the preadolescent.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL RATIONALE

From the time that man has asked philosophical questions about the nature of his life and himself, he has sought to gain a clearer understanding of the nature and development of the Self. Pre-Twentieth Century understanding of the Self was hinged on metaphysical questions of the spirit, soul and will. Vague and poorly defined, the earliest sense of man's Self rested in the dichotomy between his mind and body - the metaphysical and the physical. With the development of thinking in the Seventeenth Century a new dualism emerged Descartes often quoted 'cognito ergo sum' (I think, therefore, I am) reflected the new thinking. Man as subject and object, knower and known, and the question of how one can be at the same time the observer and object of observation has presented the thinker with a dilemma, unanswered to date.

At the end of the Nineteenth Century, William James (1890) further developed this view of the Self. He categorised two aspects of the global Self, which he considered to be simulataneously Me and I. These two aspects implied 'an objective person, known by a passing subjective thought and recognised as continuing in time' (in Burns, 1976: 6). James defined the Self as having the ability to reflect on itself, an ability which he recognised as being fundamental to one's Self Esteem. In this context, he talked of self-evaluation, self-feeling and self-regard. The quality of one's experience of one's Self became an important issue to the social scientists.

At this time the rigorously scientific Behaviourists

had little regard for the 'armchair' theorising of the introspective and more subjective theorists. They maintained that only those aspects of behaviour that were observable and measurable were of any relevance to psychology. And, because of the illusive and ill-defined nature of the Self, little scientific research was done with this concept. It was when the behaviourists realised that they were unable to reduce the explanation of human behaviour and motivation to that of stimulus - response - that they acceded the importance of referring to internal processes as well.

The Self Concept is a construct that was developed to operationalise many of the ideas held by Self theorists. It is a means whereby scientists are able to measure and quantify the feelings that a person has about himself. This concept has also facilitated a deeper understanding of the development and nature of the Self, with the advent of client-centred therapy reflecting this movement. Rogers (1951) used the developing understanding of the Self in formulating his particular therapeutic approach. He maintained that most of the ways in which a person behaved were consistent with his concept of himself. Furthermore, he states that a person might satisfy his needs, only by means consistent with his self-perception. This has obvious implications for the quality of his interpersonal relationships. In a study by Omwake (1954), self acceptance was found to be strongly related to the acceptance of other persons. The quality of one's self-feelings is intrinsic to the quality of one's feelings towards others.

The growth and maturing of the individual might be seen in his increasing acceptance of Self and concomitant enhanced Self Concept. Rogers describes this motivation in the therapeutic process as being:

> 'When all the ways in which the individual perceives himself in relation to others, are accepted into the organised conscious concept of the Self, then this achievement is accompanied by feelings of comfort and freedom from tension which are experienced as psychological adjustment.' (1969:10)

One's self concept affects every aspect of one's being in the world.

Murphy describes the Self and says 'the self is not only an aspect of all experience and a standard for all experience, it contributes to the quality and form of experience.' (1947 :499) The implication is that the way a person feels about himself will affect his interpretation of life experiences. A study by Block and Thomas (1955) examined the importance of positive self feelings. They found maladjustment on both sides of the continuum. High self satisfaction often related to repression of unconscious processes, and therefore, the development of an aloof, rigid and overcontrolled personality, whilst low self satisfaction, from a lack of ego defences, resulted in an inability to bind tension or control emotion. Ideally then, one's self concept is characterised by acceptance and openess to new experience and growth.

The Self as experiencer has been described but what role does the environment play in characterising this experience. Rogers (1951) and Webster and Sobieszek (1974) cite the effect of environmental feedback on one's self conceptualisation. The way a person acts reinforces the way he feels about himself. The effects of social interaction are stressed by many including James (1890), Cooley, (1903), Mead (1953), Sullivan (1958), Rogers (1951). They all support the notion that self awareness, or self consciousness affects and is affected by the environment, which is the basis on the symbolic-interactionist approach.

A major proponent of the symbolic-interactionist movement is Cooley (1903). He coined the term 'the looking glass self', by which he meant that ultimately the Self is experienced in so far as it is reflected by others. This approach stresses the role of the significant other whilst rejecting the proposition of innate sources of behaviour. These theorists give us an understanding

of the process by which external factors are involved in self conceptualisation, basing their ideas on cognitive theories and structures whilst understressing the role played by intrinsic motivation and unconscious processes.

Mead (1934) refers to the 'generalised other' and says that the individual thinks about himself in similar terms to those held by the people with whom he interacts. Thus Mead emphasises the importance of man's social context. It is within this context that the individual applies standards of comparison, derived essentially from the range of variation he experiences in others. (Webster and Sobieszek, 1974) The Self can, therefore, be conceptualised as a social construct.

