

**THE SECOND SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION PROCESS
OF ADOLESCENCE:
A STUDY IN A WESTERN CAPE HIGH SCHOOL**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the difficulties students are experiencing within the separation-individuation process of adolescence which could be impacting on their optimal process of growing up. The rationale for doing this research arose from the researcher's work with adolescents, in a school setting, who were presenting with difficulties in a number of areas. Blos' (1967, 1979) theory of adolescence, as a second separation-individuation process of development, provided a useful basis for understanding and examining the difficulties with which the students were dealing.

The literature review traces a developmental process, drawing on Psychoanalytic and Object Relation Theorists, towards adolescence. This process highlights the links between early and later development and the importance of optimal early development on later developmental processes. Adolescence as a second separation-individuation stage of development, is discussed.

A survey method was employed to gather quantitative data. The Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescents (SITA) (Levine *et al* 1986) was utilised as the instrument of measurement. This test consists of nine sub-categories, which are theoretically linked to Mahler *et al* (1975) early stages of development. The test highlights areas of the adolescent's development that are being experienced as difficult. Stratified random sampling was utilised to select a sample of 120 from a population of 800 students attending a high school in the Western Cape.

Class standard, race and gender were considered to be variables which might impact on the nine sub-categories of the SITA. Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted, indicating that standard was the only significant variable in relation to the nine sub-categories, highlighting differences in developmental processes between standards.

Findings indicated that students in standard 6 and 10 were the least vulnerable as they were more able to have both their dependent and independent needs met, although for different reasons. Students in standards 7,8 and 9 were considered to be more vulnerable because of their stronger need to be more independent and being less able to acknowledge their dependency needs. Standard 8 students were considered to be the most vulnerable group.

In response to the findings a number of recommendations are made to address the difficulties that these students experience. These recommendations include intervention for parents, teachers, the school and the adolescents themselves.

The Paintbrush

I keep my paintbrush with me, wherever I may go,
In case I need to cover up, so the real me doesn't show.
I'm so afraid to show you me; afraid of what you'll do,
I'm afraid you'll laugh or say mean things; afraid I might lose you.

I'd like to remove all the layers, to show you the real, true me,
But I want you to try to understand; I need you to like what you see.
So if you'll be patient and close your eyes, I'll remove the coats real slow,
Please understand how much it hurts, to let the real me show.
Now that my coats are all stripped off, I feel naked, bare and cold,
And if you still find me pleasing, you are my friend, pure as gold.

I need to save my paintbrush though, and hold it in my hand,
I need to keep it handy in case someone doesn't understand.
So please protect me, my dear friend, and thanks for loving me true,
And please let me keep my paintbrush with me,
Until I love me too.

Youngs, B.B and Youngs, J.L*

*Taste Berries for Teens, 1999; Health Communicators Inc

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence, as a developmental stage of the life cycle, is recognised as a period where a tapestry of developmental themes emerge. Childhood is left behind as the adolescent is confronted with increased internal and external pressures. Biological changes of puberty, blooming sexual feelings, (Worden 1991) the regressive pull of childhood (Blos 1979) and the emergence of new cognitive skills push into awareness. Externally, new demands from family and peers place the adolescent in conflict situations about who to be loyal to, who to spend time with and who to believe in. In addition, the question of identity – Who am I? – becomes a central concern.

Psychodynamic theory views adolescence as a time of turning away from the parents, moving towards and looking to peers for emotional satisfaction. For Blos (1979) this turning away from parents is the second step in the process of identity seeking, which began in early childhood (Mahler 1968; Mahler, Pine & Bergman 1975). The optimal resolution of the first process of separation-individuation and the experience of positive relationships in early development is viewed by Object Relation Theory as essential building blocks for later development, in that they will impact on present functioning and present relationships.

However, separation is never easy because something is lost, while what is to be gained is often unclear or uncertain. The comfort and dependency of childhood is exchanged for peers and broader horizons. But, these new found friendships may not offer the security and comfort of the ties with parents. At the same time, their rejection of their parents arouses guilt feelings. In managing this conflict, ambivalence dominates the picture as the adolescent oscillates between closeness and distance. (Worden 1991)

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This research concerns working with adolescents in a school setting. From a Social Work discipline perspective, the researcher found that students presented themselves for intervention with a variety of issues relating to both internal and external issues. These issues included family dysfunction, conflictual parent-child relationships, difficulties in personal relationships and relationships with their peers, depression, suicidal thoughts, academic difficulties, low self-esteem and behavioural problems. For many of the students, it seemed as if these issues had “suddenly” emerged with no understanding of from where these difficulties or feelings had emerged. There was often no clear precipitant as to why they felt like this, only a growing sense of dis-ease within themselves (internal demands) and in their relationships with others (external demands)

Understanding separation-individuation as a central and normal part of adolescent development, it became important to look beyond a clinical population in order to understand what issues within the process of separation-individuation students were possibly struggling with. Understanding what the difficult issues are

would heighten the school's awareness that problems being presented in school should not be seen as just problematic behaviours, but that they could be reflective of developmental processes. These difficulties are not necessarily pathological, but are rather part of growing up and developing as an individual. Where the problems are reflective of deeper issues, the increased understanding of the developmental processes of adolescence would also be useful in determining effective intervention where the school could facilitate the developmental process.

1.3 MEASURING ADOLESCENT SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION

Over recent years, various measuring instruments have been introduced to measure different aspects of adolescent separation and its relation to different issues, such as college adjustment (Rice, Cole & Lapsley 1990) and emotional autonomy, self reliance and susceptibility to peer pressure (Steinberg & Silverberg 1986). Hansburg's (1972, 1980) Separation Anxiety Test explored the link between adolescents' separation experiences and later emotional problems, while Hoffman's (1984) Psychological Separation Inventory assessed four domains of the separation-individuation process in terms of four different types of independence.

Levine, Green & Millon (1986) developed the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA) which examined the notion that phase-specific developments during the first separation-individuation are the precursors of both adolescent development and adult personality structure. The SITA attempts to delineate the key dynamics of Mahler's separation-individuation model with particular reference both to fixation points for psychopathology and milestones signifying healthy progression within adolescence. (Levine *et al* 1986)

The SITA was chosen as the measuring instrument for this study. It could be used within the school environment, with a non-clinical population to highlight which areas of the adolescent separation-individuation process were problematic for the students and which might hinder the optimal completion of tasks and impact on their further development. With an understanding of the areas of difficulty recommendations for intervention within the school environment can be made.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research study aims to:

- 1.4.1 understand the difficulties students are experiencing within the separation-individuation process of adolescence which could be impacting on the optimal process of growing up,
- 1.4.2 determine if factors such as gender, standard and race impact on these issues and
- 1.4.3 determine and make recommendations as to how the students can be assisted by the school to deal with these issues and concerns.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- 1.5.1 The study sample has been drawn from one particular school environment, which cannot be considered to be representative of school environments in the Western Cape in general. The make up of the population, in terms of racial classification can, also not be considered to be representative

of the general adolescent population. Consequently, the results of this study have a low level of generalisability to a general adolescent population.

- 1.5.2 While the SITA, as a measuring instrument has been tested for validity and reliability, it has not been done so for a South African context. Therefore, there might well be issues of cultural bias within the test, which will impact on the validity of the results within a South African context.
- 1.5.3 The aim of the study was to administer the SITA to a non-clinical sample of adolescents. No personal histories of the adolescents in the sample were obtained and the results have been analysed as a group, rather than for particular individuals. Therefore, the results will provide information for recommendations regarding intervention at a very general level, rather than for particular individuals within the sample.
- 1.5.4 While SITA hypothesises which areas of Mahler's developmental stages are linked to which sub-category, it is not possible, within this study, to determine if those earlier developmental stages were or were not optimally resolved as this is a non-clinical sample and such detailed histories were not obtained.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THIS STUDY

An ethical issue that concerned the researcher revolved around the possible impact upon the adolescents of completing the SITA questionnaire. It was possible that the questionnaire could evoke particular feelings within the individual. The researcher did not want to leave those individuals feeling that issues had been evoked and that they had no where to go and discuss their feelings or concerns.

Additionally, some students in the sample requested that they receive feedback on their particular results and the meaning of their results.

Consequently, it was explained to the entire sample population, that the writer would be available to discuss their results on an individual basis. This would take the form of an individual session where the results would be contextualised for the individual. In other words, some historical detail would be obtained from the student, as a context for understanding and interpreting their results. If necessary, additional counselling would be offered to the student. A few students requested the results of their test. Appointments were made and they were followed up.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter two will provide an overview of the literature focussing on issues of early development, the importance of attachment in the development of the infant and the process of separation-individuation as elucidated by Margaret Mahler et al. Peter Blos' (1979) theory of adolescence as a second individuation process will be discussed and its links to Mahler's earlier developmental process. To allow for easier reading, the term 'he' will be used to represent both male and females.

Chapter three will discuss the Research Design and Methodology of the study.

In chapter four the results will be presented and chapter five will focus on the discussion of the results. Wherever the term "standard" is used in this document, it refers to the class standard of the students. The use of the term "black students" includes both coloured and black students.

Finally, chapter six will offer concluding comments and recommendations.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The inner experience of the human infant can be understood to be both disorganised and chaotic. Life is begun in an environment which envelops the young infant and which the infant has little ability either to understand or transform (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983). Various psychoanalysts have characterised these stages in different terms, such as Freud's auto-eroticism or primary narcissism, Fairbairn's absolute dependence and Mahler's normal autism. Each of these developmental theories addresses the phenomenon of a disorganised, undifferentiated individual living within a world that is turbulent and unpatterned (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983)

The task of psychoanalytic developmental theories (and developmental theories in general) is to chart the infant's path from formlessness to form. Within a fairly short space of time, the infant becomes a child with a unique personality who has already begun to structure ways that make his world comprehensible to him. This structuring of the world into a comprehensible form continues throughout the life cycle. For Freud the organising principle in the development of the individual was the resolution of the Oedipal Complex, which represented the point of separation and individuation.

Bowlby (1958, 1982a, 1988) and his attachment theory provides an understanding of the importance of attachment within the individual before a process of separation and individuation can take place. Winnicott, an Object Relations theorist, speaks of the importance of the "primary maternal preoccupation" of the mother in order to meet the needs of her infant so that the infant begins to view himself, in time, as a separate entity from the mother. (St Clair 1986)

For Mahler the point of successful development was not the establishment of genital primacy following the resolution of the Oedipus Complex, but rather the developmental movement from embeddedness within the matrix of mother-child to the achievement of an individual identity. Thus, the organizing principle for Mahler was the **relations** between the self and its objects.

Mahler and her associates (Mahler *et al* 1975) delineated stages during infancy in the intrapsychic differentiation of the child from the mother, through which the infant internalises the maternal image which allows for greater physical independence from the external object (the mother). Mahler termed these stages the separation-individuation process.

Blos (1963; 1967) viewed adolescence as a vital stage in the process of development towards the achievement of a sense of identity and autonomy. Utilising Mahler's theory of separation-individuation, he viewed adolescence as a second individuation process, through which the adolescent sheds family dependencies and faces the loosening of infantile object ties so as to become a member of society at large.

The writer will focus on the theories of Mahler and Blos to provide an understanding of the challenges and issues that face adolescents in their striving for a sense of separateness, individuality and autonomy from their parents – the early infantile object ties.

2.2 PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Psychoanalysis has always investigated the way in which an individual's past colours present behaviour and relationships. This approach originated in the work of Sigmund Freud whose postulations have continued to influence the development of subsequent theories, most notably those of the Object Relations theorists.

2.2.1 Sigmund Freud

Freud's fundamental view of the human condition is embodied in what has been termed a drive model. He saw the individual as functioning to gratify the instincts, both sexual and aggressive, with the drives not only being the mechanisms of the mind, but also its contents.

Freud's model of personality investigates the structure of the personality and how it is put together. He suggests that mental functioning operates in terms of three different structures. These structures he termed the id, ego and superego. Disturbances or psychological illnesses were seen as lying predominantly in conflicts between the different parts of structures of the personality and conflicts between the instinctual demands and the demands of reality (St Clair 1986). He believed that unresolved conflicts of childhood, especially during the Oedipal phase, could continue unconsciously and emerge during adulthood. As the ego defensively responds to threatening thoughts and libidinal feelings, a neurotic compromise is reached that manifests in neurotic symptoms.

While Freud recognised both nature and nurture as shaping forces on the personality (St Clair 1986) he attached more significance to nature and the instinctual drives. He used instincts to explain relationships and environmental forces that shape an individual's personality. The implication of this is that object relations are a function of instinctual drives. Greenberg & Mitchell (1983) note that Freud viewed the object as the creation of the drive, and object relations as a function of the drive. Thus he regarded the object as not being present at the beginning but as being either discovered or created. Through the experience of satisfying and frustrating experiences the infant forms an image of what satisfaction is like. Object relations are developed through the association of these satisfactions with the conditions under which they were experienced.

2.3 BOWLBY'S ATTACHMENT THEORY

Bowlby (1982a) viewed attachment as a fundamental innate need, which is instinctual and necessary to the survival of the individual. He saw attachment as being expressed in behaviours designed to maintain closeness and accessibility of the attachment figures, which is reciprocated by protective behaviour evoked in the mother. Rooting, sucking, following, approaching, clinging are behaviours through which the infant plays an active role in seeking proximity and contact. As from birth, these behaviours become co-ordinated and focused on the mother to form the basis of attachment (Bowlby 1958).

Adequate attachment relationships are essential in the formation, within the child, of a secure "home base" from which to explore the external environment. Bowlby termed such a secure base as the internal working model of attachment (1982a) which further guides the emotional and cognitive development of the child, which will impact on the child's understanding of and participation in other relationships throughout his life time. Cohen (1974) writes that "an internal representation of the attachment figure becomes intertwined with the representation of the self and has a pervasive effect on everyday thinking and behaviour" (209).

A securely attached infant will be able to acknowledge his needs internally, signal the parent and expect a response to these needs. An infant with insecure experiences of attachment needs being met, may defensively exclude awareness of needs or become extremely distressed when stressed, and will show little expectation of appropriate parental response (Fish 1996). Based on these repeated attachment experiences, the internal working models are made up of unconscious rules for processing attachment information and memories as well as a set of expectations of self and others with regards to attachment.

A securely attached person will, with time, gradually update their internal working model, allowing for a reasonably accurate model of self and others in interaction with the self. Bowlby added that this process is significantly influenced by open and accurate communication between the child and the caretaker (1988).

Ainsworth *et al* (1978) in support of Bowlby's theory developed the Strange Situation Procedure to assess the security of attachment in infants to their parents. This procedure activated the attachment system by initiating a separation from the attachment figure in an unfamiliar setting. Ainsworth *et al* (1978) described three different types of attachment in children, namely secure, insecure-avoidant and resistant/insecure-ambivalent.

A securely attached child protests upon separation, but is easily pacified upon reunion and returns to exploratory play. There is the anticipation amongst these children that their caregivers will be available for comfort when necessary and are therefore able to resume exploration.

An insecure-avoidant child does not protest upon separation. Upon reunion he will either ignore the caregiver or hover warily nearby, being unable to engage in free activity. Such children have learned to suppress the external manifestations of their distress so as to prevent eliciting further rejection.

In contrast the insecure-ambivalent or resistant child does protest upon separation but is difficult to pacify when the caregiver returns. They want the comfort, but also resist it, taking a long time to settle down. These children present with ambivalent feelings about their caregivers as reliable safe havens and secure bases.

Main & Solomon (1986, 1990) have described a fourth classification of attachment, the disorganised/disoriented type. Such children demonstrate interrupted, confused or incomplete strategies for obtaining comfort from the caregiver and seem to freeze on separation and seem unable to sustain any organised pattern of attachment behaviour.

It is suggested that the differences in the types of attachment are more a function of the parent-child interaction, than of temperament (Holmes 1993). Mothers of securely attached children are more responsive

and attuned and engage more with their children than parents of insecure children. Parents of avoidant children are more "functional" in their parenting and efficient in their feeding and cleaning routines, but tend to brush aside the child's cues for attention and holding. Mothers of ambivalent children are inconsistent in their behaviour, intruding upon their child when he is happily playing or ignoring obvious signals of distress. Disorganised children have often been subjected to major parental failure such as physical abuse or gross neglect.

Holmes (1993) suggests that it is now possible to trace a line of attachment reaching from a mother's sense of security in pregnancy through her child's infancy and early childhood to the pre-teen years. In addition, appropriate separation protest versus avoidance or clinging and exploratory capacity versus inhibition in infancy can be linked with development in later childhood and adult life.

2.3.1 Attachment in adolescence

Given that attachment relations are "enduring bonds" and that attachment behaviour can be expected to change but still maintain similar meanings and goals (Rice 1990) it is more possible to predict the continuity of attachment and adaptation at later periods of the life cycle. Attachment has come to be seen as an important issue in relation to some aspects of adolescent development, such as ego identity development and social and emotional adjustment to different situations (Rice 1990). Additionally, secure attachment relations with parents are seen to predict adaptive functioning in a variety of situations for the adolescent.

Josselson (1996) suggests that it is the securely attached adolescent who is most likely to be competent and venture forth in their struggle for identity. Attachment persists even though relationships with parents are revised and separation is sought. Thus, connectedness or attachment and individuation are not in opposition with one another. Rather, individuation takes place within the context of relationships (Josselson 1988). Quintana and Lapsley (1987) however, suggest that attachment relations may not be as necessary for adaptive functioning in adolescence as they are in early childhood, possibly because the adolescent is not as vulnerable as the infant, and requires less parental attachment to mediate adaptation. They suggest, therefore, that adaptation, in the form of successful identity development, may not depend on a secure attachment relationship with parents.

Rice (1990) in summarising further studies on the importance of attachment (Kroger & Haslett 1998; Quintana & Lapsley 1987) says that quality attachment does seem to impact on adolescent adaptive function in terms of emotional and social development. Additionally, adolescents who report and experience secure, trusting attachments with parents, report high levels of social competence, general life satisfaction and somewhat higher levels of self-esteem. Rice *et al* (1990) in their study of late adolescents' adjustment to college report that while some degree of disengagement from the family is necessary for the adolescent to attain independence, there is not a suggestion that the adolescent must disengage totally. Rather, the individuation process simultaneously includes separation as well as continued support from the family.

2.4 OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY

The major shift in Object Relations Theory from classic psychoanalytic theory was the replacement of Freud's drive model with an "object-seeking" model, suggesting that optimal early human relationships are fundamental for optimal development. Additionally, they viewed the most important developmental stages to be prior to the Oedipal period. A crucial developmental issue was seen to be the child's move from a state of fusion and dependence on the mother, to a state of increased independence and differentiation.

