

Chapter Two

ADOLESCENCE - 'The Nature of No-Man's Land'

Alone

Alone I have remembered every harsh word they said

And I have dreamed that I was dead

Alone I have imagined how sorry they would be

Never to forget, while I would be free

Alone I have discovered that I will not die

death is only a selfish lie

Alone I have ascertained that pain is part of life

anguish is all a part of the strife

Alone I have found that the world is not fair

And your friends won't always be there

Alone I have learned on myself to depend

there I have found my best friend.

Anonymous.

Introduction

The researcher has begun this chapter with a poem that she feels clearly depicts some of the experiences of adolescence. It is understood by the researcher that her interpretation of the poet's thoughts and feelings cannot be regarded as synonymous with the poet's and is merely her understanding of what meaning can be made from it. The poet's repeated use of the word "alone" seems to reflect the feeling of isolation that can be felt during this period and perhaps the perception of being misunderstood. The poet seems to be consumed with his or her own perceptions and experiences of the world, which is exhibited in the recurrence of the word "I", and perhaps highlights the egocentricity that characterises some of

the adolescent period. This egocentricity is further portrayed in the poet's preoccupation with death, and the disbelief in the finality of death, a belief that adolescents often have when they feel that they are magically protected from the rules that govern life. The emotional immaturity of the poet is reflected in the spiteful tone of lines three and four with the description that the poet's absence will hopefully stimulate feelings of guilt and a recognisable void in the lives of others. A feeling of anger and victimisation seems to permeate each line, perhaps revealing the undertone for most adolescents during this period. However, through the poet's trials and tribulations, the poet seems to have achieved the most significant task that faces adolescents, an exploration and discovery of the 'self'.

Perhaps in reading this poem, you are better able to recall your own experience of adolescence, as the researcher has. However, the memories of this period cannot recapture the feelings of excitement and anguish, or those many 'firsts' that were experienced. As we enter adulthood and beyond, our perspective changes, coloured by the many experiences we have had. Therefore, in recognising the difference in our more objective perspective to that of adolescents, we have gained a new appreciation of their development. This perspective allows us to understand that although there are similarities between adolescents and adults, striking differences often separate our understanding of the world from theirs.

Adolescence is a time characterised by changes in all social contexts as well as dramatic individual changes in physiology and cognitive capabilities. As this study is focussed on adolescents' experiences and survival of their parents' divorce, it is necessary to refresh the memory so as to understand the way in which adolescents perceive and experience the world. While there are many varied models and theories about adolescence, including biological, psychodynamic, cultural, interpersonal, cognitive, social learning, and developmental, the following chapter brings them together in a comprehensive description of this time in life. Although all the aspects within this description may not be applicable or useful to the current study, the researcher felt it was important to provide an inclusive

understanding because the changes that occur are so vast and widespread. As Pipher (1994, p. 26) describes, “[i]t's an extraordinary time when individual, developmental and cultural factors combine in ways that shape adulthood. It's a time of marked internal development and massive cultural indoctrination”.

In this chapter, adolescence as a period in a person's life will be discussed, followed by the developmental changes in adolescence, which include those changes that continue from childhood, namely: physical development, cognitive development, moral development, and the development of the self-concept and self-esteem. This will lead into a discussion on the identity formation and the personal relationships of adolescents. Lastly, the importance of mothers and fathers in the development of adolescents will be explored.

Adolescence

The term adolescence is derived from the Latin verb “*adolescere*”, which means “*to grow up*” or “*to come to maturity*” (Atwater, 1996, p.4). It is defined as a period that is distinct from both childhood and adulthood and is characterised by the rapid growth of the individual. The majority of developmental psychologists are of the same opinion that the onset of adolescence is marked by clearly discernible physical changes (Atwater, 1996), which usually occur between the ages of 11 and 13 years (Gouws, Kruger & Burger, 2000). Identifying the end of adolescence has proven to be an even more complex task. From a social point of view, adolescence ends when the individual begins to carry out adult roles and has thus become independent and self-reliant. This could result in adolescence ending when the person is in his or her twenties. Legally, within the South African context, the end of this phase of development is characterised by the individual's ability to vote or apply for a driver's licence at the age of 18 years, or when they achieve legal independence from their parents at the age of 21 years (Gouws et al., 2000). Therefore, one can see that there could be great disparity in the age at which adolescence ends. However, it is commonly understood to end between the ages of 17 and 22 years.