Since the middle of this century, the Self Concept has been the focus of a great amount of research. In 1971, Gergen (in Maruyama et al, 1981) quoted no less than 2000 studies of the Self Concept, a number which has clearly increased significantly over the past decade. Research of the Self Concept has followed two related but different trends. On the one hand, empirical studies, based strongly within the realms of education and clinical work, have investigated the relationship between the self concept and numerous variables. These include academic achievement, locus of control, outcome of therapy, etc. In these studies, self concept scales have generally been used. Wylie's (1961) critique of 463 of these studies is based on the fact that many researchers developed their own instrument to meet the needs of their particular studies. The result is a paucity of data on the validity and reliability of their scales and questionable interpretation of results. The problem of measurement is inherent to Self Concept research and is addressed in Chapter 5.

The second major trend focuses on the investigation of methodology, and the development of valid and reliable instruments for measurement. This area is fraught with controversy and debate, often returning to attempts

at defining the Self Concept. These definitions tend to be imprecise and vary from study to study (Shavelson et al, 1976). In the present study, Self Concept is defined as the child's perceptions and feelings about himself. Coopersmith defines Self Esteem as the,

> 'evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself, it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy.' (1967, 4-5)

Because the distinction between self-description (Self Concept) and self-evaluation (Self Esteem) has not been clarified conceptually or empirically (Shavelson et al, 1976), Self Concept and Self Esteem are used interchangeably.

Most theorists would agree that although there is a global self concept, this is multifaceted and can be broken down into increasingly more situation specific aspects. (Marshall Lowe, 1961, Coopersmith, 1967, Piers and Harris, 1964; Shavelson et al, 1976). Coopersmith's 1967 study revealed no relationship between the behavioural aspect of Self Esteem and the unconscious aspect. This he took to reflect the notion of an underlying global self esteem. The model proposed by Shavelson et al (1976) als assumes the presence of a general self concept, which is further differentiated into more situation specific components. This study will focus on the general self concept of the preadolescent and the factors that contribute to the child's self-feelings at this stage of development.

From what has been written above, it is clear that any study of self concept has to address the problems of measurement and definition. Most researchers have relied almost exclusively on the individual's self-report, when assessing the Self Concept. This is often found to be discrepant with the individual's behaviour, or how he presents himself to the world. (Burns, 1979; Shavelson et al, 1976). In a study of adolescent self-

esteem, Savin-Williams and Jaquish (1981) found the presented self and the experienced self not to be significantly related to one another. The discrepancy in their findings suggest that the assessment of the Self Concept should ideally take place on more than one level. This would entail assessing the way in which a person presents himself to the world as well as the way in which he feels about himself. Furthermore, it implies moving away from a purely standardised assessment of the self concept at the risk of a questionable reliability and validity of the supplementary measures.

The present study will, therefore, take place in two phases. The first phase is the assessment of the pre-adolescent's self concept on both a standardised self concept scale, and a battery of projective tests commonly used by clinicians. The use of projective tests is based on the assumption that these facilitate the expression of unconscious processes, and consequently the child's feelings about himself, not immediately available to consciousness. It is also based on the assumption that the child's responses will be less influenced by him compliance with tester expectations, a point often criticised with regard to self reports (Burns, 1979). In summary, this study will address the limitations posed by standard assessments of the self concept by supplementing a standardised scale, with a projective battery. By doing so, a more holistic measurement of the self concept should be attained through the integration of both cognitive and affective mediums of assessment. The second phase of this study will be to examine the factors that are significant to the self conceptualisation of the preadolescent. Although this study lacks a longitudinal perspective, a primary premise is that the Self Concept is a developmental phenomenon. This implies that different aspects of the Self Concept will vary in importance depending on the particular developmental stage. As a result, the self concept will be examined with specific reference to the preadolescent stage of development.

Preadolescent falls within the Freudian 'latency' stage and is reputedly the stage of greatest stability before the child's transition into puberty. Gordon and Spears (in Gordon, 1962) found preadolescence to be one of the more stable periods of self conceptualisation. The reason for this stability is that the 'violent drives are normally dormant' (Freud, 1978: 234). This view is supported by Erikson in that he regards this phase as different from preceding developmental stages since it is not a swing from an inner upheaval to a new mastery. Similarly, Sears (1960) describes preadolescence as a transitional stage between the undifferentiated self of early childhood and the reorganisation and reintegration of the Self in Adolescence. On the basis of these theories the preadolescent stage was selected as the focus of the present study.