Thus, the primary focus was on the early formation of psychological structures (*inner images of self and the other or object*) and how these inner structures manifest themselves in interpersonal situations. It is suggested that residues of past relationships shape the perceptions of individuals and their relationships with others. Individuals are thought to interact not only with an actual other, but also with an internal other, a psychic representation that might be a distorted version of some actual person.

Kernberg (1976b; 1980) cite Kramer and Akhtar (1988) describes Object Relations Theory as one that "stresses the building up of dyadic intrapsychic representations, "self" and "object-images", reflecting the original infant-mother relation and its later development into dyadic, triadic and multiple internal and external interpersonal relations in general" (p548).

2.4.1 Donald W Winnicott

Winnicott believed that the maturational process of the infant is facilitated by a "good enough" environment which enables the infant gradually to become less dependent on the mother, who provides the experiences that enables the beginning self of the infant to emerge (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983). Winnicott did not reject Freud's notions of instincts and inner dynamics of the individual, but saw the emotional development of the infant in terms of the infant's relationship with the mother rather than in terms of instincts (St Clair 1986).

He saw the mother as providing a "holding environment" within which the infant is contained and through which the mother can bring the world to the infant, which plays a crucial and intricate role in the development of the infant. Thus, for Winnicott, the most crucial factor for development was the maternal care provided by the mother which enabled the infant to start by "existing and not by reacting" (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983).

Winnicott emphasised the need for parents to adapt to the infant and its changing needs. The mother, functioning as a mirror, offers a precise reflection of the infant's own experiences and gestures even though they are fragmented and formless in quality. Through the mother being able to echo the infant's wants, the infant is able to become attuned to his own bodily functions and impulses, which form the basis for a slowly evolving sense of self. Therefore, by empathically anticipating the infant's needs the "good enough" mother meets and fosters the omnipotence of the infant. This leads the infant to develop a sense of external reality. As the omnipotence is gradually relinquished and the infant is gradually disillusioned, the infant comes to recognise the illusory element and so establishes contact with reality. This process is facilitated by the mother's failure, little by little to shape the world according to the infant's demands (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983). The harshness of this is softened by the push within the infant towards separateness and the synchronous decrease of the mother's ego coverage and responsiveness to the infant.

The infant was seen by Winnicott as initially relating to objects subjectively and then gradually establishing the capacity to perceive them objectively. "Good enough" mothering is thought to facilitate the infant's movement from fusion with the mother to a state of being separate from her and capable of object relationships. Winnicott (St Clair 1983) suggested that the infant is not capable of being alone until a good object exists in the psychic reality of the individual. Having a good internal object and confidence in internal relationships allows the individual to be content even in the absence of external objects.

Winnicott believed that mothering that is not "good enough" results in the development of the false self. Due to the lack of synchronicity between the infant's needs and gestures and the mother's responses and understanding of them, the infant becomes compliant, hiding the true self which is the infant's own spontaneous and life-giving core. The false self reacts compliantly to environmental demands, providing an illusion of personal existence which is fashioned according to maternal expectations and claims.

Winnicott introduced the concept of the transitional object which he described as being "neither an internal object nor merely an external object, but the first not-me possession" (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983:195). The transitional object helps the infant to negotiate the gradual shift from the experience of himself as the centre of a totally subjective world to the sense of himself as a person among other persons (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983).

2.4.2 Margaret Mahler

Mahler's initial study of children in the early years of life was with a clinical sample of infants and their parents. In later work, she studied healthy mothers and their infants. Making use of a "free-floating psychoanalytic observation" and a predetermined experimental design, and through a systematic observational study of children and their parents, Mahler has detailed a complex developmental sequence. The sequence moves from an embeddedness (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983) within a symbiotic mother-child matrix towards the attainment of a stable individual identity within a world of predictable and realistically perceived others. This process or sequence she has named "separation-individuation". (Edward *et al* 1981)

Mahler's work affirms Freud's recognition that infantile experiences are significant for later development but that critical organizers or nodal developmental points occur long before the negotiation of the oedipal stage of development. In addition, Mahler (Buckley 1986), says that her understanding of the first three sub-phases of the separation-individuation process are based upon two thoughts of Freud's. The first is that the human being is brought into the world in an immature state and is therefore first absolutely and remains, to some degree, relatively dependent on the mother. Secondly, is Freud's emphasis that object relationships, that is, "one person's endowing another with object libido" is the most reliable single factor by which the level of mental health and the extent of the therapeutic potential can be determined (p222).

Mahler's understanding, however, of the symbiotic fusion with the mother and the gradual, halting awakening from that fusion towards an independent selfhood provides a framework or vision of the essential struggles of the child which is quite different from that of Freud's. (Greenberg & Mitchell 1983) Mahler's child is less a creature struggling with conflictual drive demands, but rather one that must find a balance between a longing for independent, autonomous existence and a desire to surrender and become immersed again in the fusion

from which he has so slowly emerged. Additionally, Mahler takes into account and stresses the importance of both conscious and unconscious parental attitudes towards the child's development. The parent's influence is mediated through and made possible by their function as "objects" in relation to the child.

2.4.2.1 The process of separation-individuation

Separation-individuation refers to the developmental sequence through which the human infant moves from being symbiotically fused with the mother towards a world of reality and achievement of becoming a separate entity.

Separation and individuation are intrapsychic processes running on two intertwined, but not always synchronized developmental tracks (Mahler 1971) **Separation** follows the track of differentiation, distancing, boundary-formation or structuring and disengagement from mother. **Individuation** describes the evolution of intrapsychic autonomy, that is, the development of psychic structure and an individual's own personal and unique characteristics. (Edward *et al* 1981)

Mahler has identified clear stages of development in which specific behavioural indicators are observable, specific needs become manifest and where particular developmental achievements take place. Accomplishments at one stage enable development at the next stage. Achievements are gained, accumulated and consolidated, culminating in structural developments that equip the child to negotiate subsequent developmental tasks, particularly those associated with the next major organizer, the Oedipus Complex (Edward *et al* 1981). Moving through the stages of separation-individuation, the child progresses towards a position of on-the-way to object constancy. This signals the beginning of the child's ability to retain an internal representation or image of important others. This image is separate from the image of the self, enabling the child to retain a connection in his mind with significant others, whether they are present, absent, frustrating or gratifying. Simultaneously, there is a movement towards self-constancy, which enables the individual to retain a sense of sameness, regardless of emotional fluctuations, bodily feelings or external surroundings.

2.4.2.2 Autism and symbiosis: the forerunners of separation-individuation

Mahler *et al* (1975) considered autism and symbiosis to be vitally important building blocks upon which the process of separation-individuation proper is based. The negotiation of further sub-phases is significantly impacted upon by the foundation established in the early months of neonatal life.

Normal Autism

During the first weeks of life, the young infant is mostly unaware of his surroundings, more often being in a sleep-like state than in a state of arousal. During this stage channels connecting the infant to the external world are unawakened and not yet functional with the infant's primary concern being the satisfaction of his needs, particularly that of hunger.

In this stage of normal autism, need satisfaction seems to come from within the infant's own omnipotent orbit because the infant is so closely fused with the mother. Inside or outside self and object are not differentiated

and the infant is described as being in "in a state of primitive hallucinatory disorientation" or primary narcissism, when there is no awareness of another or of an outside (Edward *et al* 1981). The infant experiences himself as the source of his own satisfaction, self-sufficiency and omnipotency, with his mother's attempts to meet his needs, not being separated from his own tension-reducing efforts. The gratification received by the mother's tension-reducing behaviours helps the infant, in time, to differentiate between a "pleasurable" and "good" quality and a "painful" and "bad" quality of experiences. (Buckley 1986:226)

The role of the mother during this phase is of crucial importance. It is the mother's many ministrations, her touching, tending and holding behaviours, that slowly draw the infant to the outside world, that contribute to the gradual unfolding sense "that I am". This constitutes the earliest step in the process of identity formation. Consequently, inadequacies in the maternal partnering may prove ominous for the development of the young infant.

While this phase is characterised by a relative unawareness of external stimuli, it should not be assumed that there is no responsiveness from the infant. Although the responses to external stimuli are brief and fleeting, it is these responses that allow for continuity between the normal autistic phase and the phases to follow.

Symbiosis

Mahler (1975) suggests that symbiosis describes a state of undifferentiation, of fusion with the mother, where the "I" is not yet differentiated from the "not-I" and where inside and outside are only coming to be sensed as different by the infant. Any unpleasurable perceptions, external or internal, are projected beyond the common boundary of the dual unity.

With the symbiotic phase of development the infant begins to become aware that need-satisfaction is not provided by oneself, but comes from a need-satisfying part object somewhere outside of the self (the mother), while still being within the orbit of the omnipotent symbiotic dual unity. With the cracking of the autistic shell, that has protected against external stimuli, there is an increase in fussiness, crying and signs of discomfort in the infant. It is here that the mother must begin to serve as the protective shield and act as a barrier between the infant and the external world, protecting the infant's primitive ego from premature stress traumata. (Edward *et al* 1981; Buckley 1986)

The mother's "holding behaviour", her "primary maternal preoccupation" in Winnicott's sense and her countless ministrations that the "good enough mother" provides for the infant, are regarded by Mahler (1975) to be the symbiotic organizers of psychological birth.

These early experiences, when favourable, equip the child for the gradual and complicated move away from the mother, allowing the child a sufficient measure of individual development and as well as a measure of trust in others to venture forth.

The differentiation sub-phase (5-10months)

This stage initiates the beginning of the separation-individuation process. The infant's attention is more outwardly directed, he is more alert and goal-directed and he engages in more exploratory and experimental behaviour. With a safe anchorage within the symbiotic orbit, an inner pleasure and the growth of outer sensory perception can interact freely together, resulting in an optimal symbiotic state, out of which smooth differentiation and expansion beyond the symbiotic orbit, can take place. (Buckley 1986)

This new alertness and interest in the outside world Mahler terms "hatching". The infant is able to be more permanently alert when awake and is aided by the ongoing emotional availability of the mother. The child begins to compare "mother" with "other", the familiar with the unfamiliar, and starts to discriminate between mother and all that is different (Edward *et al* 1981). This process is further facilitated by the development of locomotor functions which enable the infant to move away from the mother. With this movement away, and the ability to discriminate particular maternal characteristics, stranger anxiety begins to occur. Recognition that the stranger is not the same as the familiar mother raises the first threat of object loss. Where basic trust is optimal, there is an eagerness and curiosity in exploring the stranger, while constantly checking back to the mother resulting in the infant's specific memory of his mother becoming more highly organised (Mahler 1975).

Mahler (1968: 18) says that "the more the symbiotic partner has helped the infant to become ready to "hatch" from the symbiotic orbit smoothly and gradually, without undue strain upon his own resources, the better equipped has the child become to separate out and to differentiate his self representations from the hitherto fused symbiotic self-plus-object representations."

The practising sub-phase (10-15 months)

The differentiation sub-phase is overlapped by the practising period. Mahler (1975) divides this sub-phase into the early and late (or practising proper) periods. The early practising period is initiated by the child's ability to physically move away from the mother by crawling, creeping and righting himself while still holding onto her. As long as mother is within sight or sound of voice, there is pleasure in these early explorations.

The practising proper period is characterised and dominated by free upright locomotion. The child's view of the world is expanded and his pleasure and joyfulness in exploring this new world, is described by Greenacre (cite Edward 1981: 20) as a "love affair with the world".

Mahler *et al* (1975) notes that there are at least three interrelated, yet discriminable developments that contribute to and interact with the child's first steps into awareness of separateness and towards individuation. These are the **rapid body differentiation from the mother**, the **establishment of a specific bond with her**, and the **growth and functioning of the autonomous ego apparatuses in close proximity to the mother**. These developments see the infant's interest in inanimate objects grow and move beyond that of the mother. This movement enables the child to sustain transient object losses and to relate to his mother from a distance. A more stable internal self-representation distinct from the object representation (the mother) begins to develop (Edward *et al* 1981). The practising sub-phase proper is highlighted by free

upright locomotion when much of the child's energy and interest is invested into his rapidly growing autonomous ego and its functions. Mahler (1979) suggests that the elation of this sub-phase, is not only because of increased mobility and exercise of the ego functions, but also because of the elation of escape from absorption into the orbit of the mother.

The rapprochement sub-phase (16-22 months)

It is with the acquisition of upright, free locomotion and a stage of cognitive development representing the beginning of representational intelligence, that the child emerges as a separate and autonomous person. These two powerful "organisers" (locomotion and cognition) are the midwives of the psychological birth. It is in this final stage of the "hatching" process, that the toddler reaches the first level of identity - that of being a separate individual entity (Mahler 1975).

With the implication of physical separateness becoming clearer, there is an increased need and wish for the mother to share all experiences and new skills, as well as a great need for the object's love. The recently independent toddler suddenly becomes demanding and dependent. The child, fearing the loss of the mother's love and being completely alone, turns to the mother for help, but fears being re-engulfed by her. He wants to share everything with her, craves and wants reassurance of her love, but simultaneously pushes her away. It is this shadowing and darting-away pattern (Mahler 1975), the urgent and competing needs for closeness and autonomy that characterize the rapprochement period.

In this sub-phase, with individuation proceeding very rapidly and with the child exercising it to the limit, there is also a greater awareness within the child, of his separateness. The child employs various mechanisms to resist this separation from the mother. No matter how much coercion from the child, the dual unit of earlier phases no longer functions effectively, and verbal communication becomes more and more necessary. The young child gradually realises that his love object (mother) is separate from him and that he must gradually and painfully give up his delusions of grandeur. It is this crossroad in development that Mahler (1975) termed the rapprochement crisis. The optimal emotional availability of the mother during this period is crucial for successful resolution and will decisively influence the final outcome of this process.

2.4.2.4 Consolidation of individuality and the beginnings of emotional object constancy

The fourth sub-phase is different to the other three sub-phases in that it is open-ended. Mahler (1975) sees the main tasks of this stage as being the attainment of a stable sense of self and a certain degree of object constancy. The child needs to attain a sense of his own individuality, as well as a sense of the other as an internal, positive presence even when they are absent.

Through an increasingly solid, constant and positive internal representation or inner image of the mother, the child is able to express his individuality and function separately without fearing separation or abandonment by the love object. The slow establishment of this object constancy involves all aspects of psychic development implying the unification of the "good" and "bad" object into one whole mental representation.

Thus, the child can experience closeness with the object without fearing engulfment and a loss of his newly achieved individuality and independence. The child has a sense that the mother is available and dependable even when physically absent, when the child is angry with her or when she is not providing satisfaction for the child. (Edward *et al* 1981) This internal sense emerges from the building of stable internal images of the primary love object. This must be achieved at an intellectual and emotional level and remain reliable irrespective of the state of need or inner discomfort.

2.5 THE PATHOLOGY OF THE FAILURE OF SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION

Psychological health and psychopathology can both be understood in terms of the changes of object relations development and the associated organising and integrating impact of them. The earlier the interference with the processes of development of object relations, the more serious the psychopathology.

The process of early attachment occurs from birth, the stage of normal autism, to the stage of normal symbiosis where the infant becomes more aware of himself as separate from the primary object. Failure of attachment during this time may carry with it severe deficits in the early organisation of the self. Failure to develop attachment and to achieve a satisfactory symbiosis, because of environmental factors, may lead to the development of character disturbances such as the psychopathic personality. Another form of pathological attachment is attachment through the false-self organization, where the real core self has remained in a non-attached, non-object-related state (Horner 1984). Miller (1987) says that if the mother's primary occupation with her child is unpredictable, insecure, anxiety-ridden or hostile, then the child has to face the period of individuation without having a reliable framework for emotional checking to his symbiotic partner. The result is a disturbance in his self-feeling and the beginning of the development of a false self.

The child's ability to maintain continuous ties with the object and to survive the failures and frustrations, which are part of the separation-individuation process, depends upon the achievement of a sufficient degree of "confident expectation" during the symbiotic phase. (Edward *et al* 1981) The protraction of the symbiotic phase beyond the phase specific time prevents the child's disengagement and individuation from the mother, fostering psychosis, or the failure of differentiation. Thus, deficiencies in symbiosis deprive the child of the requisite foundation for later developmental tasks.

At the practising phase there may be a preoccupation with a need for mother that either precludes or dampens the "love affair with the world". At rapprochement, with its inevitable pull towards a return to the symbiotic orbit, this pull may be so overwhelming, and significantly heighten the feelings of ambivalence and tendency towards symbiosis. Mothers in the rapprochement phase, may be unable to tolerate the child's separating efforts, abruptly disengaging themselves from the child leading to the abandonment experience which is considered to be an integral aspect of borderline personality development.

2.6 ADOLESCENCE

2.6.1 Introduction

Object Relations theory offers an understanding of the important factors in the development of the young infant towards becoming a separated and individuated person. It is also stressed by Mahler (1975) that this process does not stop at any particular point, but continues throughout the lifecycle.

As the individual grows and faces new challenges, so issues are evoked and dealt with again. It has been suggested by various theorists (Blos 1967, 1979; Kroger & Haslett 1988; Trad 1995) that adolescence is a significant period of differentiation as the individual strives to determine a greater sense of identity, separate from that of their parents and family and a position in the world around them. Trad (1995) suggests that it is a time where relationships are realigned, challenged and redefined so that the adolescent can be accommodated within the family in a new manner, so as to enable successful growing autonomy.

Peter Blos (1967, 1979), drawing on Mahler's process of separation-individuation in early development, suggests that adolescence is a reworking of many of those issues, and is fundamental to an ongoing healthy development. The writer will look specifically at Blos's theory of adolescent development and how it ties in with Mahler's separation-individuation process.

2.6.2 The process of adolescence

Theorists such as Blos (1967), Kaplan (1987) and Herbert (1987) concur that adolescence begins with puberty – the biological processes of growth and differentiation. This biological process is also accompanied by both cognitive and psychological processes of growth and development. Blos (1967) suggests that psychological developmental changes draw their content, stimulation, aim and direction from a complex interplay of inner and outer impingements. What is observed at the end of this period, are new stabilising processes and alterations of the psychic structures which are achieved through the process of adolescent accommodation. This can be understood as the process of adjustment to new ideas and experiences through revising old ideas to fit or accommodate the new ideas.

Along with both biological and psychological growth is the development of cognitive skills and abilities. Piaget (in Kaplan 1988) suggested that there is a significant advance from concrete to abstract thinking at this stage. This allows for greater individualised thought and the reassessment of values and often leads to greater distance between the adolescent and his parents. (Shulman & Rubinroit 1987)

The point where biological and cognitive maturation and adolescent accommodation intersect in order to become integrated, is where the critical stages of adolescent development can be found. Kaplan (1988) speaks of 3 sub-phases of adolescence, each of which has specific developmental tasks. The early adolescent's task is to redefine himself and his relationships to his parents in the presence of enormous physical transformations of puberty. The middle adolescent, attached to his peers, reducing his attachment to his family, begins to form his sexual identity and relationships with the opposite sex. Finally, the late adolescent addresses issues of goals, ideals, standards and his relationship to the world. The addressing of such issues lends towards further consolidation of his identity.