Adolescent development will now be discussed with the understanding that these are changes in the developmental process that have begun before the stage of adolescence. Therefore, these changes should be viewed in light of this previous developmental history, which are significantly influenced by other factors such as the parent-child relationships, socio-economic status, resources, and nutrition, to name but a few. The development of the adolescent is discussed separately to assist in our understanding, therefore, it is important to keep in mind that adolescents are complex beings with qualities that develop in different ways and at different rates, and development in one area has an influence on development in another.

Developmental Changes in Adolescence

Physical Development

Adolescence is a period of growth and development. However, it is the radical physical changes to the adolescents' body that differentiates adolescence from other periods in the life span. All the body parts of the adolescent do not grow at the same pace resulting in an uneven and awkward lanky appearance. The term puberty, which is often used interchangeably with adolescence, refers to the onset of physical and more specifically sexual maturation (Atwater, 1996). For both boys and girls, there is a sequence of pubertal changes. Although the rate of maturation varies from one adolescent to another, the order of these physical changes rarely does.

Pubertal Changes for Boys

Boys are late starters in comparison with girls. Their growth spurt begins approximately 2 years later than girls, between the ages of 12 and 16 years. During this spurt they will grow approximately 10cm each year, reaching their adult height at an estimated age of 18 years. The following is a sequence of the physical changes that occur in boys at this time (Irwin & Simons, 1994; Rice, 1995; Tanner, 1991):

- The testes and scrotum begin to enlarge
- Pubic hair begins to appear
- The growth spurt begins
- The penis increases in circumference and length
- First ejaculation, usually during sleep (sperm count is low; the adolescent remains infertile)
- Growth of armpit and body hair
- Larynx grows and voice deepens (voice breaks)
- Beard begins to grow
- Adolescent boys are capable of reproduction with the formation of spermatozoa.

Boys' bodies undergo further changes, namely, an increase in shoulder and chest width, and an increase in muscle mass. Furthermore, the boy's body shape becomes more angular and his facial features more prominent (Rice, 1995).

Pubertal Changes for Girls

Girls embark on their journey into adolescence with a head start, literally. The changes in height and weight occur quickly and are referred to as the *growth spurt*, which roughly peaks at 13 years of age then declines (Rice, 1995). From the ages of 10-14 years, adolescent girls will grow approximately 7,5cm in a single year and reach their adult height at an estimated age of 16 years (Atwater, 1996). Following the onset of the growth spurt, the following changes occur in sequence (Irwin & Simons, 1994; Rice, 1995; Tanner, 1991):

- The breasts begin to enlarge
- Pubic hair begins to appear
- The internal sexual organs (ovaries, uterus, vagina, labia, and clitoris) enlarge and develop
- Straight pigmented armpit hair appears
- Menstruation begins (initially it is irregular and ovulation is unstable)
- Full development of the breasts

- Adolescent girls are capable of reproduction with the increased maturity of their reproductive organs and stable ovulation.

Other changes that occur are the widening of the hips and an increase in muscle and body fat (Rice, 1995). There is a decline in the growth of the skeleton and an increase in the production of the hormone oestrogen, resulting in the body depositing relatively more fat than muscle on the hip, stomach, thighs, and breast area. The contours of the girls' bodies become rounded, therefore losing the straight, hip-less shape they had in childhood. It is this gain in fat that accounts for many adolescent girls' negative body image.

The Psychological Impact of Physical Changes

Adolescents are acutely aware of the physical changes to their bodies. Their emotional reactions to these physical changes are important to their development as they have an influence on the self-concept and self-esteem of adolescents. The physical changes in adolescents create concern about the body image, which refers to their concern regarding their body weight and the timing of their own development in relation to norms.