Information about the factors influencing the Self Concept of preadolescents, will aid clinicians, both clinically and educationally, as to the most appropriate level of intervention with children under stress. It might also be a vital stage for intervention before the rebirth of complex drives and emotions arising with the development of puberty. Clearly if the self worth of children could be enhanced before their entry to their complex and conflict filled adolescent journey, the passage might be less traumatic. This notion is based on the clinical insight that the more stable and integrated the personality, the easier it is to adapt to conflict and stress, without the fragmentation or annihilation of the personality. This study attempts to facilitate the development of a healthy personality through adolescence, by obviating conflicts at pre-adolescence.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF CONCEPTUALISATION

Introduction

In the previous chapter the importance and relevance of Self understanding, both to psychological theory and practice is discussed. Since the Self Concept has been operationalised as a construct, it has become possible to execute empirical studies which explore the nature of the Self. In order to understand personality development through childhood, it is important to examine the process by which the self-concept develops. It is also necessary to clarify the various factors both internal and external which influence this process.

Research involving infants is obviously limited by the nature of the subjects. Consequently, most of this research examining self-understanding has taken place in the domain of visual self-recognition (Lewis and Brooks-Gum, 1979; dixon, 1957; Amsterdam, 1972). As the infant moves into childhood, so his ability to communicate verbally about his self-conceptions develops. Various researchers maintain that the early self is conceived of strictly in physical terms (Benjamins, 1978; Coopersmith, 1967; McCandless, 1967; Perkins, 1958; and Ames, 1952). Initially the child does not differentiate between the mind and the body. At a later stage of development, at approximately eight years of age, the child distinguishes between these two aspects. At this stage 'the self's essential nature is, therefore, defined internally rather than externally and becomes a matter of psychological rather than physical attributes.' (Damon and Hart, 1982: 852)

Self-understanding moves frm a primarily perceptual domain to a primarily conceptual domain. Piaget's

theory of cognitive development has enhanced our understanding of this process and he describes the important developmental factors involved in the child's ability to reflect on himself. He is careful to state, however, that,

> '... it is not possible to separate the conceptual from the affective elements. However primitive a feeling may be, it is accompanied by the consciousness of an object, or it itself creates an object.' (1973, 153)

In other words, Piaget believes that one cannot differentiate between the self concept and concomitant feelings about the self. Whilst it seems important to understand the development of the individual's cognitive and conceptual processes in self conceptualisation - this may be done without acknowledgement of the concomitant affective experience. Damon and Hart (1982) clarify this distinction when they describe conceptual understanding as a cognitive ability, while affective experience of the self might be regarded in terms of a positive or negative orientation. This affective evaluation of the self is not dependent on the development of particular skills and may consequently be viewed as a more pervasive and constant aspect of the self.

The aim of this study is essentially to gain an understanding of the preadolescent's feelings about himself, and of the factors which determine these feelings. It is, therefore, important to look at the psychodynamic theorists and their approach to the process of self concept. These theories propose that the individual's self conceptualisation is based on dynamic interaction between the individual and his environment. This interaction is dependent on both the presence of certain cognitive abilities, and on the emotional milieu within which this occurs.

The Mother-Child Relationship: Infancy

The role of the 'significant other' in the development

of one's Self Concept has been noted by many authors, (Bowlby, 1953; Coopersmith, 1967; Rogers, 1951; Satir, 1963; Sullivan, 1953; Winnicott, 1964, 1971). Not only does the 'significant other' play a fundamental role in the development of the Self from infancy, but throughout the life of the individual 'significant others' supply the individual with important feedback about himself, on both a verbal and non-verbal level.

The infant's primary significant relationship is with his mother, and she plays a fundamental role in mediating a developmental process, motivated by the pressures of both inner and outer experiences. Freud (1973) places little emphasis on the role of mothering in the developmental process. He saw the child as being driven by the need to resolve inner conflicts. Furthermore, he conceived of the genesis of character in terms of pregenital drives under the influence of social pressures - an essentially three-cornered struggle between the external world, the id and the superego. Although he de-emphasised the role played by the mother, his acknowledgement of the importance of external processes, and the external world, was the spring-board from which later psychodynamic theories developed.

The function of the mother, as an aspect of the child's external world is described by Bowlby (1976) and Winnicott (1956) as the provision of a warm, secure and protected environment, where the infant's needs could be met, without undue stress or anxiety. Bowlby says,

> '... what is believed to be essential for mental health is that an infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his Mother.' (1976, 13)

A relationship where the infant, and later the child, feels secure and experiences acceptance, will enhance his feelings about himself and lay down the foundation for the development of a healthy personality. The child's feelings of self worth are, therefore, based on his ability to gain some control over his world and

his self, thereby experiencing security in an otherwise overwhelming world.