Erikson, (cite Hamachek 1988) offers a psychosocial theory built around the understanding that emotional-social growth progresses through different stages, each with its own unique and necessary ego accomplishments. He provides a natural and helpful conceptual framework for understanding the development of the self. His 5th stage of development, coinciding with adolescence, is described as the stage of Identity versus Role Confusion. Similarly to Kaplan's views, the main tasks of Erikson's 5th stage of development involve the move away from childhood dependency on parents towards greater emotional independence. This involves the development of a sense of self as separate, yet connected to others and includes the capacity to assume responsibility for decisions and actions taken. The individual who is unable to develop a sense of identity will experience a sense of role confusion where there will be no clarity of one's own beliefs and values. There will be a limited sense of self as being an individual, able to be physically and emotionally close to another without fearing a loss of self (Hamachek 1988).

Erikson's stages suggest essentially an "either-or" situation. However, Sandner (1988) proposes an alternative view in that they may be viewed as pairs of opposites to be negotiated in childhood. Any qualities expressed by the ego, such as trust and autonomy, have their opposites, mistrust and shame, being present as an underground existence through feeling-toned split-off complexes. This means that any qualities not expressed by the ego, are held by the complex, carrying a vital life force of its own.

Anna Freud's quote "a mother's job is there to be left" (cite Kroger 1989) captures the essence of optimal conditions for the development of identity, according to both psychoanalytic and object relations traditions. "A parent-child partnership that enables not only an adolescent's confident, guiltless physical departure from the home of childhood both to love and to work in the wide world beyond, but also an intrapsychic departure from an internalized parental image that has to this point been one's source of guidance, support and self-esteem". (Kroger 1989:46)

2.7 ADOLESCENCE AS A SECOND INDIVIDUATION PROCESS – THE THEORY OF PETER BLOS

What Erikson described as "ego identity", Blos (1967:48) called "character", which described the entity which restructures and consolidates during adolescence. To Blos, character meant that aspect of the personality which pattern responses to stimuli, originating both within the environment and within the self. In understanding character, Blos did not focus so much on ego processes in the formation of character, but rather on the dynamic balance between id, ego and superego structures.

Blos (1967) posits four challenges which are related to formation of character or identity. Without addressing and favourably resolving each of these issues, adolescents retain a character deficient in the structure necessary to healthy functioning during adult life.

The four character challenges are considered to be components of a total process, with their integrated resolution marking the end of adolescence. (Blos 1979) The **second-individuation** process involves the letting go of the intrapsychic parental representations, internalised in toddler-hood and forming the structure of childhood identity. Regression is seen to be a normative process as the adolescent disengages from early

object ties. In **reworking childhood traumas**, the adolescent must return to, rather than avoid early injuries, so they can be mastered rather than defended against through adulthood. **Ego continuity** refers to the need for a sense of personal history. In order to have a future, the individual must have a past so that there is some sense of inner continuity and sameness for healthy identity formation. Blos (1967) viewed the reactivation of childhood oedipal issues and formation of a **sexual identity** as a final critical challenge to adolescent character formation.

2.7.1 The second individuation process

Blos (1967) views adolescence, in its totality, as a second process of individuation. He views the first process as having been completed with the attainment of object constancy at the end of the third year. He sees both periods as having common experiences. There is a heightened vulnerability of the personality organization, an urgency for changes in the psychic structures and finally, should either of these periods miscarry, they will be followed by specific deviant development that highlights the respective failures of individuation.

Blos (1967) draws a direct parallel between "hatching" in infancy from a symbiotic relationship with the mother, to the adolescent process of shedding family dependencies to become a member of the "adult world". He says that it is not until the termination of adolescence that self and object representations acquire stability and firm boundaries. In adolescence, Blos (1967) says the developmental task is to diminish family dependencies and to lose infantile object ties. The disengagement from internalized objects opens the way to the establishment of meaningful relationships with the external world and so external and extrafamilial objects of love and hate are found. Without this disengagement, the finding of new extrafamilial love objects is either precluded, hindered, or remains restricted to simple replication or substitution of earlier relationships.

Blos (1967) says that up to adolescence, the parental ego is selectively available to the child and is his legitimate ego extension. Thus, the ego weakness of adolescence is not only due to the increasing strength of the drives, but more due to the disengagement from the parental ego support, which has until adolescence formed an essential component of the child's ego.

Disengagement from the infantile object and loosening of these object ties makes way for more age-adequate relationships. This disengaging and loosening process is always paralleled by ego maturation. It is through ego maturation that a firm sense of self, different from that of parents, not overwhelmed by internalised superego demands and more capable of self-support, emerges. (Kroger 1989)

2.7.1.1 Adolescent avoidance of individuation

Ego disturbances, apparent in acting out, learning disorders, lack of purpose, procrastination, moodiness and negativism, are often the symptoms of crisis or failure in the disengagement process and can represent derailment of the individuation process itself. (Blos 1967)

The adolescent who is struggling through the painful process of disengagement, may present with extreme behaviours such as running away, leaving school, becoming promiscuous or using drugs as a means of

escaping from an overwhelming regressive pull to infantile dependencies, safeties and gratifications. This dramatic change in behaviour can offer a respite or holding position for the adolescent until there is a rekindling of progressive development. It can, however, become a way of life for many which ultimately leads back to what, at the outset, was to be avoided, namely regression.

Physical separateness from parents as well as ideological separateness, demonstrated through change in social role, style of dress and grooming, special interests and moral choices, are often the only means through which the adolescent can maintain psychological integrity during the process of individuation. It is these intrapsychic distancing techniques that combat fears of infantile re-engulfment and illustrate how the forceful opposition to, at time harmless reality, may be about fighting an "other-than-external" battle. The counter-cathetic energy employed in upholding this way of life accounts for the often striking inefficacy, emotional shallowness, procrastination, and expectant suspense which characterises the various forms of individuation avoidance.

Blos (1967), however, notes again that the crucial issue remains whether these new behaviours and way of life becomes the displaced, temporary battleground of freedom from childhood dependencies, which leads to individuation – or whether this new way of life becomes a permanent substitution of childhood states and therefore avoidance of individuation.

2.7.1.2 Adolescent regression and early ego organisation

Central to successful resolution of adolescent individuation is regression. Only through the young person's ability to renew contact with infantile drives, can the psychic restructuring of adolescence occur and the adolescent task be fulfilled. (Kroger 1989) Only through the regression at adolescence can the residues of infantile trauma, conflict or fixation be modified, by bringing to bear on them the ego's extended resources. (Blos 1967)

It is important to note whether the reality-bound and self-observing part of the ego is kept intact, if only marginally, during the regressive movements of adolescence. In this way the dangers of regression are reduced or regulated, preventing the danger of the regressive loss of the self, or a return to the undifferentiated stage of merger. Thus, adolescent regression is not always defensive in nature, but is an essential psychic process that must follow its course, in the service of progressive development. Common adolescent regressive behaviours would include action rather than use of verbal language to express themselves, idolisation of a particular person e.g. rock or pop star or emotional states (with friends) that reflect a sense of merged-ness and constant, frenetic activity to fill the sense of internal object loss.

Up to adolescence, the parental ego is available to the child and lends both structure and organisation to the child's ego. When the psychological naval chord has to be cut in adolescence, children with early ego damage fall back on a defective psychic structure that is totally inadequate to the task of the adolescent individuation process. The regression to seriously defective ego organisation of early childhood will turn a developmental impasse, so typical of adolescence, into a temporary or permanent psychotic illness.

The degree of early ego inadequacy often does not become apparent until adolescence. Blos (1967) describes this as the nuclear pathology flaring up once more, adding that the failure of the emotional

disengagement from the family during adolescence shows the extent to which these children have been living on borrowed ego strength in the intervening years.

The incapacity to separate from internal objects except by detachment, rejection and debasement is subjectively experienced as alienation. Affective loneliness is demonstrated by the pressing need to do things "for kicks" and also by the need to seek solitude and splendid isolation where affective states of great intensity are felt and believed, as an attempt to escape affective loneliness, the feeling associated with alienation.

2.7.1.3 The sub-phases of adolescent individuation

Mahler's observations of what makes up "ordinary devoted mothering" through each sub-phase is helpful in understanding ways to facilitate the second individuation process.

As Mahler observed for infants, a stage of normal symbiosis is absolutely critical for separation-individuation sub-phases to proceed. Similarly for adolescents, says Kroger (1989) if there has been a sense of security provided by a significant overlap between self and parental representation since the end of pre-Oedipal stages, the removal of that overlap is now possible in adolescence.

Differentiation Sub-phase

In normative adolescent development, the differentiation process begins of its own accord as the adolescent begins to move beyond the boundaries of the family and the early infantile object ties. Crucial adult attitudes towards the adolescent at this time include understanding the new needs for distance and independent action and not retaliating because of the increased withdrawal as well as seeing the emerging adolescent as an individual in their own right and not as an extension of one's self.

As with the infant, the adolescent's use of transitional objects can assist in their efforts to relinquish infantile object ties.

Delayed differentiation from internalised parental representation are seen when the adolescent's actions are aimed at eliciting parental approval, and thereby gaining narcissistic gratification and self-esteem. Such an adolescent is struggling with the removal of parental ego-strength and the transition to seeing himself as separate from his parents

Premature differentiation is characterised by separation which cannot keep pace with individuation which says Kroger, (1989) may stem from a fear of engulfment by the internalised parent. Consequently, the ego strength of the adolescent is insufficient to support the push towards autonomous functioning.

Practising sub-phase

The practising adolescent shows continued effort to test the intrapsychic structure permitting more autonomous functioning. As the toddler was assisted at this time with increased locomotor abilities, so too the adolescent is able to move further into the world beyond because of increasing independence and

autonomous functioning. A balance between support of exploration and limit setting of that exploration is important to provide the optimal conditions for resolution in this sub-phase of adolescence.

Too much freedom for the adolescent makes demands on the still establishing ego of the adolescent. Too many limitations, threatens the adolescence drive towards autonomy and increases the fear of engulfment by the infantile object.

Rapprochement sub-phase

This sub-phase is marked by swings between a desire for distance and renewed efforts for closeness as the adolescent seeks to return to the overlap of internalised self and object of earlier stages of development.

The ability of adults to maintain their own ground against the onslaught of adolescent regressive and progressive development is crucial for the adolescent. If the caregiver is vulnerable to adolescent assault, which is in defense against the infantile regressive pulls, they will be unable to remain emotionally available to the adolescent. The adolescent will not be able to return to the primary object for re-fuelling and may experience this as abandonment by the primary object.

Libidinal object constancy

Mahler (cite Tyson 1996) said that object constancy means that "the maternal image has become intrapsychically available to the child in the same way that the actual mother had been libidinally available, for sustenance, comfort and love" (p175)

For the adolescent, this stages involves a consolidation of structural reorganisation, where the adolescent sees himself as separate from the primary object, but still connected to that object. In times of anxiety or distress, the adolescent is able to draw on an internalised image of the primary object in order to proceed through the state of anxiety.

Brandt (1977 cite Kroger 1989) states

"The identity crisis of adolescence is thus caused not only because it is hard for the adolescent to find himself, but because in the process he must find himself alone....The experience of identity is of finding oneself painfully separated from one's accustomed environment, alone and forced to rely on one's own resources. The experience of separation from the first love object, mother, and the sensation of aloneness is one of the factors in the creation of a sense of identity. Without this separation no true autonomy or independence of the ego or superego is possible, and hence no real sense of identity can be achieved" (p78)

2.7.2 REWORKING AND MASTERING CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

Childhood offers many opportunities for emotional injury, the impact of which depends both on the extent of the danger itself as well as the child's own vulnerability to such assault. Mastering childhood trauma is a life-long task, because life situations are often set up which, in effect, recreate the original injury. In so doing an opportunity for mastery and resolution is provided. Blos (1963) saw adolescence as a time when "a considerable portion of this task is being accomplished" (p132).

Infantile traumas are not removed by the close of adolescence, but instead are optimally integrated into the ego and experienced as life tasks. In optimal resolution, the individual is able to find satisfying ways of coping with what was originally an unmanageable childhood experience. Such resolutions of residual trauma contribute to a heightened sense of self-esteem.

Infantile traumas which are not resolved may lead to a reactive character (identity) formation through avoidances, phobias, compulsions and inhibitions. Such adolescents are not able to come to terms with the trauma and remain under the trauma's directive in defensive manoeuvres during following years (Kroger 1989).

2.7.3 EGO CONTINUITY

Blos (1967) regards ego continuity as critical to character (identity) formation in that development can only be continued if the adolescent ego succeeds in establishing a historical continuity in its realm. Where a child must accept a distorted reality in order to survive, a lack of ego continuity results because of the denial of one's own experience and a lack of sense of inner continuity and sameness. It is only during late adolescence that a capacity to form one's own view of the past, present and future emerges. Thus, character (identity) formation at the end of adolescence is dependent upon the framework provided by ego continuity.

2.7.4 SEXUAL IDENTITY

A sexual identity, a sense of masculinity or femininity, needs to be established during adolescence. In order to establish a sexual identity, Blos viewed adolescence as a necessary regressive state for the completion of phallic stage Oedipal issues. Renewed Oedipal strivings, however, are experienced at a different level during adolescence and are seen not to be repeated, but rather completed, during adolescence. (Blos 1979)

Resolution during adolescence involves addressing both positive and negative Oedipal components. A child's sexual love for the parent of the same sex is seen as the Negative Oedipus Complex, while love for the opposite-sex parent is seen as the Positive Oedipal Complex. Blos believed that it was the positive complex that found some resolution during childhood, with children being left to resolve the negative complex during adolescence.

The optimal movement of the adolescent through these four stages and the resolution of each of these stages, allows for a sense of individual character to form, where there is integration rather than denial of previous experiences into the identity or character of the individual.

2.8 CONCLUSION

"She looked from one to the other, and she saw them established to her safety, and she was free... Her father and her mother now met to the span of the heavens, and she, the child, was free to play in the space beneath, between".

DH Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (cite Josselson 1996)

Consistent and caring early attachment between the mother and the young infant provide a basis for the child to begin his journey towards separateness and independence from his parents. Mahler (1968,1971, 1979, 1986; Mahler *et al* 1975) describes a process of separation-individuation of the infant from the mother.

Through this process, the young child will come to be able to be apart from the mother, retaining an inner image of the mother who can comfort, console and be present, even when absent. The optimal resolution of this process enables the child to move onto further developmental stages, with which he is equipped to deal.

Blos (1963, 1967, 1979,1983), drawing on Mahler's stages of development, described adolescence, in its totality, as a second separation-individuation process. The adolescent has another opportunity to work through earlier issues that may not have been resolved as he progresses towards seeking out his own sense of character. Character formation, as described by Blos, involves the resolution of at least four challenges in order for identity to develop and stabilise at the close of adolescence.

Resolution of these challenges, within the context of connectedness with parents, is a journey characterised by ambivalence, regression to earlier behaviours and finally by progression towards new ways of behaving, relating to others and an understanding of oneself as separate, yet connected to significant others. Optimal resolution of the second separation-individuation process enables the adolescent to move into young adulthood, equipped and able to deal with the developmental challenges that lie ahead.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research design, the study population and sample, sampling procedure, data collection procedure and data analysis strategy will be discussed. The Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA) will be discussed and an explanation of each of the SITA sub-categories and how they are hypothesised to relate to Mahler's stages of early development as well as how they may present in adolescence will be given.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The main objective of this study is to understand what issues, within the separation-individuation process of adolescence, the students are experiencing difficulties with and whether race, standard and gender impact on these issues. Such an understanding would be significant in determining how the school can better respond to the needs of these students as they work through this stage of development.

The Separation-Individuation Test for Adolescence (SITA) (Levine, Green & Millon 1986) was used as the instrument of measurement. This instrument has been tested and noted for reliability and validity but not within the South African context.

Such a design, making use of a validated questionnaire, can be considered to be a quantitative-descriptive design.

3.3 STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLE

3.3.1 Study Population

A population can be defined as the "total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen" (de Vos 1998: 190) This study's population will be male and female adolescents attending a high school in the Western Cape. The population ranges in age from 13 to 19, which represents early, middle and late adolescence. The entire study population numbers 800.

3.3.2 The Sample

According to Arkava and Lane (de Vos 1998) a sample is the element of the population considered for inclusion in the study. The sample is described in an attempt to explain a particular facet of the population and should be representative of the population in that experiences, beliefs, and changes of the sample can be assumed to be similar for the whole population (Spector 1981).

Thus, a key principle in choosing a sample is that of representativeness. The degree of representativeness of the sample will impact on the degree to which the research results can be made applicable to the general population.

3.3.2.1 Sample Size

In order for quantitative research to be considered useful, it is important to ensure that the sample size is adequate so as to be able to relate the findings back to the population from which the sample was chosen. Seaberg (1988) and Grinnell and Williams (1990) state that in most cases a 10% sample should be adequate for controlling sampling errors.

In this study, 10 male and 10 female students were selected in each standard, from standards six to ten. In addition, a further 25 black students were selected from the general population of the study, across all standards. The initial sample chosen totalled 125 students. Taking into account subject mortality in this study, the final sample size was 120 subjects.

The final sample was made up of the following groupings.

Std 6 males	n=9
Std 6 females	n=10
Std 7 males	n=10
Std 7 females	n=10
Std 8 males	n=9
Std 8 females	n=9
Std 9 male	n=10
Std 9 females	n=10
Std 10 males	n=9
Std 10 females	n=10
Black students	n=24

Total subject n=120

3.3.2.2 Sampling Procedure

As noted earlier, representativeness is always important when generalisations are to be made to the larger population. Random sampling (de Vos 1998) is the method of ensuring that the sample is as representative as possible and ensuring that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected.

Stratified random sampling was utilised in this study which is a form of probability sampling. This kind of sampling was used to ensure that the different groups of the population, such as gender and age, are sufficiently represented (Chadwick *et al* 1984).

Stratified random sampling is the application of random sampling procedures to two or more strata of the sampling frame. In this study, the population was the school students and the sample frame was the school

enrollment list. Stratification is based on mutually exclusive categories or strata of the relevant variables. In this study three categories or strata were selected, namely, boys in standards six to ten, girls in standard six to ten, and black students in the school.