Body weight becomes a significant concern for boys and girls in adolescence, however, for different reasons. For boys, the dissatisfaction with their bodies is due to a lack of weight and strength, and they are thus more likely to adopt strategies to increase their weight and muscle tone through the use of steroids and nutritional supplements (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2001). On average adolescent girls are more dissatisfied with their appearance than boys due to the normal increase in fat on their bodies and the loss of their tall lean frame (Sweeting & West, 2002). The perception that they have a weight problem, even when their weight is normal for their height, might lead to the likelihood that they will engage in dieting behaviours that are harmful and unnecessary (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2001). As a result of adolescent girls' overall dissatisfaction with their weight, their self-esteem has been found to be lower than boys their age and they

generally feel less attractive (Kim & Kim, 2001; Mendelson, Mendelson & Andrews, 2000).

Early and late maturation is believed to have significant psychological ramifications on adolescents' development and self-esteem. However, the impact is unique for both boys and girls and may prove to be both constructive and destructive for them. Adolescence is a period of the life span that is characterised as embarrassing for both boys and girls (Adams, Gullotta & Markstrom-Adams, 1994), as they are acutely self-conscious and aware of the extreme changes to their bodies. These changes can be difficult enough when development occurs in synchronisation with the norm. However, when adolescents develop faster or slower than their peers, it tends to be problematic.

Nielsen (1996) suggests that there are considerable social advantages for early maturing boys. On average they are reported to feel better about themselves and have a positive body image (Santrock, 1999). Their self-confidence is better, they are afforded more social status with their peers and they attract more attention from girls, which may result in them entering into heterosexual relationships earlier. However, early maturity also has its disadvantages. In research conducted by Ge, Conger and Elder (2001), the relation between pubertal timing and psychological distress amongst adolescent males was examined. Their study revealed enhanced levels of externalised hostile feelings and internalised distress symptoms in boys who were more physically developed than their peers. This may be attributed to the stimulation and secretion of the male hormone, androgen, which is associated with aggression in boys (Brooks-Gunn, 1988). There is also a tendency for adults to have higher expectations of these mature male adolescents with regards to responsibility, and pressure is placed on them to prematurely commit themselves to goals and life choices they may not be emotionally and intellectually ready for (Cobb, 1992). This highlights the discrepancy between physical and emotional maturity, which may not go hand in hand. Furthermore, it seems these boys have less time to enjoy the freedom that comes with childhood and they may experience greater anxiety regarding the hormonal and physical

changes to their bodies as they have less time to adjust. The findings regarding the long-term effect of pubertal timing on boys reflect a discrepancy in the understanding that early maturation has a favourable influence on adolescent boys.

According to Rice (1995), the disadvantages for late maturing boys are as significant. These boys are in danger of being socially rejected by their peer group due to the differences in physical development, resulting in the development of negative self-perceptions, feelings of self-consciousness and inadequacy, and the desire to withdraw. Late maturing boys may further exhibit an overt dependency on others and an eagerness for status and attention in an effort to compensate for their feelings of rejection.

The picture appears to be as complicated for early maturing girls. According to Nielsen (1996, p. 53), "developing a womanly body and starting to menstruate years before other girls is stressful for most girls". Some adolescent girls may welcome the early development of breasts, which may lead to a greater degree of self-assurance and a positive self-image. However, for others it may only serve to isolate them as different from their peers at a time when group conformity is paramount. The presence of their mature bodies may further encourage sexual stares and interactions by older boys, which may be embraced by some girls for its benefits of popularity with the group. However, emotionally these girls may not be prepared for the intimate relationships associated with their physical appearance, further highlighting the disparity that exists between physical and emotional maturation during this stage. In a study conducted by Williams and Currie (2000), early maturation was found to result in lower ratings of body-image as well as lower levels of self-esteem. Towards the end of adolescence, the negative effects of early maturation are believed to be transformed for adolescent girls, who seem to exhibit improved self-concepts and better personal relations than their peers (Rice, 1995).

Late maturation in girls appears to impact temporarily on their social status with their peers (Rice, 1995). These adolescent girls are viewed as immature by their peers and as a result are excluded from many social interactions such as mixed parties. Their underdevelopment further prohibits them from dating and their relationships with boys seem to maintain the nature of friendships. However, it appears these girls are at some advantage to their peers in that they escape the conflict with parents regarding issues such as dating and curfews (Rice, 1995).