An aspect of the mother-infant relationship which is therefore of primary importance, is the acceptance that the infant experiences from his mother. 'A child needs to feel he is an object of pleasure and pride to his Mother.' (Bowlby, 1976: 77) Rogers says,

> '... the most important aspect of the self experience of the ordinary child, is that he is loved by his parents and perceives himself as lovable, worthy of love and that his relationship to his parents is one of affection.' (1951, 499)

Rogers sees this aspect as being a core element of the self, as it begins to develop. Ultimately it is a means of a process of internalisation that the infant comes to love himself as is modelled by the way that his parents love him. (Breger, 1974)

The importance of the maternal relationship is illustrated by extensive research on the effects of maternal deprivation. Bowlby (1969) has cited three primary circumstances in which deprivation occurs. These are a) when the mother's attitude toward the child is unfavourable; b) when the mother is absent and there is a mother substitute; and c) when the mother is absent with no substitute. The child's development is disrupted by a 'negative' mother, in much the same way as it is by a totally absent mother. This highlights the importance of the quality of the mother-child relationship for the healthy development of the child.

Anna Freud (1965) extended Freud's theory to include the importance of environmental factors in the development of the self concept during infancy. She maintained that, although unconscious and instinctual factors were of great significance, environmental factors such as the parents attitude toward the child, were equally important. Along with Erikson (1952); Mahler (1974) and Sullivan (1952), she recognised and explored the dynamic interactive process between mother and child.

She saw the infant's development beginning with the biological unity of mother and child, with mother's narcissism extending toward the child. The process of parental attachment depends on the child's 'representing for them either the ideal of themselves, or a figure of their own past' (1965, 47). The mother's attachment to her child is dependent on her own internal processes and needs, and this attachment is essential for the development of the infant.

Mahler (1974) describes three steps of development that the infant must undertake in relation to it's mother in order that it establish an awareness of separateness and individuation. These are :-

1) the body differentiation from mother;
2) the establishment of a specific bond with her;
3) the growth and functioning of the automonous ego appartuses in close proximity to the mother.

The mother is, therefore, seen as a primary mediator for the infant's movement into the world.

Concomitant with this process, Winnicott (1964, 1965) describes three intrapsychic tasks that the infant must accomplish in the course of his early development. The first of these is personalisation which involves the infant's experience of collusion between his psyche and soma. The second task is accomplished as a result of the mother's anticipation and well-timed fulfilment of the infant's needs. This is the infant's illusory experience of himself as omnipotent, as the creator of 'objects' that fulfill his needs. This illusion is important for the development of his autonomous ego apparatus which appears with the introduction of weaning. During this phase the mother gradually disillusions the infant with simplified bits of objective reality.

Mahler's (1974) description of the role of the mother

concurs with that of Winnicott who says,

> ' A "good enough" environmental provision in the earliest phase of development, enables the infant to begin to exist, to have experience, to build a personal ego, to ride instincts and to meet all the difficulties inherent in life. All this feels real to the infant as he becomes able to have a self ...' (Winnicott, 1956: 304)

The importance of 'good enough' mothering is stressed in the theories of Mahler (1974); A Freud, (1965); Winnicott, (1956); and Bowlby (1976, 1969). This implies that the here with needs of the infant are met on an empathic and accepting level.

What then of the mother who is unable to adequately meet the needs of her infant? Sullivan (1953: 70) says,

> '... when the parental influences are incongruous to the actual possibilities and needs of the infant, there is a growing distortion of the "bad me" and the "not me".'

In Winnicott's terms the infant develops a 'false self'.

A Freud says that in order that the infant,

> 'retain parental love under these conditions, the child allows his own personality to be moulded into a pattern which is not his own and which conflicts with or neglects his own innate potentialities.' (1965: 47)

Inadequate parental love results in the development of a self that complies with the demands of the external environment, that imitates and that lacks the spontaneous expression of it's true, innate individuality. Essentially a self with a poor esteem.

Poor self esteem is borne of a not 'good enough' environment, according to Winnicott (1956). The mother lacks the necessary empathy and does not adapt sensitively to the needs of her infant. She allows her own needs and the external environment to impinge repeatedly on the infant's 'going on being'. He is unable to spontaneously express his needs and gestures, and does not have the competence to bring these impingements into his area of omnipotence. With a continual reaction to impingement, the threat of fragmentation and

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annihilation of being becomes and actuality. How the infant copes with the anxiety engendered by this process with be discussed in greater detail in chapter three.

The Mother-Child Relationship: Childhood

It is important for the purposes of this study to examine how the infant's relationship with his mother develops through childhood to preadolescence. The absence of reference to the infant-father relationship is indicative of the relatively indirect role ascribed to the father in the earliest stage of the infant's development. Winnicott, Bowlby and Sullivan would all agree that the father is important, albeit, indirect role in the earliest stage is in terms of support of the mother, thereby allowing her to give more easily to her baby. The father become increasingly more important in the development of the child as the infant's needs become more differentiated and his symbiosis with the mother decreases.