Random sampling procedure was then applied to all strata with the use of a random sample table. The procedure used was as follows:

1. Received separate alphabetised lists of boys and girls from standards six to ten.
2. Numbered the students in these lists.
3. Utilized the random sample table to select the sample.
4. Selected 10 boys and 10 girls from each standard.

The procedure to select the black students from the entire population was as follows:

1. Extracted all the black students from the entire population.
2. Numbered them.
3. Utilised the random sample table to select the sample.
4. Selected 25 students from the population.

This sample reflects the make up of the black student population in the school i.e. there are more black standard sixes in the sample than standard tens because there are more black standard sixes in the population.

3.4 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

As directed by the SITA (Levine *et al* 1986) a survey method, making use of a questionnaire, was employed in this study to gather quantitative data.

Students, who were randomly selected from the school population were advised by the researcher both in writing and verbally, of their selection to participate in the research, when and where they should meet and what they should bring with them.

The writer collected the data at a predetermined time during the school day, when all subjects were able to be present. The majority of the sample completed the questionnaire at the same time, but individually, with no consultation with one another and limited consultation with the writer. The few students who were absent completed the questionnaire at a later stage.

3.5 MEASURING INSTRUMENT

3.5.1 The Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA)

The Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (Levine *et al* 1986) is a 103-item self-report inventory that poses a series of attitudinal statements about relationships with parents, teachers and peers with regard to life issues (Levine & Saintonge 1993). The respondents are asked to indicate the degree to which each item

is "always true for me" or "strongly agree" to "never true for me" or "strongly disagree" on a 5-point Likert scale (Kroger and Green 1994). The maximum score that can be achieved for any sub-category is 50.

The SITA's current form consists of nine sub-scales, each conceptually linked to a specific derivative of the early childhood separation-individuation process as explicated by Mahler (Levine & Saintonge 1993, Levine *et al* 1986). Blos (1979) suggests that adolescence is a second individuation process, where issues of the first separation-individuation process, which were not adequately resolved at that stage, are re-evoked and an opportunity to rework and resolve those issues in adolescence is provided.

Thus, the SITA attempts to measure "resolutions of Mahler's separation-individuation phases as they might express themselves during later developmental periods" (Levine *et al* 1986). In so doing it highlights areas of the adolescents' development that are being experienced as difficult.

It is important, therefore, to have a clear understanding of what each of the sub-categories mean and which phase of the separation-individuation process they are thought to relate to. In addition, it is important to understand what might have contributed to that phase of development not being adequately resolved initially.

The following section details the understanding of each of the sub-categories as delineated by Levine *et al* (1986). The first section describes how the particular sub-category may present itself in adolescence, followed by a description of where the issues are thought to arise from in terms of Mahler's phases of early development.

3.5.1.1 Dependency Denial

Dependency (or need) Denial assesses the degree to which individuals attempt to deny or avoid dependency needs. Such individuals are thought to be defending against anxiety associated with separation and may respond by rejecting or failing to understand feelings of closeness, friendship, or love (Levine *et al* 1986, Kroger & Green 1994). The individual will deny or avoid any acknowledgement of dependency needs, associated to feelings of closeness, friendship or love, because of their anxiety of then being separated, either physically or emotionally, from the person on whom they are dependent.

These defensive strategies of avoiding or denying dependency needs are thought to arise from mechanical or unpredictable treatment of the child by the mother during the symbiotic phase of early development. The child is not able to be certain that his needs will be adequately acknowledged or gratified and so will learn to defend against such needs, because of the uncertainty of the response.

Alternative defensive strategies could emerge from parasitic, impinging interactions of the mother towards the child, where the anxiety of being separated from the mother is so intense that it becomes "safer" to deny and avoid needs. In this way, he avoids the risk of being separated from the gratifier of the needs because of the fear that his needs will be experienced as too demanding by the mother.

The adolescent who fears that his needs will not be adequately acknowledged or gratified, will attempt to deny or avoid any expression of such needs, preferring to appear to manage on his own.

3.5.1.2 Nurturance Seeking, Teacher Enmeshment and Peer Enmeshment

Nurturance Seeking sub-category assesses the need for seeking dependent gratification or intensely close, merged interpersonal relationships with a parental figure.

Teacher Enmeshment reflects the desire for intense, merged relationships with teachers.

Peer Enmeshment reflects the desire for intense, merged relationships with peers.

Nurturance Seeking, Peer Enmeshment and Teacher Enmeshment are hypothesised to represent the residual effects of the symbiotic phase in Mahler's developmental scheme (Mahler *et al* 1975). Teacher and Peer Enmeshment are seen to address the issue of enmeshment, while Nurturance Seeking addresses the issue of dependency. Both dependency and enmeshment are aspects of the symbiotic period but are seen to become differentially manifest during adolescence and therefore need to be assessed and targeted differently (McClanahan & Holmbeck 1992).

The symbiotic phase (Mahler *et al* 1975) describes a state of undifferentiation between the mother and child, where the child is slowly becoming aware that need-satisfaction is not provided by self, but comes from a primary object (the mother) outside the self. This developing awareness is seen as the cracking of the autistic shell that protected the child from external stimuli. During this phase, the mother needs to act as a protective barrier between the external world and the child, ensuring that the child is not prematurely exposed to external stress traumata.

Should the mother not provide this protective barrier for the child, or provide it in a mechanical or unpredictable manner, the child will need to prematurely seek out his own mechanisms of defending against the various stress traumata present in his environment. Alternatively, the mother may provide too much of a protective barrier, never enabling the child to begin to develop appropriate mechanisms of defense to deal with external stresses and so remains too enmeshed with the mother, having not been able to become differentiated from the mother.

The mother needs to achieve a balance in meeting her child's dependency needs and enabling her child to begin to develop his own means of satisfying his needs as he recognises that he is separate from the primary object.

So too with the adolescent, the parents need to achieve a balance between meeting the adolescent's dependency needs, while enabling him to move outwards from the family, seeking his own sense of independence and identity.

3.5.1.3 Practising-Mirroring

Practising-Mirroring (or self-centredness) describes the degree of narcissism or self-centredness experienced by the respondent. McClanahan & Holmbeck (1992) suggest that this sub-category also reflects positive self-esteem and feelings of self-efficacy rather than only feelings of narcissism and self-absorption.

This sub-category is hypothesised to assess the residual effects of Mahler's practising phase in the separation-individuation process. (Levine *et al* 1986) During this phase of development, the young child begins to explore his world more fully as he is able physically to move away from the mother by crawling, creeping and righting himself. It is the growth of the autonomous ego apparatuses within the child, while in close proximity to the mother, which encourages a sense of accomplishment and positive self-esteem within the child.

The role of the mother at this stage is to encourage and assist the child in his movement away from her and his exploration of the world around him. When the mother expresses excitement, approval and other positive responses to the child's attempts, he learns to feel positive and encouraged about his movements away from the mother. If the mother expresses disapproval, fails to assist the child, thereby encouraging premature development, or expresses great anxiety at the child's attempts to explore, the child will either develop a premature sense of self-efficacy and ability to manage, or a limited understanding of his abilities.

Where disapproval for independent strivings is experienced, the child faces the dilemma of following his own desires and losing the approval of the mother or doing what the mother wants and maintaining the approval and love of the mother.

So too does the adolescent need to know that he is supported and encouraged by his parents to explore beyond the boundaries of the family, without forcing a premature sense of having to manage without the support of the parents.

3.5.1.4 Engulfment Anxiety

Engulfment Anxiety describes individuals who are particularly fearful of close interpersonal relationships and who view them as threatening to their sense of independence and selfhood. There is a fear of being controlled or enveloped by a significant other whom they perceive to be impinging upon their autonomy, and therefore losing their autonomy.

This sub-category is hypothesised to measure residual effects of the re-engulfment fear felt by the toddler during rapprochement which is re-experienced during adolescence. (Levine *et al* 1986) The fear of re-engulfment during rapprochement is thought to stem from the toddler's renewed dependency needs which create merging fantasies within the toddler, combined with the experience of the mother as excessively intrusive or enveloping during the early symbiotic phase.

In adolescence, Engulfment Anxiety may be experienced when the adolescent seeks out gratification of dependency needs, but fears that his movement towards autonomy will be prevented by the parents being too over-protective towards him, because of the expression of his dependency needs.

3.5.1.5 Separation Anxiety

Separation Anxiety assesses the degree of distress experienced in losing emotional or physical contact with important others. Associated feelings can be rejection, abandonment or desertion as well as anxiety or depression due to actual, anticipated or perceived separation (Levine *et al* 1986).

This sub-category is hypothesised to measure residual effects of the intense separation anxiety felt by the toddler during rapprochement, and which is re-experienced by the separating adolescent. Levine *et al* (1986) suggests that the increased separation anxiety of rapprochement arises from the increased cognitive and physical ego functions of the child, which allow for greater realisation of his separateness. This is also seen in children who broke from the symbiotic tie to their mother prematurely and in children whose mothers were less than optimally available to them during this phase of development.

During rapprochement the toddler both needs the mother and her assurances of love, and simultaneously pushes her away. It is vital for the mother to tolerate this shadowing and darting-away behaviour pattern of her toddler, without creating a sense of guilt or fear of loss of her love because of his independent strivings or a fear of being re-engulfed because of his need of her.

The mother who cannot tolerate this behaviour, and consequently evokes fears of loss or re-engulfment, forces the child to make a choice between either losing his growing sense of independence or the love of his mother. It is this dilemma which is known as the rapprochement crisis.

The developmental expectation of increasing independence from parents may be experienced by some adolescents as separation anxiety. This anxiety may be heightened if the expectation of independence is premature, suddenly imposed upon the adolescent or is something with which they are threatened.

3.5.1.6 Rejection Expectancy

Rejection Expectancy was designed to assess perceived emotional callousness or indifference from significant others. It is hypothesised to reflect the residual effects from early separation-individuation phases of future borderline and narcissistic patients. (Kroger & Green 1994)

It is linked to the rapprochement sub-phase where the toddler is struggling between the desire for closeness with the mother, and also a desire to explore his wider environment. How the mother responds to these explorations will impact on the resolution of the pull towards the symbiotic orbit of earlier sub-phases. The mother who encourages exploration and therefore the toddler's movement towards separation and who is available for emotional refuelling will allow for a sense of security to develop within the toddler. The mother who resents and struggles with this movement towards independence and who threatens withdrawal of her love and support evokes fear of rejection and abandonment for the toddler should he pursue his independence.

For the adolescent, a sense of rejection may be experienced if they feel that their parents are not supportive of their independent strivings by either not responding to them or being critical of them.

3.5.1.7 Healthy Separation

Healthy Separation measures the resolution of conflicts associated with the adolescent separation-individuation process. Particular reference is paid to the individual's ability to integrate dependency and independence needs, similarities with and differences from others, and the capacity for intimacy without fearing loss of autonomy (Kroger & Green 1994).

Healthy Separation is hypothesised to represent individuals who have progressed successfully to the consolidation phase of separation-individuation during childhood and who are thus able to achieve a similar kind of consolidation of self and object images during adolescence.

Healthy Separation in adolescence is seen in the ability of the adolescent to be both separate from, yet connected to significant others.

3.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

3.6.1 Reliability

Reliability is a crucial characteristic of measurement and refers to the consistency of a measuring device (Spector 1981). Reliability tests whether the instrument being used will produce the same results every time.

3.6.2 Validity

Validity of an instrument means that it measures what it is designed to measure (Spector 1981).

Validity itself is a simple concept, but the determination of the validity of a measure is elusive (Spector 1981). There are three procedures for measurement of validity. The first and most simple procedure is face validity, which is an agreement among observers that the procedure "appears" to measure the concept. The second procedure is construct validity. This indicates whether a measured variable shows the same relationship to other variables as might be predicted on the basis of theory. A third procedure is criterion validity. Here an outside criterion is compared with the new measure in order to demonstrate validity. The criterion may be another measure of the same concept, which has a more widespread acceptance than the measure being validated.

Validity and reliability go hand in hand and are two crucial properties of instruments. An instrument can be reliable but not valid, but to be valid an instrument must be reliable. Additionally, the level of reliability sets a limit to how valid an instrument can be (Spector 1981).

3.6.3 Validation Process of the SITA

Levine *et al* (1986) developed the SITA through a three-step validation model, following Loevinger's 1957 model, which emphasises theory as a basis for all steps in the validation process. The three steps are:

1. **Theoretical-substantive** – the evaluation of the theoretical match between items and their intended scale dimensions.
2. **Internal-structural validation** –to determine that the internal properties of the test (relationships among items and scales) are consistent with the theory upon which the test is based.
3. **External-criterion validation** – is the logical and meaningful correspondence of scale scores to extra-test measure of relevant concepts (Levine *et al* 1986; Levine & Saintonge 1993).

Further research has been done into the validity of the SITA (Kroger & Green 1994; Levine & Saintonge 1993) which demonstrates the validity of the measuring instrument. Fishler, Sperling & Carr (1990) describe the SITA as "compelling theoretically and apparently structurally valid", concluding that "criterion validity remains to be further investigated" (p509)

Comrey (1988), however, notes that validation of an instrument is an ongoing process and "there is no point at which the scale developer's work has been completed because there is never too much validity information" (p761).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY

When there are a number of factors in a study and the researcher wants to analyse for statistical significance of the differences among the means (averages) of the factors, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test is used.

The ANOVA is used to test for significant differences amongst MEANS. The test looks at the amount of variability, or the differences, between the means of the groups compared with the amount of variability among the individual scores within each group. In other words, it analyses the variance between groups versus the variance within groups (Kranzler & Moursund 1995).

In this study, a Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was administered. MANOVA is an extension of ANOVA, analyzing variables in relation to a number of other factors.

MANOVA determined the statistical significance of race, gender and standard and how they affect the 9 sub-categories as outlined in the SITA. In so doing it highlighted which of the nine sub-categories were experienced as difficult by the adolescents.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present the average scores obtained by the students, according to their standard groupings, in the nine sub-categories of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescents.

The nine sub-categories of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescents (SITA) are:

- Healthy Separation
- Nurturance-Seeking
- Peer Enmeshment
- Dependency Denial
- Engulfment Anxiety
- Practising-Mirroring
- Separation Anxiety
- Rejection Expectancy
- Teacher Enmeshment

The three factors that were considered to potentially impact on the scores obtained for these sub-categories are:

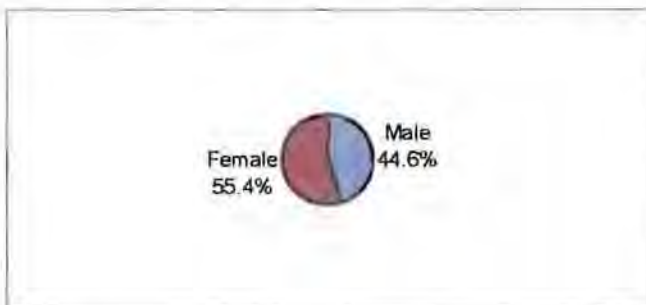
- Standard
- Gender
- Race

The factor that is statistically the most significant in relation to the nine sub-categories will also be highlighted.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF SAMPLE POPULATION

4.2.1 GENDER DISTRIBUTION

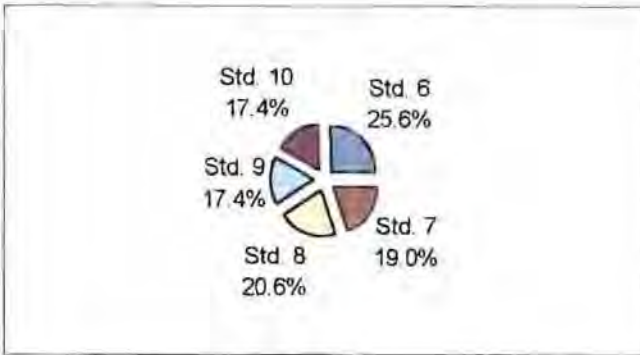
DIAGRAM ONE: Gender distribution (n=120)



Sixty-six (55.4%) were female and fifty-four (44.6%) were male.

4.2.2 STANDARD DISTRIBUTION

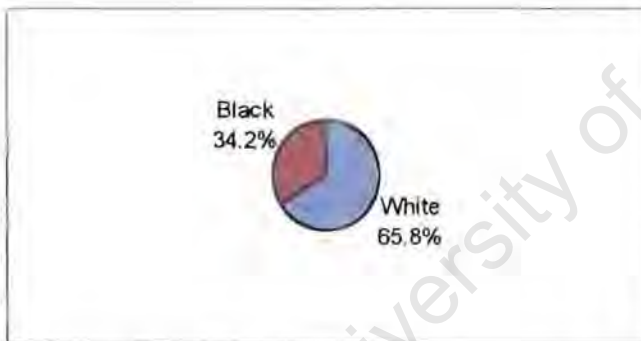
DIAGRAM TWO: Standard Distribution (n=120)



31 students (25.6%) were in standard six, 23 students (19.0%) in standard seven, 26 students (20.6%) in standard eight, 20 students (17.4%) in standard nine and 20 students (17.4%) in standard ten.

4.2.3 RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

DIAGRAM THREE: Racial Distribution (n=120)



45 students (37.5%) were black and 75 students (62.5%) were white. This distribution reflects the general make-up of the research population.

4.3 STANDARD, GENDER AND RACE

The Multiple-Analysis Of Variance (MANOVA) was administered to determine how the three factors of standard, gender and race affected the nine sub-categories of SITA. MANOVA also determines which of these factors is most significant in relation to the nine sub-categories. When a MANOVA is conducted, standard comes up as the most significant factor where $p < .064$, making this a borderline significant result. (Anything $< .050$ is considered to be significant on average.)

When a Single Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) is conducted, standard becomes much more significant ($p < .0060$). It becomes more significant because it is not taking into account the effects of gender and race, which on their own are not significant, but when included, impact on the average scores.