In both early maturing boys and girls, there is the increased possibility of developing relationships with peers who are older than them, which may lead them to being exposed to harmful behaviour, such as alcohol and drug use (Wiesner & Ittel, 2002). This would probably be as a result of social isolation from their own peer groups and their immaturity in the social, emotional, and cognitive arenas.

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development can be defined as an "individual's growth in knowledge, the ability to understand, think, and perceive, and to utilise these abilities in solving the practical problems of everyday living" (Rice, 1995, p.141). According to Piaget (1950), who delineated the stages of cognitive development in children, the highest level of cognitive development is attained in adolescence, namely *formal operational thought*. Attaining the formal operational stage provides adolescents with the ability to manipulate new information. Adolescents are no longer confined to the concrete operational stage, which characterises childhood. They are now able to think abstractly and to understand abstract concepts and relationships. Emotions such as love and hate are no longer confined to their feelings toward people (Gouws et al., 2000). They are now able to love abstract concepts such as freedom or abhor manipulation. Their abstract reasoning is further displayed in their developing ability to understand and question another person's intentions and behaviour as well as to analyse and construct their own view of political, religious and philosophical doctrines. Furthermore, the ability to envision what is

possible and not only what is real, allows adolescents to think hypothetically. The world is now filled with infinite possibilities, which is of special relevance with regards to their future as well as to the understanding of subtle nuances, nonverbal communication, and double meanings in language.

Although the formal operational stage represents the climax of intellectual development, adolescence does not guarantee advanced operations of thought. Not everyone is able to think abstractly, even by late adolescence or early adulthood (Piaget, 1972). The cognitive reasoning at any age seems to be dependent on the interaction between cognitive maturity and the social environment (Piaget, 1972). Cobb (1992) challenged Piaget's view. He believed that we continue to utilise concrete reasoning skills as adolescents and adults, depending on the situation we are faced with and our experience of that situation. It seems we utilise formal reasoning in situations we are most familiar with or have background knowledge of.

Despite certain limitations, Piaget's theory does provide valuable guidelines for understanding the cognitive development in adolescence. Formal operational reasoning is still regarded as the highest form of thinking that an individual can achieve, however, it should not be confined to the stage of adolescence.

Adolescent Cognitive Development in a Social Context

The cognitive development of adolescents plays a significant role in other areas of development. Their ability to reason in an abstract manner, formulate hypotheses, and their increased awareness of the self and others impact on their behaviour and relationships in the following manner.

Parent-adolescent relationships may be negatively influenced by the adolescents' advancing cognitive abilities. Adolescents are able to formulate hypotheses and are confronted with more possible solutions to a problem than they were as children. However, at times they may be uncertain of the correct one to choose. This dilemma is further complicated by their reluctance to enlist their

parents' guidance due to their drive for increased independence (Mussen et al., 1990). This may result in adolescents making poor decisions for themselves or arguing with their parents' decisions because they are now aware that there are alternative solutions. Ideally, it seems adolescents require guidance from their parents; however, their ability to perceive and understand alternatives also needs to be acknowledged. As children, adolescents may have idealised their parents and accepted every word of theirs as truth. However, during this stage of development adolescents begin to question and compare the values and behaviours of their parents with those of others and may become aware of the inconsistencies in what their parents say and do. This may create discord in the parent-adolescent relationship as adolescents come to realise their parents fall short of the ideal they had once created (Mussen et al., 1990).

The complexity of individuals begins to be understood by adolescents. As they gain an understanding of their own complexities as individuals, they are able to translate this to others as well. Thus, information obtained about people can be related to knowledge that has already been acquired. Furthermore, they are able to view behaviour in light of its context rather than interpreting the same meaning from various behaviours. Therefore, the advancement in cognitive abilities prevents adolescents from observing others and their behaviours in isolation; thereby assisting adolescents in their interactions with others by enhancing their understanding of those they interact with (Santrock, 1999). For example, conflict within a peer relationship no longer means the end of that friendship; it can now be understood as a difference in opinion defined within a particular context of that particular issue with the possibility of being resolved.