Erik Erikson (1978, 1956, 1968) provides a valuable theory for the stages of the child's ego development. For the purposes of this study, ego will be used interchangeably with Self, as it encompasses the various facets of the individual's functioning. Based in the psychoanalytic tradition, Erikson integrates the intrapsychic and then interpersonal aspects of development of the child. He regards the child's ego development as relating both to his immediate social milieu, that is his family unit, and to the broader culture within which he lives. The development of the child's relationships progress from symbiosis during infancy to the possiblity of mutuality and intimacy in adulthood.

The first stage in Erikson's theory is described as the period during which the infant learns a basic sense of trust, or alternatively of mistrust in relating to his world and to himself. Erkison states that,

> 'Mothers created a sense of trust in their children

> 'by that kind of administration which in it's quality combines sensitive care of the baby's individual needs and a firm sense of personal trustworthiness.'
> (Erikson, 1978: 224)

He goes on to say that,

> '... this forms the basis in the child for a sense of identity which will later combine a sense of being "all right", of being oneself, and of becoming what other people trust one will become.' (ibid)

Erikson's second stage emphasises development of autonomy and is a period of experimentation. The infant begins to learn what control he has in holding on or letting go. Both of these modalities of being can result in either hostile or benign expectations and attitudes. This fundamental conflict, and the difficulty that the infant experiences in negotiating it, necessitates the close involvement of the mother during this period. External contol within a firm and protective environment is important. The young child needs to experience a gradual and well-guided experience (of autonomy) of free choice if he is to develop positive feelings about himself. Failure on the part of the child to act appropriately on the basis of his ability to discriminate results in negative feeling about himself and the experience of shame and doubt. These inappropriate actions may also receive negative reactions from his significant others. Since the child identifies with his behaviour, harsh and critical reactions from significant others will be interpreted as a rejection of his Self. Rogers (1951) describes this process when he says that the child experiences negative words and actions of parents in regard to his behaviour as being a deep threat to the nascent structure of his self.

At this stage the child's 'sense of competence' is already crystallising. An important aspect of this development is to establish a sense of his own ability to affect and control his environment and himself. Mahler (1974) describes this as a process of separating and individual-

isation. Where this fails due to inadequate mediation and affirmation by the mother, the child's self concept is harmed.

> 'This stage, therefore, become decisive for the ration of love and hate, co-operation and wilfulness, freedom of self-expression and it's suppression. From a sense of control without loss of esteem comes a lasting sense of good will and pride, from a sense of loss of self-control and of foreign overcontrol comes a lasting propensity for doubt and shame.' (Erikson, 1978: 228)

Finally Erikson reflects on the importance of parental attitudes at this stage. Their acknowledgement and acceptance of the child's development insitlls a basic confidence and self acceptance in the child.

Once the child is confident on his feet and his body and person have grown together, he is able to negotiate the next stage of childhood. Erikson calls this the stage of initiative which 'adds to autonomy the quality of undertaking, planning and "attacking" a task for the sake of being active and on the move.' (ibid: 229) This is the stage during which infantile sexuality is expressed, with the concomitant development of the super-ego. The child now becomes self-reflective and is able to experience overwhelming guilt and anxiety in his quest for the favoured position with his opposite sex parent. Once again, the important role of the parent at this point is that of mutual-regulation, whereby the child can gradually come to regulate his behaviour according to the supportive, yet firm, guidelines of his parents. Because the child at this stage is becoming morally aware, and has a rapidly developing super-ego, it is important that his behaviour be guided, rather than prohibited, that he experiences acceptence, rather than rejection.

During this stage that the young child also becomes more open to his peers. He is able to work constructively and co-operatively with other children, and is able to respond to the demands and expectations of other adults (teachers). The significant other in the child's world start increasing in number, and as they do so,

his concept of himself starts to diversify. Ames (1952) found that the four year old's sense of self was no longer being influenced solely by his mother and other adults, but also by contemporaries with whom most conversation takes place.

Erikson's last stage of childhood is that of industry. This period is of particular relevance to the present study. At this stage the child is well established in the educational system. He experiences strong external controls over his wishes and desires, and learns to channel these energies in productive and constructive ways. He also learns that by doing so he receives recognition and affirmation from others. Erikson says 'to bring a productive situation to completion is an aim which gradually supercedes the whims and wishes of play.' (1978: 223) The ultimate ends of the stage of industry are two fold. The one being to gain recognition as an able and productive member of his society, and the other is in terms of his own sense of competence. This latter concept is described in greater detail in chapter four, with specific reference to Robert White (1959).