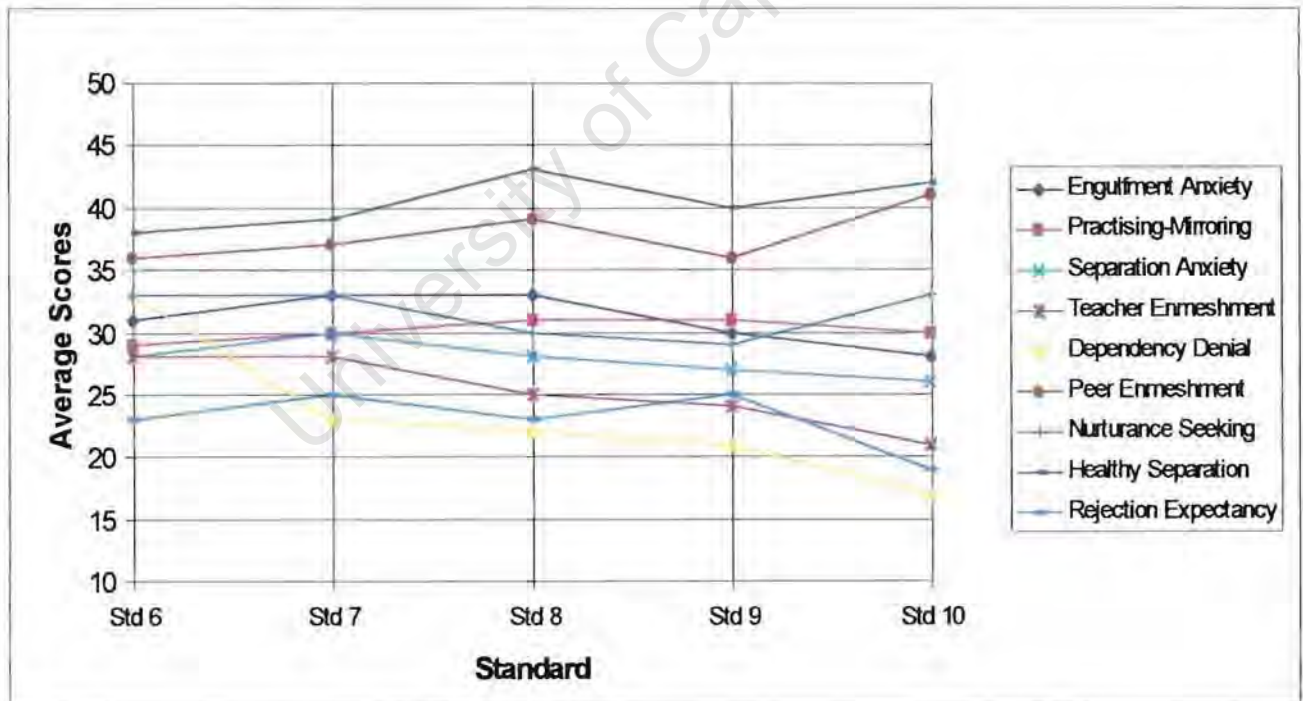
Race and gender are two cultural factors that potentially impact on the separation-individuation process that may affect with which issues students experience difficulties. Standard, which also reflects age differences, was also viewed as an important factor because developmental theory highlights specific tasks for specific ages. Thus, if there were a significant difference in standard, the measuring tool would be further validated because it is based in developmental theory and its results support those general developmental theoretical trends.

4.4 AVERAGE SCORES FOR SUB-CATEGORIES

In presenting the results, standard will be presented first as it was found to be most significant, followed by gender and race, which are not significant, but are interesting to note.

4.4.1 STANDARD

DIAGRAM FOUR: Average scores for sub-categories for each standard
Significant difference for standard $P < .0060$



HEALTHY SEPARATION

A higher score in this category indicates movement towards the integration of dependent and independent needs.

Healthy Separation measures the resolution of conflicts associated with the adolescent separation-individuation process, particularly focussing on the individual's ability to integrate dependency and independence needs and the capacity for intimacy without fearing loss of autonomy. (Kroger and Green; 1994 and Levine et al; 1986)

Healthy Separation across all standards achieved the highest average score, with the Standard 8 receiving the highest average score of 43. Std 9 and 10 students had an average score of 40 and 42 respectively. Std 7 have an average score of 39 and Std 6 an average score of 38.

PEER ENMESHMENT

A higher score in this category indicates movement away from parents as the primary source of support for the individual, towards close, merged relationships with peers.

Peer Enmeshment reflects the desire for intense, merged relationships with peers.

Across all the standards, Peer Enmeshment reflects the second highest average score. Std 10 have the highest average score of 41 with Std 8 having an average score of 39. Std 7 have an average score of 37. Standard's 9 and 6 have an average score of 36.

ENGULFMENT ANXIETY

A higher score in this category indicates a heightened anxiety of being re-engulfed by the primary object.

This sub-category describes and assesses a fear of being controlled or enveloped by a significant other and thereby threatening the individual's sense of independence and selfhood.

Standard 7 and 8 students reflected the highest average score for Engulfment (33) which is significantly higher than the Standard 10's score of 28.

Standard 6 students had an average score of 31 with the standard 9's having an average score of 30.

NURTURANCE SEEKING

A higher score in this category reflects stronger dependency needs and the desire to seek gratification of these dependency needs from a parental figure.

Nurturance Seeking describes individuals who have strong dependency needs and assesses the need for seeking dependency gratification or intensely close, merged interpersonal relationships with a parental figure.

Standard 9 students reflected the lowest average score of 29 for this sub-category. The highest average score of 33 was reflected by the standard 6,7 and 10 students. Standard 8 students reflected an average score of 30.

PRACTISING-MIRRORING

A higher score in this category indicates a greater degree of narcissistic belief.

Practising-Mirroring or self-centredness describes individuals who possess a high degree of narcissism and self-centredness. This is often reinforced simultaneously by another person's feedback, praise or admiration (mirroring).

Standard 6 students received the lowest average score of 29. Standard 7 and 10 students received an average score of 30 and Standard 8 and 9 students an average score of 31 each.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

A higher score in this category indicates heightened anxiety about being separated from a significant other, either physically or emotionally.

This sub-category focuses on the actual or perceived distress experienced by the individual in losing emotional or physical contact with important others. This would relate to significant adults as well as peers.

Standard 10 students received the lowest average score of 26 for this sub-category. Standard 7 students had an average score of 30, with the standard 6's with a score of 28 and the Standard 8's and 9's with an average score of 28 and 27 respectively.

TEACHER ENMESHMENT

A higher score in this category reflects the wish for more close and supportive relationships with teachers.

Teacher Enmeshment reflects the desire and wish of the individual to have a close and merged relationship with teachers.

Std 6's and 7's received a higher average score of 28 for this sub-category than the Std 8's (25) and significantly higher than the Std 10's (21). The average score for Standard 9 students is 24.

REJECTION EXPECTANCY

A higher score in this category reflects a fear of being rejected by a significant other.

This sub-category assesses perceived emotional callousness or indifference from significant others.

Standard 10 students have the lowest average score of 19 for this sub-category which is significantly lower than all the other standards.

Standard 9 students have the highest average score of 25 followed by Standard 7 students with an average score of 25, standard 8's with 23 and Standard 6's with an average score of 23.

DEPENDENCY DENIAL

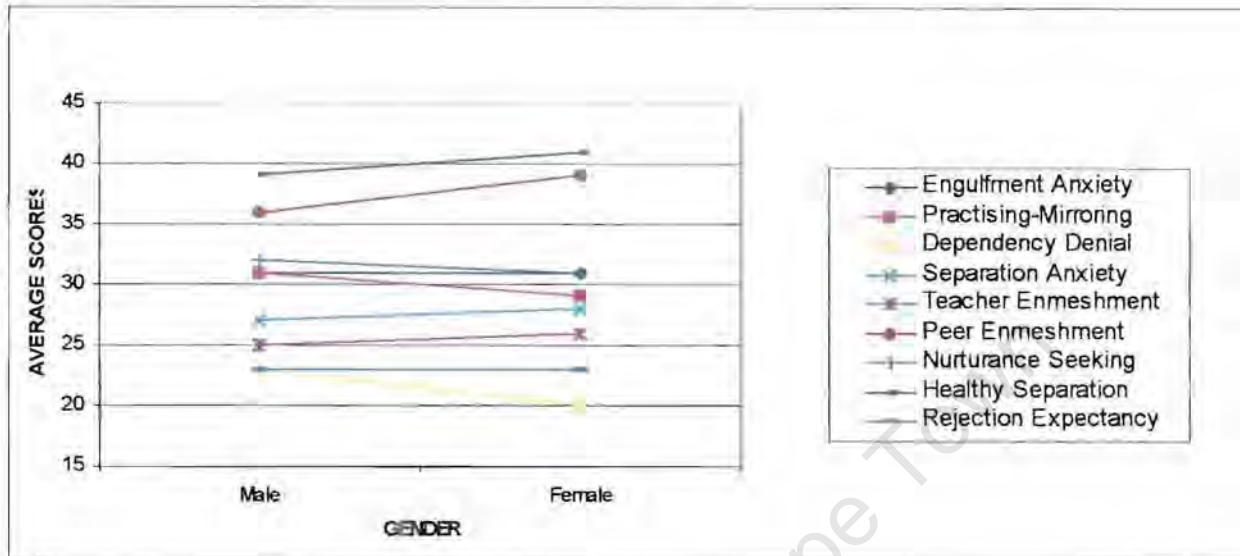
A higher score in this category indicates a greater denial or avoidance of dependency needs.

This sub-category describes the degree to which individuals attempt to deny or avoid dependency needs.

Across the standards, Dependency Denial received the lowest average scores. Standard 10 students reflect the lowest average score of 17, with standard 6 and 7 students reflecting the highest average score of 23. Standard 9's reflect an average score of 21 and Standard 8 students an average score of 22.

4.4.2 GENDER

DIAGRAM FIVE: Average Scores for sub-categories for males and females in all standards (no significant differences between genders across the standards)



Male students have an average score of 39 for Healthy Separation and 36 for Peer Enmeshment. Females have higher average scores for both of these categories with 41 for Healthy Separation and 39 for Peer Enmeshment.

For both Engulfment Anxiety and Nurturance-Seeking, females received an average score of 31, while male students received an average score of 31 for Engulfment Anxiety and 32 for Nurturance-Seeking. Male students received an average score of 31 for Practising-Mirroring and females an average score of 29.

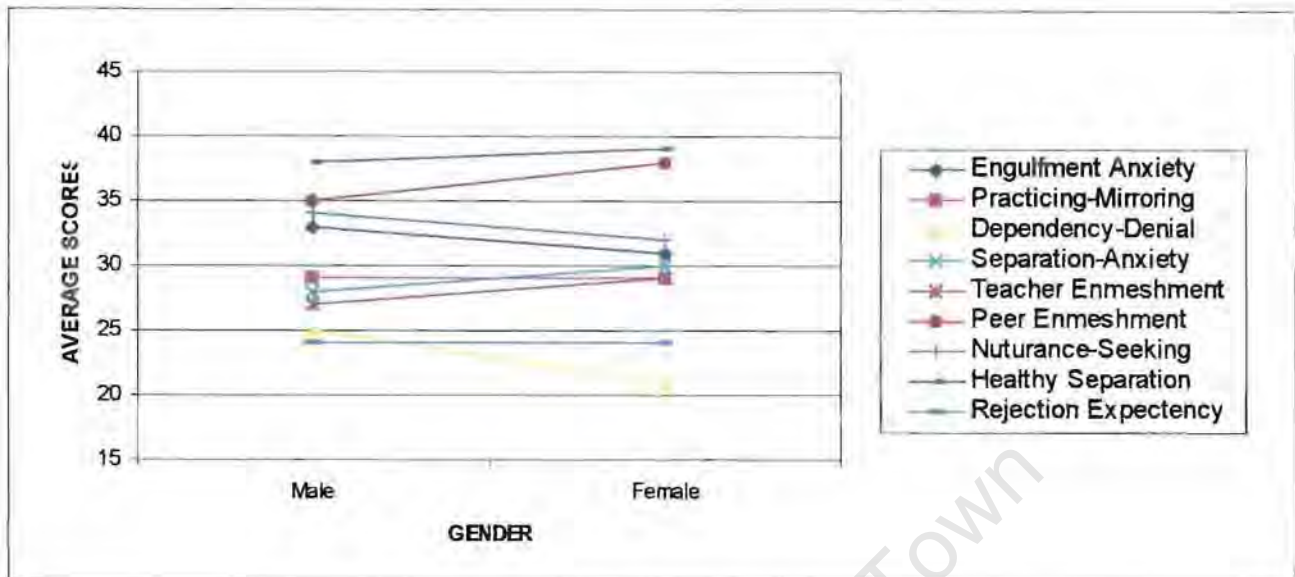
In both gender groups, Dependency Denial and Rejection Expectancy received the lowest scores. Females received an average score of 20 for Dependency Denial and 23 for Rejection Expectancy. Males received an average score of 23 for both these sub-categories.

Females scored an average score of 26 for Teacher Enmeshment and an average score of 28 for Separation Anxiety. Males received an average score of 25 for Teacher Enmeshment and 27 for Separation Anxiety.

When the genders are grouped into two separate standard groups, namely Standards 6 and 7 together and Standards 8 to 10 together, there are some changes in the results indicating more specific differences within gender in relation to standards.

DIAGRAM SIX:

Average scores for sub-categories for males and females in standard 6 and 7 (no significant difference within gender)

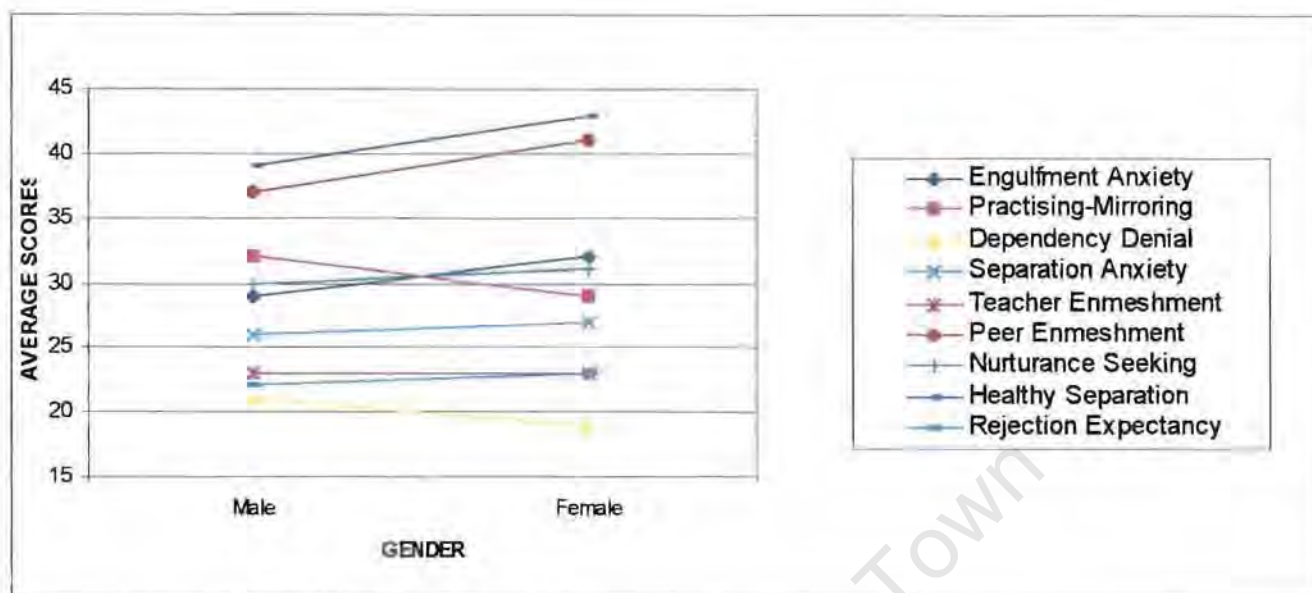


For males and females in Std 6 and 7, Healthy Separation has the highest average scores of 38 and 39 respectively, followed by Peer Enmeshment for both males and females with scores of 35 and 38 respectively. Male students have a score of 34 for Nurture-Seeking and an average Engulfment Anxiety score of 33. Females had a lower average score of 32 for Nurture-Seeking and an average score of 31 for Engulfment Anxiety.

For both males and females, Rejection Expectancy has the lowest average score of 24. Females demonstrate a higher average score of 30 for Separation Anxiety than do the males (28), but a lower average score of 21 for Dependency Denial than the males (25).

Female students demonstrate a higher average score of 29 for Teacher Enmeshment than their male counterparts (27), while for both groupings, they have an average score of 29 for Practising-Mirroring.

DIAGRAM SEVEN: Average Scores for sub-categories for males and females in standard 8-10 (no significant difference within gender)

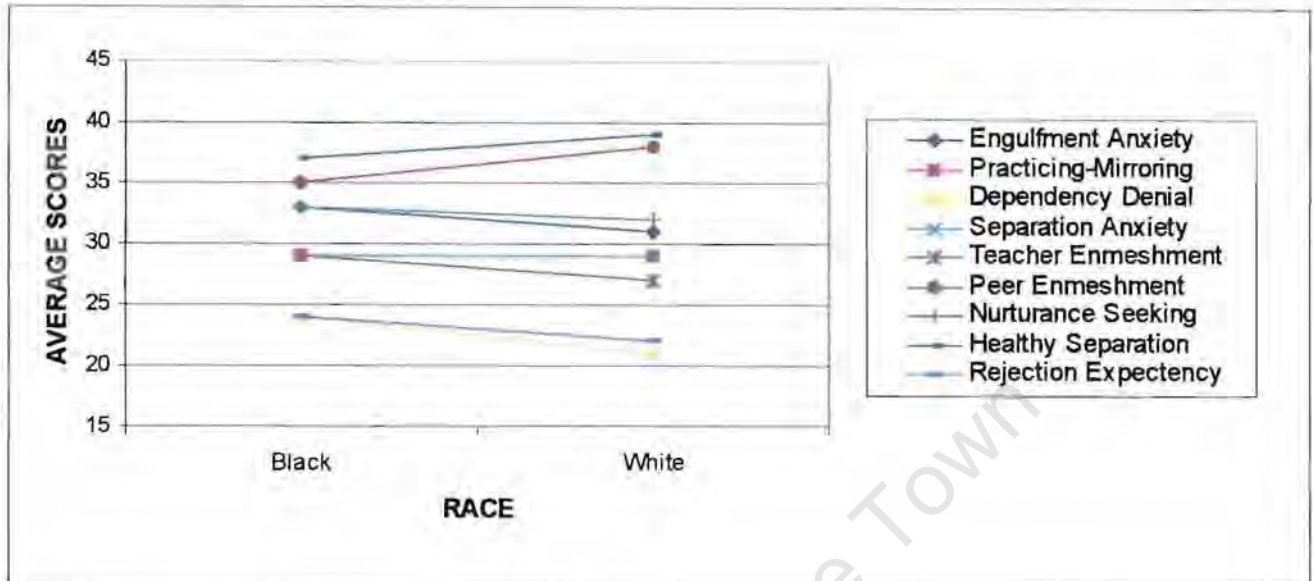


Female students in Std 8-10 receive a higher average score of 43 for Healthy Separation (39) an average score of 41 for Peer Enmeshment as compared to the males who received average scores of 39 and 37 respectively. Female students have a higher average score of 32 for Engulfment Anxiety, than their male peers, who have an average score of 29. Nurturance-Seeking reflects an average score for males and females of 30 and 31 respectively.