Adolescent egocentrism escalates when adolescents combine their newfound abilities to think beyond what is 'real' or the 'here and now' with the overwhelming physical and emotional changes that occur within themselves. That is, adolescents' cognitive abilities have begun to advance. However, their understanding and management of these new abilities may still be immature, resulting in egocentric thought patterns. Egocentrism is defined as "an inadequate

differentiation between one's own thoughts and feelings and those of others" (Atwater, 1996, p.118). According to Elkind (1967, p. 1030-1031), adolescent egocentrism leads to the creation of an "imaginary audience" and a "personal fable".

Their new found ability to take into account the thoughts of others leads adolescents to falsely assume that others are as preoccupied with their appearance and behaviours as they are, thus creating for themselves an imaginary audience. Adolescents will attribute all reactions to this audience in an attempt to please them and avoid criticism. This may be the reason adolescents become over-concerned with wearing the latest clothing-style, as they believe others will immediately notice. It may further explain the powerful tendency for adolescents to conform to the norms of the peer group. The awareness of the imaginary audience often creates self-consciousness and an increased need for privacy, which is of particular relevance as any form of criticism or embarrassment may have an adverse effect on their self-esteem. Recent research on the imaginary audience contradicts the theory of Elkind. In two separate studies conducted by Vartanian (2001) and Bell and Bromnick (2003), the notion that adolescents believe in an imaginary audience was not supported. The study by Bell and Bromnick further revealed that adolescents believe their concern with other people's opinions of them is valid because others' opinions have legitimate consequences for their lives, both personal, in terms of self-esteem, self-confidence and identity, and social, in terms of approval and social support.

In addition to the imaginary audience, Elkind (1967) believed adolescents create a personal fable, which is the belief that they are unique and distinctive individuals and consequently come to regard their thoughts and feelings as special and more intense than anyone else before them. The personal fable is often exhibited in adolescents' belief that the grief they experience over a broken relationship is more intense than felt by anyone else or they may respond to help and guidance with comments such as, 'nobody understands me'. The personal fable, when taken to the extreme, is understood to underlie a great deal of the self-destructive and risk-taking behaviour of adolescents. This stems from the adolescents' perception

that they are immortal and invincible (Dacey & Kenny, 1994). However, the attribution of the personal fable to the risk-taking behaviour of adolescents is under dispute. Only certain dimensions of the construct were related to risk-taking behaviour in the study by Maggs, Almeida & Galambos (1995) and Greene et al. (2000) who report that it is the combination of the personal fable with sensation-seeking behaviour, that explains risk-taking behaviour and not the personal fable alone. Furthermore, adolescent egocentrism has been found to extend into adulthood (Frankenberger, 2000), thus, disputing the belief that it begins to decline after the age of 16 years (Rice, 1995). Considering the results of recent studies, it may be appropriate to view adolescent egocentrism with more caution than before. However, these constructs are still valuable in explaining some of the behaviours of adolescents.

The implications of advanced cognitive abilities have both advantages and disadvantages for adolescents. They struggle with the discord in their relationships as well as the emotional intensity of their experiences. However, in their drive to define themselves they are able to gain a deeper understanding of others and establish meaningful interpersonal relationships.

Moral Development

Moral development refers to the process by which adolescents learn the principles that are established by the greater society or culture to enable them to judge particular behaviour patterns as 'right' or 'wrong', and to direct their own behaviour in accordance with these principles (Vander Zanden, 1993). They are guided from infancy with these standards; some being formalised while others are established through tradition. As children, adolescents readily accept the moral values imposed upon them by various authority figures such as parents and teachers, and institutions. However, adolescents' cognitive ability to formulate hypotheses and think in an abstract manner enables them to weigh choices against each other, thereby becoming less reliant on adults for guidance (Vander

Zanden, 1993). They begin to question and challenge the moral values imposed upon them by others in an attempt to develop their own personal value system.