The innate development of the preadolescent and the role of his parents as mediators is not clearly defined at this stage of development, since a number of responsibilities for his growth have been taken over by various social institutions. However, parental acceptance and valuation is still of primary importance to the child at this time. He strives to meet their expectations and ultimately his own internalised expectations of himself. White (1972) says that children pick up clues as to their parents' feelings and construct a conception of parental expectations that goes beyond what is communicated. They then accommodate themselves to these expectations which then become their own. Problems arise at this stage when parental expectations are not in keeping with a realistic view of and acceptance of the child. The child may at this point experience

feelings of inferiority in being unable to meet the criteria of acceptance. Although this will probably be only one of his important sources of evaluation and feedback, with teachers and peers playing their own important roles, parental evaluation may still be considered fundamental to the child's feelings about himself. Murphy (1947) says that the tendency to value rather than to disvalue self is positively correlated with parental approval and with success in achieving group aims. Rogers (1951: 498) emphasises the importance of feedback from others, when he talks of the structure of the self. He maintains that the self is formed as a result of interaction with the environment and evaluational feedback from others. In Coopersmith's study of the antecedants of Self Esteem (1967), he found four major contributing factors. The first two that he describes relate to the amount of respect, acceptance and concern the child experiences from his significant others. The third factor relates to the history of successes that the child has had, which gives him a 'sense of competence' with a basis in reality. The fourth factor is related to how the child reacts to devaluation. Coopersmith highlights the primary sources of self esteem as being based both in feedback and evaluation from others and in one's own sense of achievement. Erikson (1978) reminds us that children receive only real strength from genuine praise or encouragement since the external source is not solely responsible for feelings of worth.

In summary, it is evident that the development of the child's self through infancy to preadolescence is marked by increasing differentiation. The child is gradually exposed to a wider range of experiences in relation to objects and people, and derives a sense of himself both through the evaluations he receives from his significant others and from his own sense of competence. Once the child is in the latency stage and has developed come familiarity with his body and his mind, he is freer to focus outside of himself and to move into the world

It is at this stage that his own sense of competence becomes increasingly more important. This is discussed in more detail in chapter four.

CHAPTER THREE

ANXIETY

Introduction

A review of the voluminous literature on anxiety reveals four current areas of research. The first of these is characterised by cognitive theorists (e.g., Lazarus and Averill, 1972; Epstein, 1972) who 'believe that an individual's appraisal of the threat serves as a key to understanding anxiety.' (May, 1977: 99). They emphasise the fact that anxiety is an essentially human response, and is therefore, not necessarily pathological. A second area of research is Spielberger's differentiation between 'state' and 'trait' anxiety. 'State' anxiety is seen as a transitory emotional condition associated with the autonomic nervous system, whilst 'trait' anxiety refers to anxiety proneness. (Spielberger, 1972a, 1972b, 1976). Spielberger says that the level of 'trait' anxiety is influenced by the quality of the parent-child relationship that one experiences in childhood. More specifically he sees trait anxiety as being influenced by situations where the child is punished, thereby feeling rejected and vulnerable. May (1977) used the distinction between state and trait anxiety in his own research, and his findings were in support of anxiety proneness having it's roots in maternal rejection. This process is of particular significance for the present study, and will be discussed in greater detail below.

The third area of research is that on the relationship between anxiety and fear. This research is essentially within the realm of the behaviour and learning theorists. Finally, the fourth area of research is on anxiety as it is experienced in real life situations, that

is the individual's response to life's stresses and crises.

For this present study, the first two areas of research are of particular relevance. Epstein says that 'acute anxiety is produced by threats to the integrative capacity of the Self-system' (1976: 223) This means that anxiety is experienced when the integrity of the Self of the individual is threatened. This is not unlike the view of anxiety held by psychodynamic theorists such as Freud (1926, 1973a); Klein (1963); Horney (1977, 1939) and Sullivan (1953).

This orientation views anxiety as an affective condition, inextricably tied up with the Self Concept. It is also a process referring to a 'sequence of cognitive, affective, physiological and behavioural events' (Spielberger, 1976: 6).

Psychodynamic Theories of Anxiety

Freud initially differentiates between two forms of anxiety, objective and realistic anxiety and neurotic anxiety (1926). He later added a third form of anxiety which he called moral anxiety (1973a, 1973b). For the present purposes his initial conceptualisation of two forms of anxiety, is of the greatest relevance. Freud regarded realistic anxiety as rational and intelligible, with the primary function of self preservation. Realistic anxiety is therefore a means whereby a person could protect himself from fright. Neurotic anxiety, on the other hand, is defined as 'free-floating' anxiety, or expectant anxiety, which was ready to attach itself to any idea or circumstance. Neurotic anxiety is undifferentiated and irrational. Freud (1973a) notes that it is this latter form of anxiety, neurotic anxiety, that characterises the anxiety states of childhood. He maintains that realistic anxiety is a state that is dependent on learning and consequently only develops with the development of the child's cognitive abilities. It is likely that it is this anxiety which characterises

the studies of the cognitive theorists. Freud says,

> '... when in the end realistic anxiety is awakened in them (children), that is wholly the result of education; for they cannot be allowed to make instructive experiences themselves.' (1973a: 457)