The two lowest scores for this grouping are for Rejection Expectancy (22 and 23 for males and females respectively) and Teacher Enmeshment, where both reflect an average score of 23. The average score for Dependency-Denial for males is 21 and for females it is 19. For Separation-Anxiety, males received an average score of 26 and females an average score of 27.

4.4.3 RACE

DIAGRAM EIGHT: Average scores for sub-categories for black and white students in standards 6 and 7 (no significant differences within race)



In the grouping of black and white students in Standards 6 and 7, Healthy Separation receives the highest average score within both groups with a score of 39 for white students and 37 for black students. For black students, Peer Enmeshment has an average score of 35 and for white students an average score of 38.

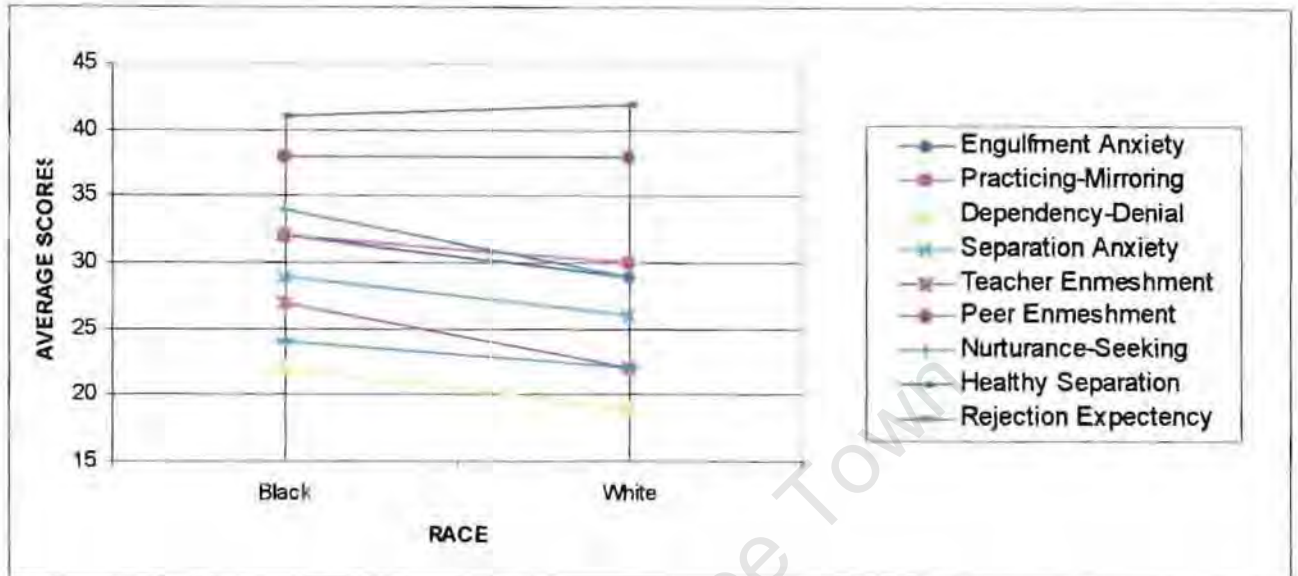
Black students have an average score of 33 for Nurturance-Seeking and an average score of 33 for Engulfment Anxiety. White students have an average score of 32 for Nurturance-Seeking and an average score of 31 for Engulfment Anxiety.

For white students, the lowest average score is 21 for Dependency Denial, followed by 22 for Rejection Expectancy. For black students, the lowest average score was for Rejection Expectancy and Dependency-Denial (24 for both)

Both groups of students received an average score of 29 for Practising-Mirroring and Separation-Anxiety. Teacher Enmeshment received a higher score of 29 for black students, with white students receiving a score of 27 in this sub-category.

DIAGRAM NINE:

Average scores for sub-categories for black and white students in standards 8-10 (no significant difference within race)



In the grouping of students in standards 8 to 10, Healthy Separation has the highest average score of 42 for white students and 41 for black students. Peer Enmeshment for both groups receives an average score of 38. For black students, Practising-Mirroring receives an average score of 32 and for white students an average score of 30.

White students received a lower average score of 29 for Nurturance-Seeking than black students, whose average score was 34.

Black students have a higher average score of 32 for Engulfment Anxiety than white students who received an average score of 29.

The lowest average score for white students is for Dependency Denial (19) followed by Rejection Expectancy (22). The lowest average score for black students is also for Dependency-Denial (22) followed by an average score of 24 for Rejection Expectancy.

Black students have a higher average score of 29 for Separation Anxiety than white students (26). The black students average score for Teacher Enmeshment is 27, which is higher than that of the white student's average score of 22 for the same sub-category.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to understand the difficulties students are experiencing within the separation-individuation process of adolescence which could be impacting on the optimal process of growing up.

The SITA was administered to 120 students from Std 6 to 10. The results were analysed using Multivariate Analysis of Variance to determine the impact of the three factors of gender, standard and race on the sub-categories as mentioned by SITA.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

More than half the students in the sample were female (55.5%). Almost two-thirds of the sample were white students (65.8%).

One quarter (25.6%) of the sample were standard six students, with the majority of the black students being in standard six. This is an accurate representation of the make up of the school population both in terms of numbers in the standard as well as the racial make up of that standard.

This sample is a good representation of the distribution of standard, gender and race at this school.

PRESENTATION OF THE DISCUSSION

While each sub-category reflects a particular aspect of the separation-individuation process, the sub-categories should not be viewed in isolation, but rather understood in relation to one another. In doing this, an understanding is formed of how the different areas interact with one another and how they impact on one another. Such an understanding allows for a more holistic picture to emerge and for a more accurate understanding to develop as to with what issues the students are experiencing difficulties.

Standard, as a significant factor impacting on the sub-categories, will be discussed first.

5.3 STANDARD

5.3.1 AVERAGE SCORES PER SUB-CATEGORY WHERE THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE FOR STANDARD. (P<.0060)

HEALTHY SEPARATION

Healthy Separation across all standards, achieved the highest average score, reflecting a general trend within this sample, of movement towards a resolution of conflicts associated with the integration of dependency and independent needs and a capacity for intimacy without fearing the loss of one's autonomy.

The Std 8 students achieved the highest average score for Healthy Separation, with 95% of the group falling in the score range of 41 to 44, suggesting that, in this sample, they are the most able to resolve conflicts around integrating dependent and independent needs.

Std 6 students achieved the lowest average score for Healthy Separation indicating less movement towards resolution of conflicts of autonomy and dependency. These findings are supported by the theoretical developmental expectation that middle and late adolescents will be more independent and autonomous than early adolescents.

The range of scores as indicated by the 95% confidence level for Std 6, 9 and 10 suggests that in these groupings there are variations within the group itself in terms of ability to integrate independent and dependent needs.

For Std 7 and 8 there is a more narrow spread, suggesting more similarity within the group of integrating dependent and independent needs, although the Std 7s lower Healthy Separation score suggests that they are less resolved in general about integrating these needs than the Std 8 students.

The results of this sub-category indicate that in general this is a psychologically healthy sample of students. However, healthy separation on its own does not indicate that they are not experiencing difficulties within the overall process of separation-individuation, and so there must be an understanding of how the other 8 sub-categories impact on healthy separation in particular.

PEER ENMESHMENT

The sub-category of Peer Enmeshment, reflecting the desire within the individual for intense, merged relationships with peers (Kroger & Green 1994) follows a similar profile within the standards to that of healthy separation. The high scores reflected for this sub-category indicate

that throughout the sample there is a need and wish for close, intimate peer relationships, but that there is some variation between the standards. Blos (1967) notes that while the toddler requires the help of the mother to reach autonomy, the adolescent turns to his contemporaries to extract contact supplies, through which the primary aim is to achieve a sense of identity or of "who I am".

Levine *et al* (1986) state that peer enmeshment reflects the residual effects of Mahler *et al* (1975) stage of symbiosis, which describes a state of undifferentiation between mother and infant, where the "I" is not differentiated from the "not I". For the adolescent who demonstrates no movement towards their peers, but rather an intense need for closeness with his parents, there is a difficulty in his being able to see himself as a separate entity from the primary object.

The high scores for peer enmeshment in this sample indicate that there is a shift in focus from the family or parents as the primary objects of support, to peers. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) suggest that there is a period of disengagement from parental ties which is accompanied by a noticeable orientation toward the peer group and that this is a normal and healthy part of ego development. It is these peer relationships that the adolescent finds to be supportive in his quest for seeking his identity. Furthermore, Blos (1967) notes that the group shares, and so alleviates the individual's guilt feelings, which accompany the freeing of the individual from childhood dependencies, prohibitions and loyalties.

Std 10 reflect the highest average score for Peer Enmeshment with 95% of the group falling within the score range of 39-43. Std 8s have the second highest average score with 95% of the group falling within a score range of 36-41. Both these groups indicate that they want and seek out close relationships with their peers rather than their parents. This supports their high scores for healthy separation, suggesting greater emotional autonomy from their parents and a desire for closeness with peers.

Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) add that even though there might be a large measure of emotional autonomy in family relationships, this autonomy isn't necessarily translated to independence within the peer group. This dependence on peers, they say, may lead to a greater susceptibility to peer pressure, especially when that pressure is to do something wrong. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) go on to say that adolescents who are more emotionally autonomous from parents are least able to be autonomous in the face of peer pressure. This raises a question about the level of vulnerability and the risk of the standard 8s in relation to their peers in particular, as they present as the most emotionally autonomous (high healthy separation score) as well as being closely connected to their peers. These students are more likely to challenge both internal and external boundaries in order to feel acceptable in their peer circle, as well as to demonstrate their independence from their parents. Challenges of these boundaries might include drug and alcohol experimentation, sexual experimentation and non-conformity to general expectations.

While the Std 10 students also have a high score for peer enmeshment, their score for healthy separation is lower, suggesting less emotional autonomy from parents and that they are more able to draw on support from their parents, reducing their potential risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour. In being more able to integrate dependent and independent needs (maintaining contact with parents and peers), it is also possible that they have been more able to integrate and translate autonomy in relation to their parents to autonomy in their peer group than the standard 8 students.

Std 6 and 7 students reflected lower average scores for Peer Enmeshment, indicating that although they are wanting to be and are closely connected to their peers, there is less expression of this, possibly because there is less emotional autonomy from the parents. This is supported by the lower scores the Std 6 and 7 received for Healthy Separation and the developmental expectation that younger adolescents are more likely to be attached to their parents than older adolescents are. Steinberg & Silverberg (1986) showed in their research that emotional autonomy is strongly related to age, and that as age increases, so does emotional autonomy.

Developmentally, it would be expected that the Std 9 would closely follow the Std 10 students in terms of moving away from parents towards peers. Their lower score however, suggests some ambivalence in this group about moving towards autonomy. This can be related to the young toddler who wants to explore the world, but also does not want to lose contact with the parent in case he needs them. The Std 9s are moving towards autonomy and separation, but are indicating a greater need than both the Std 8 and 10's for connection with their parents.

ENGULFMENT ANXIETY

Engulfment Anxiety reflects the fear of being enveloped or controlled by a significant other and losing one's autonomy (Kroger & Green 1994). Levine *et al* (1986) viewed this as measuring the residual effects of the re-engulfment fear experienced during the rapprochement phase of early development.

Even though the Std 8 students reflect the highest average score for Healthy Separation and a high average score for Peer Enmeshment, they simultaneously reflect one of the highest average scores amongst the standards for Engulfment Anxiety. While Std 8 students may be striving for autonomy and reflecting an ability to integrate dependent and independent needs (Healthy Separation) and showing a strong movement towards their peers, they also fear being controlled or enveloped by the primary object/parent and losing their sense of autonomy and separateness.

Thus, this group presents with a Healthy Separation score, which could indicate premature, rather than real separation from the primary object. Their drive towards Healthy Separation seems to be underpinned by a fear of re-engulfment, rather than by a true ability to integrate dependent and independent needs, without fearing the loss of autonomy. There is a fear that if they return to the

parent for emotional "re-fuelling", they will be drawn back into a symbiotic relationship with the parent. They therefore want to be more connected and intimate with their peers, whom they view as being more supportive of, and less threatening of their push for independence and autonomy than their parents. This is supported by Kroger (1989) who notes that premature separation may result in the ego strengths of the adolescent not being adequate enough to support the push towards autonomous functioning. This may result in difficulties for the adolescent when he is faced with issues that are beyond his real ability to manage.

By comparison, Std 10 students have a significantly lower average score for Engulfment Anxiety. This possibly reflects a more accurate and stable process towards Healthy Separation, where they are more able, as with the older toddler in the rapprochement phase of separation, to integrate the need for the mother and/or parents, without fearing engulfment by them, or being abandoned if they follow a path of separateness and greater autonomy.

Std 6 and 9 students reflected the lowest average scores for Engulfment Anxiety, indicating a greater sense of freedom to approach the parent for emotional support and less of a fear that in doing this they will lose what autonomy they have gained. This supports the emerging picture for Std 6, 9 and 10 students that they are moving towards an identity separate from their parents, but where they are still able to remain connected to their parents. This is further supported by their demonstrating less of a fear of being re-engulfed by their parents and therefore more able to draw on them for support.

Std 7 and 8 students have a greater fear of being engulfed which impacts on their ability to utilise their parents as a supportive base. The danger for these students is that if the fear of re-engulfment is so strong, they may experience this lack of connection with the primary object as abandonment by the parent. This may require them to be more emotionally autonomous when in reality, they are not ready for such a high degree of autonomy.

NURTURANCE SEEKING

Nurturance Seeking describes individuals who have strong dependency needs and assesses the need for seeking gratification of dependency needs and the desire to have close or merged relationships with a parental figure. Levine *et al* (1986) hypothesised that it represented the residual effects of the symbiotic phase of early development as classified by Mahler *et al* (1975).

Std 9 students have the lowest average score for Nurturance Seeking, indicating that they do not have strong dependency needs and do not seek out gratification of their dependency needs. However, while they seem not to seek out gratification of their dependency needs by their parents, they are still able to maintain an emotional connection to their parents. This belief is supported by their lower scores for both Peer Enmeshment, and engulfment anxiety and suggests that they still

want and maintain a link with their parents and that they are not as fearful of being re-engulfed should they approach their parents for support or nurturance.

For Std 8 students, also with less strong dependency needs and a tendency not to want to seek gratification of dependency needs, a different picture emerges. Their high peer enmeshment score indicates a sense of closeness and intimacy with their peers, with whom they feel their dependency needs are being met. It would appear, with their greater surge towards emotional autonomy, that they feel more comfortable in being dependent on their peers rather than their parents. Additionally, their high anxiety about being re-engulfed if they seek out gratification of their dependency needs underlies their tendency not to want too be too close to their parents.

For the ongoing healthy development of these students it is most important that their parents are able to withstand this surge towards independence and to remain constant and present in their lives, even if the students seem not to want the contact with parents. If the parents are unable to do this, these students are at risk of remaining stuck in needing to be independent and self-sufficient, struggling to identify and have their needs met.

Even though standard 6, 7 and 10 students present with the same scores for nurturance seeking, the emerging underlying pictures appear to be different.

Std 6 students have a high Nurturance-Seeking score, suggesting strong dependency needs and indicating a desire for gratification of their dependency needs and that these needs be met through close relationships with their parents. This is supported by their low anxiety level of re-engulfment and by the indication, that although they wish for connectedness with their peers, they also wish to remain connected to their parents and to draw on their support. In their process of moving towards integrating dependent and independent needs, the Std 6s still require the support of their parents.

Std 10 students, having achieved some measure of independence and autonomy from their parents, are able to recognise their need for support and nurturance from their parents, without becoming fearful of being re-engulfed and losing their autonomy. That they are able to seek out gratification of dependency needs balances their strong pull towards their peers and reduces the risk of their being negatively influenced by their peers and feeling isolated and alienated from their parents. This is something that the Std 8 students, with their strong drive towards autonomy, closeness with their peers and high anxiety of engulfment, do not have as a protective factor.

The Std 7 students' emotional stage of growing up appropriately appears to fall between that of the standard 6 and 8 students as they present with issues that are present in both the Std 6 and 8 groups. There is an indication of some ambivalence, as also seen in the Std 9 group, about growing up and becoming more autonomous from the parents. They present with strong

dependency needs, feeling more anxious than the Std 6s about seeking gratification of those dependency needs but also less anxious than the standard 8's.

DEPENDENCY DENIAL

Levine et al (1986) view Dependency Denial as the degree to which an individual denies or avoids his dependency needs. The defensive strategy of denying or avoiding one's dependency needs is thought to arise from mechanical or unpredictable treatment during the symbiotic phase of development. During this stage the young infant needs the mother to act as a barrier between him and the external world. If the mother's behaviour is mechanical (without any real feelings for the child) or unpredictable, the infant will learn prematurely that his needs will not be adequately met. The child will either attempt to deny his needs or meet them himself and become self-sufficient at too early an age.

Dependency Denial reflects the lowest scores amongst the sub-categories and across all standards indicating that this sample, in general do not deny or avoid their dependency needs. The differences in the scores, specifically between standard 10 and standard 6 students, coincides with developmental expectations that older adolescents are less likely to deny or avoid their dependency needs. This is because there is a greater understanding and integration of dependent and independent needs. Having these dependent needs met does not mean that there is not growing autonomy.

However, as it has emerged in the discussion to this point, not all standards are able to seek out gratification of their dependency needs even though they are aware of them.

Std 10 students are most able to acknowledge their dependency needs as well as being able to seek gratification of these needs. With their low anxiety of engulfment, they are most likely able to have their needs for intimacy and connectedness met, without fearing the loss of their independence and their growing sense of self. They have begun to move out of the heightened ambivalence (reflective of the rapprochement stage of early development) towards a realisation that they can be separate, yet connected to their parents.

Std 6 and 7 students, although they express in a number of ways their need for nurturance and attachment to their parents, still do attempt to deny or avoid their dependency needs. It seems however, that their need for nurturance and support is greater than their denial of dependency needs, and so they are able to a large extent to have these needs met.

For the Std 8 and 9 students, there is some degree of avoidance and denial of their needs. The Std 8s seem to have more of a struggle in being able to seek out their parents to have their needs met. Their fear of being engulfed as well as a possible fear of the unpredictable nature of their parents'

response, prevents them from gratifying their needs and projects them prematurely, into self-sufficiency and emotional autonomy.

For the Std 9 students, again a sense of ambivalence is recognised in that they tend to avoid or deny their dependency needs, while also still wanting to be connected to their parents in order to have their needs met. It is vital for these students that their parents are able to tolerate their ambivalence and remain available to them when they do come to their parents for support and nurturance.