Dynamic theorists would agree that the earliest experience of anxiety arises from the separation of mother and child and the concomitant helplessness experienced by the child. Freud defines a two-fold origin of anxiety 'one as a direct consequence of the traumatic moment, and the other as a signal threatening a repetition of such a moment' (1973b: 127). Breger from a dynamic perspective, notes that the loss or separation of a loved one is a potential source of anxiety throughout life. He says 'the prototype for anxiety is helplessness arising from the disruption of a vital human relationship' (1974: 196)

Breger sees realistic anxiety as a later form of anxiety where the primary concern is the loss of Self. The infant may experience parental restraints or negative reactions as a loss of love and ultimately as a threat to his Self. In fact, in the course of development, the loss of love and withdrawal of affection, parental disapproval and threats and punishment, all come to symbolise separation and the experience of the primary anxiety, separation anxiety. Realistic anxiety arises once the infant is aware of his separateness, his dependence and his need for acceptance. This form of anxiety is therefore rooted in interpersonal relationships. (Freud, 1973a; Klein, 1963; Horney, 1939; Sullivan, 1953).

The importance of the maternal relationship in the development of anxiety in the child is noted by Sullivan (1953) and Horney (1939). Although Klein (1963) also discusses the child's interaction with his mother, at great length, for her the primary process is more in terms of the child's fantasies, than the actual relationship with the mother. She does however, acknowledge the importance of a safe, secure and accepting

relationship in order that the child may gradually come to organise his universe in an adaptive way.

In describing the antecedents of basic (realistic) anxiety, Horney (1939) cites some disturbance in the relationship between mother and child. Disturbance is seen to be related both to the mother's own egocentricity, and her inability to establish a safe environment for her child. A. Freud (1965) and Winnicott (1964) suggested that the self development of the child is dependent on the ability of the mother to meet the child's needs totally, thereby establishing an illusin of omnipotence, and the consequent sense of security. The child's self develops to the extent that he feels secure and competent in coping with his anxiety, without the fear of annihilation or rejection. The nature and intensity of the experienced anxiety is inextricably tied to the mother-child relationship. Breger (1974) emphasises the importance of a balance being found for the infant, between security and anxiety, so that he may experience the anxiety of separation, without the threat of a total loss of Self. At this point this sense of security can be internalised.

Sullivan (1953) believes that anxiety originates in the interpersonal realm and particularly in the child's relationship with his mother, or significant others. He states that,

> '... anxiety arises out of the infant's apprehension of the disapproval of the significant persons in his interpersonal world. Anxiety is felt empathically in the sensing of the mother's disapprobation long before consciou awareness is possible for the infant.' (in May, 1979: 145)

He notes, however, that the infant's Self develops out of a growing need to deal with anxiety creating experiences. Thus is born his concept of Self system, a dynamism 'built-up out of this experience of approbation and disapproval, reward and punishment.' (1953: 20) The Self, therefore, 'comes into being as a dynamism to preserve the feeling of security' (ibid, 46)

Sullivan's theory is important for a number of reasons. In the first place he describes the development of the Self System (conceptualised in this study as the Self Concept) as being motivated by the need to contain anxiety and maintain a homeostatis. He recognises the importance of anxiety as a dynamic factor in the development of th Self, and that too much anxiety results in splitting or dissociation. There is therefore an optimum level of anxiety needed for the growth and development of the Self. This is not unlike Leuba's (1955) conceptual-isation of optimal stimulation, which he uses to account for the need for anxiety in the individual. For the purposes of this study, a concept of 'functional' anxiety has been developed. This is defined as the optimum level of anxiety needed for growth and development, whilst a disfuntional level of anxiety will result in dissociation or apathy and withdrawal.

A further aspect of Sullivan's theory which is of particular interest for the present study, is his emphasis on the importance of the significant other in the infant's life, particularly in terms of the mediation and gradual integration of anxiety responses. This is made possible through the assurance of a secure and safe environment where the infant is able to adapt to his experience. The mediation also takes the form of monitoring the quality of feedback given to a child about himself, which thereby influences the nature and intensity of the anxiety response. The child who feels secure, accepted and loved should be able to accommodate to the situation where he experiences anxiety. In this way he assimilates what he has learnt, and becomes progressively more able to deal with anxiety provoking situations. (Piaget, 1973; 1977). Since a child's self esteem often depends on the extent to which he is able to cope with his own internal impulses, and the demands made on him by his family and broader society, his self esteem will relate strongly to the quality and intensity of the anxiety he experiences. (Epstein, 1972; Coopersmith, 1967; Breger, 1974). Clearly anxiety

is a crucial aspect of growth and development.