Ryan and Lynch (1989) view attachment to the parent as a relationship that from the very beginning permits optimal autonomy in the context of emotional support. Adolescents who come from a connected base with their parents are more able to navigate the pathway towards autonomy than those who are less connected and who struggle to have their needs met. Because the Std 9s, more so than the Std 8s, still want a connection with their parents, they are, at this stage, likely to be more able to navigate the pathway to autonomy than the Std 8s.

PRACTISING-MIRRORING

Practising-Mirroring reflects the degree of narcissism and self-centredness experienced by the individual. This sub-phase is hypothesised to assess the residual effects of the practising phase of separation-individuation (Levine *et al* 1986) as well as the attainment of narcissistic reserves in earlier phases of separation-individuation.

A healthy degree of narcissism is important so that the individual is able to determine his needs and to seek gratification of them in an appropriate manner. Development of healthy narcissism arises from the mother's ability to mirror her child's progress and movement towards greater autonomy in a positive way, while still remaining emotionally available to the child for nurturance and support.

Too much narcissism may result in an individual only being aware of their own needs and wants, without considering others. An inflated belief in self may develop resulting in the individual being unable to seek out support and encouragement, needing instead to demonstrate his self-sufficiency and therefore possibly feeling quite isolated and alienated from those around him.

Std 8 and 9 students reflect the highest average score for Practising-Mirroring suggesting a higher level of belief in their own capacity to function in the world. For the Std 8s, however, their concurrent high level of anxiety of re-engulfment, their high Healthy Separation score and their tendency to deny their dependency needs, confirms an earlier suggestion that they are at risk of becoming too self-sufficient, too early. Their higher level of narcissism could be to defend themselves against their need for nurturance and support from parents because of their underlying

fear of being re-engulfed as well as being separated from those on whom they feel dependent, such as their friends.

Std 9s, with the same score, are less at risk because of their lower scores for Engulfment Anxiety, Dependency Denial and Peer Enmeshment, indicating more of an ability to remain connected to their parents. There is therefore less of a need to be so self-sufficient.

While the average score for the Std10s is not much lower than the Std 8s, the overall picture for them indicates that their level of narcissism or self-sufficiency may be more realistic. They are more able to recognise their needs and feel less threatened about having their needs met by significant others.

Std 6s have the lowest average score for Practising-Mirroring. This ties in with the overall picture for this group, who are still more attached to and in need of their parents. These students more actively acknowledge their need for parents as indicated by a high Nurturance-Seeking score and a lower Engulfment Anxiety and Peer Enmeshment score.

Std 7s once again fall in between the average scores of Stds 6 and 8, indicating a higher level of narcissism than the younger group, but a lower level than the older group. This suggests that with their higher anxiety of re-engulfment, greater need for nurturance and less of a need for close relationships with their peers, they may well be moving towards the Std 8s and away from the Std 6s. This further suggests that the Std 8s are more at risk of isolation and alienation, and are developing earlier than has been indicated and that these risks are also present in the Std 7's.

Rice, Cole & Lapsley (1990) note that while some disengagement from family is necessary for the adolescent to attain independence, the link between these factors is not so significant that they must disengage totally. For the Std 8s in particular, but also the Std 7s, the risk is that they will disengage too much at this point, and not be able to re-engage with their family. The result will be a deep sense of rejection and alienation, pushing them towards other means of having their need for connectedness and belonging met, such as use of substances, sexual exploration and acting out, poor academic performance and other behavioural problems.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Separation anxiety assesses the degree of distress experienced in losing emotional or physical contact with important others. It is thought to measure the residual effects of the separation anxiety experienced during the rapprochement phase of early development (Levine *et al* 1986, Kroger & Green 1994).

As can be expected developmentally, Std 10s present with the lowest level of anxiety when faced with real or perceived separation from significant others. This supports the picture that has emerged, that as they are able to identify and seek out gratification of their needs and are more able to integrate dependent and independent needs, there is a greater capacity to tolerate separation without feeling that all will be lost.

With the emerging picture of Std 6s being more dependent and in need of their parents, it would be appropriate to expect them to present with the highest score for Separation Anxiety, suggesting a heightened anxiety at the loss of a significant other. However, it is the Std 7s who are the most anxious regarding actual or perceived loss of a significant other. For the Std 6s there seems to be a greater sense of security that their support systems are intact, whereas there is greater uncertainty about this within the Std 7's. Their heightened ambivalence, as highlighted earlier in the discussion, around dependence and independence exacerbates their fear of separation.

Standards 8 and 9 present with lower scores suggesting less anxiety about separation. The lower Separation Anxiety score in the Std 8s supports the picture of them being more autonomous and expressing less need of their parents, albeit that it is potentially premature and inflated.

The Std 9's lower level of anxiety can be understood in terms of their movement towards a greater autonomy and integration of dependent and independent needs even though there is some indication of ambivalence around this.

REJECTION EXPECTANCY

Rejection Expectancy assesses perceived emotional callousness or indifference from significant others, a residual from early separation-individuation of future borderline and narcissistic patients (Kroger & Green 1994).

The Std 10s have a low expectation of indifference or rejection from those around them. This could be attributed to their moving towards a clearer understanding and sense of themselves as individuals, separate, yet connected.

Standards 6 and 8 reflect the next lowest average scores, also indicating less of an expectation of rejection from others, but possibly for different reasons to those of the Std 10s. Std 6s express a greater need for intimacy and connection with significant others, primarily their parents. Their less differentiated state allows their belief, as with the less differentiated toddler/infant, that they will be protected and that their needs will be met resulting in less of an expectation that others will be indifferent to their needs.

The Std 8s on the other hand, who are at risk of being isolated and alienated because of their strong push for emotional autonomy, do not necessarily experience possible indifference as rejection. Rather, it fits with their need to be independent. However, this position would not protect them entirely from a sense of rejection, although they might have become more immune to indifference, if present, than the other groups.

Standards 7 and 9 have the highest expectation of rejection and indifference from others. Both these groups fall in between more clearly defined groups (Stds 6,8 and 10) while also carrying aspects of each of those standard groups. Their movement towards autonomy and exploring their independence and separateness may evoke a fear that they will not be supported by their parents. There may also be a fear that their parents will not be there for them should they need or wish to return to them. This will heighten the already present ambivalence in these groups around being dependent or independent.

TEACHER ENMESHMENT

Teacher enmeshment reflects the desire and wish of the individual to have a close and merged relationship with teachers. It is hypothesised to represent residual effects from Mahler's symbiotic phase of separation-individuation, where the infant experiences a sense of oneness and undifferentiation from the primary object (Kroger & Green 1994). The primary object is viewed as a protective barrier for the infant from external traumata.

The scores received by all standards in this sub-category reflect a progression of highest need in Std 6's to lowest need in Std 10. This coincides clearly with developmental expectations of adolescents and their greater or lesser need for adult support.

Standard 6 and 7 students reflect the highest average score for teacher enmeshment, reflecting a greater need for involvement with the teacher. The teacher may be viewed, within the educational setting, as a protective barrier between the adolescent and the demands, real or perceived, being made on him. The need for the involvement with the teacher can be seen to be as important for the Std 6 student as he begins high school and the process of adapting to the new pressures and expectations, as for the infant. The infant, beginning to be aware of the world around him, needs the mother to protect him from too many stimuli and demands being placed on the infant's developing ego capacity. The ambivalence of the Std 7 student is again made apparent in the expression of need for closeness with teachers.

Std 10s achieved the lowest average score for Teacher Enmeshment, reflecting less of a need to be closely connected to their teachers. Their high score for Peer Enmeshment supports the developmental understanding that they wish to be more connected to their peers and less so to adults. Their need for a protective barrier within an educational environment is significantly less

than for the younger students, reflecting a greater ability to deal with the demands placed on them within the school environment without needing as much assistance as the younger student does.

Std 8 and 9 students reflect a score mid-way between Stds 6 and 10 indicating that their need for involvement with teachers is not as great as that of the Std 6s, but that they are not able to function as independently as the Std 10s. This may reflect their struggle to express the need for teacher involvement because of their push towards autonomy and independent functioning.

5.4 GENDER

5.4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

55,4% of the sample were female and 44,6% were male.

There were **NO** significant differences between genders when MANOVA was applied.

While the results are not statistically significant, it is interesting to note the trends within the two gender groups in terms of what presents as issues or difficulties of adolescent separation-individuation.

When the gender groups are separated into two standard groupings, Std 6 and 7 and Stds 8-10, differences in gender in terms of standards or stages of development are highlighted. These results are not significant in terms of any differences shown.

5.4.2 AVERAGE SCORES FOR SUB-CATEGORIES FOR MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS ACROSS ALL STANDARDS

Female students reflected a higher average score for Healthy Separation and Peer Enmeshment and a lower average score for Practising-Mirroring and Dependency Denial than the male students. This suggests that there is a greater desire for close, intimate relationships with their peers, but also that they are more able to express their dependency needs. Their lower Practising –Mirroring score suggests that they experience themselves as less self-sufficient than the male students.

Male students also express some desire for close, intimate relationships with peers, but to a lesser extent than the female students. This is supported by their tendency to deny their dependency needs (within peer and parental relationships) and their having a higher score for Practising-Mirroring. This suggests that they are more self-sufficient and have greater narcissistic strivings, perhaps in order to defend against dependency needs.

In understanding these differences between males and females, it is interesting to consider the impact of socialisation on these differences. Generally, it is more socially acceptable for females to express their dependency needs, to seek gratification of them, to be less self-sufficient and to seek out and have close, intimate relationships with their peers as well as to maintain a sense of connectedness to their parents. Male students may well receive more positive mirroring for narcissistic strivings and less positive mirroring for the expression of dependency needs. This less positive mirroring could be from both their parents and their friends. Additionally, parents often feel more inclined to protect their daughters and not to mirror independent striving as much as they would for their sons, for whom such strivings are seen to be more acceptable and are more greatly valued.

The differences in the kind of mirroring that male and female students receive and the fact that greater value is placed on male independent strivings could be seen to place male students in a more vulnerable position than females. Male students may also be more at risk of seeking gratification of their needs in alternative ways as a result of these differences.

For the remaining sub-categories of Engulfment Anxiety, Separation-Anxiety, Teacher Enmeshment, Nurturance Seeking and Rejection Expectancy, there is little difference between male and females across the standards.

5.4.3 AVERAGE SCORES FOR SUB-CATEGORIES FOR FEMALES CONTRASTING STANDARD 6 AND 7 WITH STANDARDS 8-10

The previous discussion highlighted differences between male and female students across the standards. The following discussion addresses differences between older and younger female students followed by differences between older and younger male students.

Healthy Separation and Peer Enmeshment reflect the highest average scores for both grouping of females, with Stds 8-10 reflecting a higher score than Std 6 and 7 females.

The younger group reflects a higher average score for Nurturance-Seeking as well as a significantly higher score for Teacher Enmeshment than the older group. This indicates a greater need amongst the younger group for connection and support from significant others. While older females also seek this out, it is more likely to be from their peers than from teachers or parents. Younger females reflect a higher average score for Separation Anxiety than older females indicating a greater anxiety of loss or perceived loss of physical or emotional connection with a significant other. This would also correlate with their higher score for Teacher Enmeshment and Nurturance-Seeking reflecting a greater degree of need OF and interest from significant others.

For both female groups Rejection Expectancy and Dependency Denial reflect the lowest scores. Younger females have a slightly higher degree of Rejection Expectancy as well as tending more towards denying or avoiding their dependency needs than the older group. Younger female students have a higher level of anxiety around actual or perceived separation or loss of those on whom they feel dependent. This heightened separation anxiety may well underlie their difficulty in acknowledging their dependency needs because of the fear of loss of those who meet those same needs.

Older females have a higher average score for Engulfment Anxiety reflecting a greater fear of being enveloped or controlled by significant others even though they are more able to acknowledge their dependency needs. This could indicate less ambivalence amongst younger females in seeking out nurturance and connectedness because of the slightly reduced fear of re-engulfment. For the older female this ambivalence is heightened and may impact on their ability to seek the nurturance they want and need from the primary object and fuel the movement towards their peers from whom they receive support without the fear of engulfment.

5.4.4 AVERAGE SCORES FOR SUB-CATEGORIES FOR MALES CONTRASTING STANDARDS 6 & 7 AND STANDARDS 8-10

Healthy Separation and Peer Enmeshment reflect the highest average scores for both groupings of males, with Stds 8-10 reflecting a higher average score than Std 6 & 7 males. This suggests strivings toward autonomy, reflecting a strong wish to be more connected to their peers.

Std 6 and 7 males have a higher average score for Nurturance-Seeking, indicating dependency needs and a need for seeking dependency gratification from their parents. However, they simultaneously reflect a higher degree of Engulfment Anxiety, showing an ambivalence between being connected and seeking out the needed nurturance from their parents. There is a fear of being re-engulfed in that process and losing their developing independence.

Younger males express a higher degree of Separation Anxiety as well as more of a need for involvement with teachers than the older male students, suggesting that they feel less confident within themselves and are more in need of contact and nurturance from parents and teachers. However, at the same time, they have more difficulty in acknowledging their dependency needs than the older male students as well as a heightened anxiety of being re-engulfed, which may impact on their ability to have their needs met.

For the older students, there is less fear of engulfment by parents, accompanied by a greater sense of their own self-sufficiency (narcissism) and being able to acknowledge their dependency

needs but less of a need to seek out gratification of their dependency needs. They also have less of an expectation that significant others will be indifferent to their dependency needs or callous in their response to those needs than the younger males.

5.5 RACE

5.5.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

37.5% (45 students) were black and 62.5% (75 students) were white. This distribution reflects the general make up of the population.

When MANOVA was applied, **NO** significant differences were found between race groups. It is interesting however, to understand the general patterns within the race groups, and to identify what are the issues that are potentially most problematic for each group within two standard groupings, namely Std 6 and 7 and Stds 8-10.

5.5.2 AVERAGE SCORES FOR SUB-CATEGORIES FOR BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS IN STANDARDS 6 AND 7

Healthy Separation receives the highest average score followed by Peer Enmeshment for both black and white students, which is understood to reflect a desire for close or merged relationships with their peers. This movement towards peers and away from parents is important in terms of the adolescents' progress in being able to resolve conflicts associated with the integration of dependent and independent needs.

Black students receive a slightly higher score for Nurturance Seeking and Engulfment Anxiety than the white students. For both groups, these scores indicate dependency needs and a need to receive gratification of these needs from their parents. However, at the same time, they also fear that in receiving nurturance, they will be re-engulfed by the parent and so be prevented from striving towards a greater sense of independence. Black students reflect a higher average score for Rejection Anxiety than the white students, indicating a slightly higher degree of anxiety of indifference or emotional callousness from others. The struggle is about how these young adolescents are able to receive the nurturance that they require and need, without fearing that they will be re-engulfed or rejected by significant others.

This struggle is seen to reflect the rapprochement phase of early separation-individuation where the developing toddler wants and needs the involvement of the mother at times, but fears being re-engulfed in having those needs met. At the same time there is the worry that because he is

exploring his independence, and demonstrating less of a need of the mother, he will be rejected by the mother.

Both black and white students reflect significantly higher scores for Practising-Mirroring, Separation Anxiety and Teacher Enmeshment than for Rejection Anxiety and Dependency Denial. While both groups struggle to acknowledge their dependency needs for fear of either rejection or engulfment, they simultaneously reflect a need to be enmeshed and connected to their teachers and indicate an anxiety about being separated physically or emotionally from significant others, which could include parents, teachers or peers.

Teacher Enmeshment is seen to reflect the symbiotic phase of early separation-individuation, where the primary object acted as a barrier between the infant and potential external trauma to the infant. The infant experienced anxiety when the primary object was not there to act as a barrier and to protect the child. Likewise with the adolescent, there is a need for some kind of protective barrier between them and the external world, to assist them in dealing with external demands placed on them. Anxiety is experienced if there is a real or perceived physical or emotional separation from the primary object.

In summary, both these groups of students are moving towards healthy separation and growing independence, but in that process, are still struggling with fears of separation, abandonment and rejection if they pursue their independent drives. At the same time, they fear being re-engulfed by the primary object, should they allow those needs to be met.

5.5.3 AVERAGE SCORES FOR SUB-CATEGORIES FOR BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS IN STANDARDS 8-10

Healthy Separation and Peer Enmeshment receive the highest average scores for both black and white students in Stds 8-10, reflecting the general trend of negotiating separation-individuation within this sample population.

Black students receive a higher average score for Nurturance-Seeking, indicating stronger dependency needs and a greater desire for closeness with a parental figure and also indicating that they seek gratification of their dependency needs from a parental figure. Black students reflect a higher average score for Teacher Enmeshment than white students, indicating a greater desire to be more closely connected to their teachers. This reflects a need (as in the symbiotic phase of early development) for a protective barrier between themselves and the demands of the external world or more particularly of their school world.

As well as a heightened anxiety about the perceived or actual loss of or separation from the person on whom they feel dependent, there is also more anxiety about being re-engulfed by the parental figure when seeking gratification of their needs.

White students reflect lower average scores than black students for Engulfment Anxiety, Nurturance-Seeking, Practising-Mirroring and Separation Anxiety. This might indicate that similar issues or concerns prevail, but not to the same degree as with the black students. This would support the higher score that white students received for Healthy Separation, suggesting that they are more able to integrate dependent and independent needs.

For both groups Rejection Expectancy receives the second lowest average score, reflecting less anxiety about being rejected by a significant other. The lowest average scores for both groups were for Dependency Denial, which indicates that there is less of a tendency to deny their dependency needs. White students received a lower score for this sub-category, being more able to acknowledge their dependency needs, and feeling less threatened by re-engulfment and rejection in expressing their needs.

While the differences in scores between black and white students, in both the younger and older groups, are not that great, it is interesting to consider what may be contributing to these differences. In this particular school environment there are more white than black students and the general culture of the school, based on the school's history, is white oriented. Additionally, the language medium is English, which is often a second language for many black students. That this research was conducted in the school context, in English, and that the measuring tool is not validated for a South African context, may also contribute towards the differences in scores.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

This research study aimed to understand the difficulties students were experiencing within the separation-individuation process which could be impacting on their optimal process of growing up. A second aim was to understand to what extent factors such as standard, race and gender impact on these issues. Finally, armed with an understanding of with which issues the students experience difficulties, attention can be given to how the school can better address these issues and so aid the process of development of their adolescent students.

Standard (when tested on its own) was found to be the most significant factor in relation to the 9 sub-categories identified by SITA. (Levine *et al* 1986) indicating that there are differences between standards and that different developmental tasks and level of completion of those tasks are linked to age. Additionally, these results further validate the measuring tool as they support general developmental theories on which the test is based.

Race and gender were not found to be significant in relation to the nine sub-categories identified by SITA, but did impact on the level of significance of standard when grouped together. Thus, although they are not significant in their own right, they do have some level of influence on the sub-categories. It would be important to explore further the extent to which race and gender do impact on the adolescent's ability to negotiate the process of separation-individuation. This study employed a research methodology, of a quantitative nature and would not be considered reliable in generalising on issues of gender and race. The observations made regarding gender and race would need further exploration using qualitative techniques in order to investigate how gender and race impact on separation-individuation.

The high average scores received for the sub-category of Healthy Separation throughout the sample indicate that this is generally a healthy sample and that these students are progressing through the process of separation-individuation. When Healthy Separation is seen in interaction with the other eight sub-categories a picture emerges, of a healthy sample, but highlighting areas of difficulty or concern within the different standards, within the process of separation-individuation. That is, there are areas of vulnerability within some standards, which needs to be noted.

Std 6 and 10 students present as the least vulnerable standards within the process of growing up. For the Std 6s entering the process of separation-individuation and for the Std 10s emerging out of the process of separation-individuation, (but not being at the end of it) there seems to be greater clarity of their needs and less ambivalence in expressing those needs.

The Std 6s generally still want and require involvement from their parents and demonstrate a greater sense of ease with this. The Std 10s no longer want and require such intense involvement because they are more able to function independently. However, they generally do not prevent or resist parental support or nurturance as they have an understanding that connectedness and autonomy can exist side by side. While there is some indication of ambivalence within these standards, it is significantly less than for Stds 7 and 9 and perhaps enables them to more easily draw from their parents or others to have their emotional needs met.

For the standard 7 and 9 students there is a greater ambivalence about being connected as well as being more autonomous. The Std 7s, moving from greater connectedness with parents, are ambivalent about increased autonomy, while Std 9s, moving from greater autonomy or expression of autonomy, are ambivalent about re-connecting with parents. In both instances there is a fear of loss – loss of connectedness and support and loss of autonomy and independence.

The Std 8s present as the most vulnerable group in the sample, within the process of separation-individuation. Their strong push towards autonomy exhibited in their denial or avoidance of dependency needs, their struggle to seek out nurturance, their high level of anxiety and fear of re-engulfment and their strong need of their peers and desire to be autonomous, place them at risk of not being able to draw on their parents for support and of being isolated. There is no sense in the Std 8s, of ambivalence about being connected or separate, but rather a clear and definite sense of wanting to be separate and independent. This absolute desire to be separate places them at risk of experiencing this separateness as alienation or estrangement from their support networks.

Some level of ambivalence would offer some protection for them against isolation and alienation in that it would offer the option of seeking nurturance and support. If they remain unable to acknowledge any sense of ambivalence, they are at risk of seeking alternative, and not always healthy, means of meeting their need for connectedness and support. Parents and teachers can play an important protective role for these students through acknowledging their need for support and nurturance, even though the students themselves cannot acknowledge these needs.

In essence therefore, the issues that this sample finds to be most difficult are around acknowledging their dependency needs and seeking out gratification of those needs and the fear of being re-engulfed and losing what autonomy they have gained. The struggle is around disengaging enough to have a sense of freedom to explore the world around them, to develop their sense of autonomy, while still feeling that they are supported and nurtured and that there will be a base for them to return to when the external world becomes too much for them. Adolescents need to have both freedom and boundaries from a parental figure. In the boundaries is the connection and sense of safety, in the freedom, the space to explore the world and their sense of identity.

In understanding these findings, it is also important to consider the impact of external factors on these issues of difficulty. One of the most significant external factors is the high value placed on independent functioning in the adolescent by parental figures. There is more positive mirroring from parental figures for independent behaviours, but less understanding and therefore less positive mirroring for dependent type behaviours. Behaviour problems which may emerge can potentially be viewed by parental figures as the adolescent simply not being responsible and making the right choices, rather than understanding that the expectations for independent functioning are too high and too soon for the adolescent. It is important that parents and teachers do not push too soon for independent functioning, recognising that in the midst of apparent self-sufficiency, there will be times when the adolescent will not be able to manage on his own and that this is quite appropriate and acceptable.

Thus, negotiations of growing up which may initially be presented as being quite advanced and integrated (balancing dependent and independent needs), as presented in this sample, may in fact be premature and inaccurate. These students may feel that they need to and are able to meet their own needs, but in doing so are at risk of satisfying them through anti-social means, such as alcohol, drugs, sexual acting out or general behavioural problems. While regression is understood to be part of the disengaging process from parental ties, there is the risk that these students will come to depend on these behaviours, resulting in their developmental progress being hampered or interrupted.

Another external factor, which supports the high value placed on independence, is the increased financial independence of adolescents due to part-time employment. With increased financial independence comes the belief, from the adolescent and parental figures, that they are therefore emotionally independent. These adolescents, should they become aware of their own sense of vulnerability, may feel unable to seek out support for themselves because there is a fear that in acknowledging their own vulnerability, they may be engulfed by parental figures and lose the independence they value so highly.

Standard 7, 8 and 9 students are the most at risk students in this sample. The Std 8s because they express an intense need to be autonomous and meet their own needs and the Std 7 and 9s because they are moving towards (Std 7s) and away from (Std 9s) the position of the Std 8s. In so doing, they run the risk of remaining stuck in the position of being more independent than what they are ready for.

If only independent strivings are acknowledged and positively mirrored by parental figures, (teachers, parents, employers) the students will struggle to recognise and acknowledge their need for support, nurturance, guidance, boundaries and comfort. They may choose to relinquish such needs in favour of something that is highly valued and prized. That is, independence. This is supported by research conducted by Ryan and Lynch (1989) that looked at the relationship

emotional autonomy and perceived parental acceptance and support of independence. They concluded that "the more emotional autonomy adolescents express, the less connected or secure they feel within the family, the less they experience their parents as conveying love and understanding, and the less they report willingness to draw upon parental resources" (p353). It is vital therefore, that parents, teachers and the school as an institution of education, constantly remain aware of the dependent needs of these adolescents, even though they may be well hidden by the adolescent. This means being emotionally available, consistent and predictable in responses when the adolescent comes to them for support or nurturance.

It is at this juncture of ambivalence about disengaging and remaining connected, that parental figures need to be present and constant in their support, nurturance, guidance and setting of boundaries for the adolescent. Additionally, the ability of parental figures, to tolerate the adolescent's ambivalence and movement between being strongly independent and then suddenly needy and dependent of them, is of vital importance in the ongoing optimal growth of the adolescent.

What is apparent is that within the process of adolescence there is a marked vulnerability of personality and a likelihood of maladaptive behaviours (Coleman 1987). These result from the internal and external pressures of development on the adolescent and the inadequacy of ego strengths to cope with these conflicts and tensions. Within this, the process of separation-individuation or disengagement is seen as a necessity for mature emotional and sexual relationships to be established outside the home.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following areas of intervention are recommended:

1. Parent Education

Parents are expected to understand and be aware of the developmental process of their adolescent and to know what they should do and when they should do it. However, for many parents it is an unknown area into which they are propelled. They need and should receive information about the developmental processes of adolescence and how they can better respond to the needs of their adolescent.

Parent Education should cover the following areas:

How to parent an adolescent effectively. This would look at the role of the parent and how their parenting will impact on the adolescent's negotiation of developmental tasks. A primary issue would be to enable parents to remain constant and predictable, giving consistent feedback and establish appropriate boundaries for their adolescent.

The process of adolescent development. This would look at the stages of adolescent development, highlighting developmental tasks and the needs of the adolescent at that specific point of development.

Developing a support network for parents of adolescents. Parent education should take place within a group environment, so parents can draw support, knowledge and advice from one another.

Parent Education should be seen as a community based service, something which schools are in a prime position to implement and oversee.

2. The role of the school

High schools, being institutions specifically designed for the education of adolescents, need to look at their structures, their relationship with the adolescents and their parents, how they manage behavioural problems and how they respond to the developmental needs of the adolescent. They need to determine to what extent they hinder or aid the optimal growth and development of the adolescent.

Schools should be encouraged to implement ongoing support or mentor groups for students that would remain constant and ongoing over the entire school career of each student. This would allow increased awareness and knowledge of each student's academic and emotional progress and allow for preventative intervention to take place. In this way, in addition to constant and predictable parenting, the adolescent has another base of constancy and predictability on which to draw a sense of security and support.

An increased awareness of adolescent development and the needs of adolescents can influence how behavioural problems are understood and responded to as well as determining the best form of intervention for the adolescent.

3. Teacher Education

This research study has shown that amongst the younger students there is a strong need for connection with a parental figure. Teachers spend many hours with adolescents, both in formal and informal teaching processes. By the nature of their interaction, they are a parental figure. They therefore need to understand the process of adolescent development, what they can expect from different ages and how they can best interact with their students in order to optimally support their ongoing development.

Teacher Education should cover the following:

The process of adolescent development and its relation to educational processes.

This would look at the stages of adolescent development and the needs of adolescents at any particular stage of development, within an education environment. While acknowledging that the teacher is not the adolescent's parent, it is important that they develop an understanding of the role that they play in the lives of adolescents. This would include an understanding of their expectations of the different ages (standards), how they respond to the expressed needs of the adolescent, how they set boundaries and how they respond to behavioural issues.

4. Intervention with the adolescent

Intervention with adolescents should include the following:

Preventative Intervention

Broad-based life skills education programme.

Educational group work focussing on specific issues of importance in a particular school community.

Assessment of adolescents who present with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The aim of such interventions would be to increase awareness among adolescents about their own processes of development, their needs and the kinds of difficulties they may face and how they can better deal with these difficulties.

Curative Intervention

Therapeutic Group Work focussing on specific issues that emerge within the student population.

Individual Therapeutic intervention

Family Intervention

None of these recommendations are short-term solutions, nor are they necessarily easy to establish. Constraints such as time, financial limitations and availability of qualified personnel will present as real and large obstacles that need to be overcome. Understanding and responding differently to the difficulties that adolescents face, can be seen to be preventative in that it limits and addresses the alternative behaviours such as drug and alcohol use and sexual acting out in which adolescents engage. Treatment of substance dependency, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections is costly. Preventative action can limit both the emotional and financial costs of these problems.

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ATTITUDE AND FEELINGS SURVEY

Directions: Listed below are a number of statements which best describe various feelings, attitudes and behaviours that people have. Read each statement and then mark on your sheet:

- (a) if the statement is **always true** for you or you **strongly agree** with it,
- (b) if the statement is **usually true** for you or you **generally agree** with it,
- (c) if the statement is **sometimes true** for you or you **slightly agree** with it,
- (d) if the statement is **hardly ever true** for you or you **generally disagree** with it,
- (e) if the statement is **never true** for you or you **strongly disagree** with it.

Please answer all of the questions. If you have difficulty answering a particular question, choose the response which is closest to your feelings on that item, even though you may not feel strongly one way or another.

Please use a pencil to complete the answer sheet and erase completely any answer you may wish to change. In marking your choices, be sure the number of the statement you have just read is the same number you are marking on the answer sheet.

1. Sometimes my parents are so overprotective I feel smothered.
2. I sometimes feel so powerful that it seems like there is no feat which is too difficult for me to conquer.
3. Being alone is a very scary idea for me.
4. often I don't understand what people want out of a close relationship with me.
5. I enjoy being by myself and with others approximately the same.
6. I can't wait for the day that I can live on my own and am free from my parents.
7. Sometimes it seems that people really want to hurt me.
8. I worry about death a lot.
9. Most parents are over-controlling and don't really want their children to grow up.
10. Sometimes I think how nice it was to be a young child when someone else took care of my needs.
11. I am really friendly with several different types of people.
12. I don't see the point of most warm, affectionate relationships.
13. I particularly enjoy looking at my own body in the mirror.
14. One of my parents knows me so well they almost always know what I'm thinking.
15. If I told someone about the troubles I have, they would probably not understand.
16. I do best when I'm by myself and don't have other people around to bother me.
17. Even when I'm very close to another person, I feel I can be myself.
18. Usually when I'm doing something with my friends, I act like a leader.
19. I feel lonely when I'm away from my parents for any extended period of time.
20. During the past 10 years I have not slept more than 3 hours per night at any time.
21. Most people are basically worried about their own good and don't care about helping other people.
22. I feel so comfortable with one of my friends that I can tell him/her anything I feel.
23. I frequently worry about being rejected by my friends.
24. My friends and I have some common interests and some differences.
25. I can't feel that love has much of a place in my life.
26. I frequently worry about breaking up with my boyfriend/girlfriend.
27. My parents seem much more concerned about their own plans than they do about mine.

28. Even with my good friends I couldn't count on them to be there if I really needed them.
29. I feel that to her people interfere with my ability "to do my own thing."
30. Being close to someone else I uncomfortable.
31. Although my best friend does things I do not like, I still care about him/her a great deal.
32. Considering most of the people I know, I find myself comparatively better off.
33. I often feel rebellious toward things my parents tell me to do.
34. I am comfortable with some degree of conflict in my close relationships.
35. Sometimes I feel very sad about having to say goodbye to a teacher I really like.
36. Sometimes I amaze myself with my own capabilities and talents.
37. I think about some of my friends when I'm alone because I miss them.
38. My life is fulfilled without having best friends.
39. Although I'm like my close friends in some ways, we're also different form each other in other ways.
40. I am quite worried that there might be a nuclear war in the next decade that would destroy much of this world.
41. My friendships tend to be of the "best-friend" kind.
42. I feel dominated by my boyfriend/girlfriend.
43. I feel that other people admire and look up to me.
44. One of my friends knows me so well I feel he/she can practically read my mind.
45. Friendship isn't worth the effort it takes.
46. While I like to get along well with my friends, if I disagree with something they're doing I usually feel free to say so.
47. I have a habit of switching from one close relationship to another.
48. The teacher's opinion of me as a person is very important to me.
49. My parents seem very disinterested in what's going on with me.
50. I know some of my friends so well, it seems like I can read their minds.
51. I feel overpowered or controlled by people around me.
52. When I'm with a group of friends, I sometimes act like the leader and at other times more like a follower.
53. I think it is silly when people cry at the end of an emotional movie.

54. With my favourite teacher, I can share some of my most personal fears and concerns.
55. I believe that God looks over and protects me from danger.
56. It sometimes seems that my parents wish they hadn't ever had me.
57. I don't really need anyone.
58. It's quite a struggle for me to be a person independent from my parents.
59. I had many fears of monsters and/or ghosts when I was younger.
60. I'm quite worried about the possibility of one of my parents dying.
61. When I think of the people that are most important to me I wish I could be with them more and be closer to them emotionally.
62. I feel particularly comfortable when I'm doing things with a group of friends together, rather than by myself.
63. It's hard for me to really trust anyone.
64. One of my favourite teachers is amazingly similar to me in personality.
65. Even when they don't say it, I can sometimes tell that people admire me by the look in their eyes.
66. I don't really love anyone.
67. My parents keep close tabs of my whereabouts.
68. In school, I have a special relationship with one teacher that goes further than the average teacher-student bond.
69. I feel my parents restrict my freedom too much.
70. I have not seen the sun shine for over a year now.
71. People sometimes seem amazed by my own abilities.
72. When I am truly friendly with someone, it's usually the case that they know both my good parts and my bad parts.
73. Eating delicious food is one of the greatest pleasures in my life.
74. I feel that the degree to which I satisfy the needs of my friends and they satisfy my needs is approximately equal.
75. There's a certain sense of oneness that I feel with other people.
76. I see dependency as a sign of weakness.
77. When I hope somebody will do something for me, I often find myself disappointed.
78. No one seems to understand me.

79. Before I go to sleep at night, I sometimes feel lonely and wish there were someone around to talk to or just be with.
80. If I let myself get close to someone else I would probably get burned.
81. There is a sense of interconnectedness that links people of all kinds together.
82. God knows my life, I will go where he leads me.
83. Other people are easily impressed by me.
84. Sometimes it seems my parents really hate me.
85. I have no living relatives on this earth at the present time.
86. As long as I don't depend on anyone, I can't get hurt.
87. Knowing that other people find my physical appearance attractive is very pleasing to me.
88. I often sense admiration from those around me.
89. At home, I seem to be "in the way" a lot.
90. The idea of going to a large party where I would not know anyone is a scary one for me.
91. I feel special compared to other people.
92. In my group of friends I am often the centre of attention.
93. I preferred the younger years of life when I could rely more on my parents for guidance to get along.
94. I usually get positive "vibes" from other people regarding how they feel about me.
95. I can't have much of a need for close friendships with others.
96. I worry about being disapproved of by my teachers.
97. Other people seem to be impressed by my capabilities.
98. I would like to always live in the same town as my parents and siblings so we could spend a lot of time together.
99. My teachers give me advice about my social life.
100. I like parties best when my close friends are there and there is an intimate atmosphere.
101. My personal plans are more important than my relationships.
102. I am greatly looking forward to getting out from under the rule of my parents.
103. I would get upset if I found out my teacher was mad at me or disappointed in me.

SITA Subscales

Subscales	Items	m	SD	alpha
Engulfment Anxiety	1,6,9,33,67,69,102	28.07	7.3	.77
		32.49	8.0	.75
Practicing Mirroring	2,13,18,32,36,43,65,71 83,87,77,91,92,94,97	31.85	5.6	.88
		30.31	6.3	.85
Dependency Denial	12,16,25,29,30,38,45,53, 57,66,95,101	19.20	5.0	.79
		21.67	5.7	.74
Separation Anxiety	3,4,8,10,23,26,40,48,51,61 79,90,96,103	27.73	5.6	.77
		28.49	5.5	.68
Teacher Enmeshment	35,48,54,64,68,96,99,103	25.00	6.6	.75
		25.85	8.3	.79
Peer Enmeshment	22,31,37,41,44,46,50,72	36.98	6.3	.75
		36.06	7.2	.74
Nurturance (Caretaker Enmeshment)	10,14,19,55,60,82,93,98	28.79	6.7	.70
		28.46	8.1	.74
Healthy Separation (Maturing – Pseudomaturity)	5,11,17,24,31,39,46	40.94	5.0	.64
		39.76	5.8	.64
Rejection Expectancy	7,15,27,28,49,56,63,78,80 84,86,89	25.62	6.9	.79

Note: For m, SD and alpha the first figure listed is for the non-clinical sample and the second figure listed is for the clinical sample.

SCORING FORMULA FOR SITA

a=5,b=4,c=3,d=2,e=1

Total for each scale = (raw score total/ #of items in scale) X 10

Example: if patient's responses to items 3,8,26,48,60,90,96,103 were a,b,c,d,e,d,e,a, then his score for the Separation Anxiety scale would be:

$$(5+4+3+2+1+2+1+5/8) \times 10 = (23/8) \times 10 = 2.875 \times 10 = 28.75$$

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