Anxiety is not only a response to a particular stimulus, but might in itself be seen as a means to an end, anxiety can have a mediating function. The definition of anxiety as a process is proposed by Spielberger (1972a; 1976), (Izard, 1972; Mandler, (1972); Friedman and Shmukler, (1982). through the integration of anxiety as a transitory emotional response (A-state), Spielberger defines a complex cognitive emotional process. He says that,

> 'Persons who are high in A-trait... are more strongly disposed to perceive the world as dangerous or threatening than low A-trait persons. COnsequently, high A-trait individuals are more vulnerable to stress and tend to experience A-state reactions of greater intensity and with greater frequency over time, than persons who are low in A-trait.' (1976: 6)

The aetiology of A-trait has been discussed in so far as it refers to the 'neurotic anxiety' of the individual which is based in his early experience of helplessness and in his interpersonal relationships. Spielberger (1976) further states,

> '... cognitive appraisals of danger are immediately followed by A-state reactions, or by an increment in the level of A-state intensity.' (ibid: 6)

A-state, therefore, relates to the later form of anxiety, discussed above in terms of 'realistic' anxiety, where learning plays a fundamental role. A-state anxiety is aroused when the Self is threatened through loss of loved object, or the threat of loss of love and security. The extent to which the individual is able to cope with these feelings and to adapt to them without loss of Self, is the extent to which the individual will develop. Spielberger's theory proposes that the important variables related to the evocation of an anxiety state, should be examined in order to understand the fundamental dynamics of the individual at that particular state of development.

In the present study, anxiety is conceptualised as a process, both in response to the environment and as

a motivating factor for coping with the environment. The present study addresses this issue by exploring the relationship between the nature of anxiety experienced by the preadolescent, and other important developmental variables. These include the effect of maternal acceptance on the preadolescent's experience of anxiety and on his concomitant feelings of self worth, as well as the relationship between the child's experience of anxiety and his sense of competence.

CHAPTER FOUR

A SENSE OF COMPETENCE

Introduction

Erik Erikson uses the term 'sense of' to describe the crisis points in the growth of the individual through the various stages of his life. He sees the individual as developing, at different stages, a 'sense of trust', 'a sense of autonomy', etc. He says of this term,

> '... senses pervade surface and depth, consciousness and the unconsciousness. They are, then, at the same time, ways of experiencing accessible to introspection; ways of behaving observable by others; and unconscious inner states determinable by test and analysis.' (1977, 226)

In terms of the 'sense of competence' in a child, his subjective experience, his behaviour and the unconscious meaning that his acts have for him are important and should be held in mind. It implies the feeling of being competent in dealing with one's world, as well as behaving in a way which would be evaluated as being competent by others. The sense of competence seems to be an important concept occuring at the interface of the other major dimensions dealt with in this study; specifically the development of the self and the experience of anxiety.

White's Theory of Competence Motivation

The motivating role of anxiety has been described above. The theories of learning, held by orthodox drive theorists, or anxiety reduction theorists, describe the primary aim of adaption and learning as being the reduction of tension. Here the organism is seen to be propelled on a path of learning motivated by it's own innate need to re-establish a homeostatic

balance. Learning is not seen to be an end in itself, but rather a by-product of the organism's attempts to cope with the anxiety it experiences in reponse to familiar and novel situations.

White in a classical paper 'Motivation Reconsidered: The Concept of Competence' (1959) thoroughly surveyed the major studies of learning and motivation. He found the notion that a person acts on his world simply in an attempt to re-establish a homeostasis unsatisfactory. Consequently, he developed the concept of 'competence motivation', which is defined as 'an organisms capacity to interact effectively with it's environment.' (1959: 297) Further, he states that:

> 'In organisms capable of but little learning, this capacity might be considered an innate attribute, but in mammals and especially man, with their highly plastic nervous systems, fitness to interact with the environment is slowly attained through prolonged feats of learning. In view of the directedness and persistence of the behaviour that leads to these feats of learning, I consider it necessary to treat competence as having a motivational aspect.' (ibid)

Drawing on the writings of Berlyne (1950) and Woodworth (1958), White came to the conclusion that exploratory behaviour was an end in itself and not simply motivated by the need to reduce anxiety. He further substantiates this notion by examining the detailed examples (of early infant behaviour) described by Piaget (1952). Behaviour characterised by curiosity and a desire to explore novel situations. Furthermore, Hendrick (in White, 1959) proposed the existence of a major instinct, 'the instinct to master' which he further described as an 'inborn drive to do and to learn how to do' (ibid, 307).

White's concept of competence motivation incorporates both the individual's need to do, and therefore, learn, and the need to experience effectance - the ability to do. White acknowledges the importance of environmental feedback, in the individual's experience of competence,

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