Lawrence Kohlberg developed a cognitive model of moral development comprising three major levels, each with two types of moral orientation (Langford, 1995). He believed that moral reasoning guided moral behaviour and indicated that advanced cognitive development must exist for the progression of moral development to take place. However, it does not necessarily guarantee it. The following is a brief outline of Kohlberg's stage theory (Langford, 1995; Muuss, 1996):

LEVEL	STAGE
<p><u>Level 1: Preconventional Morality</u></p> <p>Others' standards are adopted with the aim of obtaining rewards or avoiding punishment.</p>	<p><i>Stage 1:</i> Obedience is motivated by the avoidance of punishment.</p> <p><i>Stage 2:</i> Good behaviour is maintained for a reward.</p>
<p><u>Level 2: Conventional Morality</u></p> <p>Individuals want to please. They observe the standards maintained by others and seek to adhere to these standards because they want to be seen as 'good' by the people they like.</p>	<p><i>Stage 3:</i> Obedience is aimed at securing social approval. The 'good boy/girl' orientation is aimed at being accepted and avoiding rejection. For the first time, the individual is able to take into account another individual's motive.</p> <p><i>Stage 4:</i> Law and order orientation. Rules are accepted out of concern for the community.</p>
<p><u>Level 3: Post-Conventional Morality</u></p> <p>This is characterised by the attainment of genuine morality. Control over behaviour becomes internal at this stage.</p>	<p><i>Stage 5:</i> Morality of democratically accepted laws. The individual is motivated by the attainment of respect by another individual or community.</p> <p><i>Stage 6:</i> Orientation in agreement with universal principles. The person acts on self-chosen principles based on universal values.</p>

Kohlberg was cautious not to equate each stage with a particular chronological age. He believed that the moral development of the individual is a process where, within one particular age group, individuals can be at different stages. There are certain guidelines though where one can assume the individual should be, provided their development continues in an optimal manner. According to Balk (1995), most adolescents and adults function at level 2, which is conventional moral reasoning. They have internalised the standards of others, they conform to social conventions and think in terms of doing what is right to please others and obey the laws of society. Level 3 focuses on the individuals' ability to develop their own moral principles. It is made up of individuals who accept democratically recognised principles, not because they have to but because they believe in the principles. For that reason, moral reasoning is internalised and no longer based on external reward or punishment.

Kohlberg speculated that there was a positive relationship between moral development and cognitive development as well as being confronted with moral decision-making through experience (Langford, 1995). However, parents and peers have also been found to significantly influence the adolescents' development of moral reasoning (Rice, 1995). In childhood, adolescents gain their first knowledge of the world through observing the actions and attitudes of their parents. Their parents set rules based on their beliefs of what is honourable and immoral and convey to them the norms of society. Therefore, parents can assist in establishing the foundation of moral reasoning through a warm, emotional context. As a result of being respected, they are likely to be admired and imitated by their children, resulting in similar traits in adolescents. Furthermore, through the love and care adolescents receive from their parents, they learn consideration for others.

Parental discipline has too been shown to foster moral learning in youths (Rice, 1995). Authoritative disciplinary techniques, which are characterised by consistency, are motivated by the care and love of adolescents, and rely on clear, rational, verbal explanations have been associated with more parent-adolescent moral and non-moral value agreement (Bednar & Fisher, 2003; Pratt et al., 2003).

This seems to be effective as it involves cognitive reasoning and acknowledges adolescents' abilities to understand the reasoning of their parents and therefore to accept and internalise the values.

Peer groups have been identified as playing a significant role in the moral development of adolescents. During this period, parental influence begins to diminish, and the peer group becomes the primary reference group. Although the values of the peer group may be in conflict with the values of the family, parents are usually successful in encouraging interactions with peers who have similar values. However, adolescents who are neglected or rejected by their parents will primarily turn to the peer group for support (Bednar & Fisher, 2003). Without parental guidance, these adolescents are vulnerable and may become affiliated with a group that is characterised by deviant moral values and delinquent behaviour (Rice, 1995).

The Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Me.

*Like a cowardly lion, I sit in a corner wondering what comes next?
What came before? Why am I here? Where am I going?
These questions I've asked. These questions I will ask
I wish you well. I wish I could see the real me.
See if there is something to be seen....*

(A 17yr old girl's experience of adolescence).

Who Am I?

Adolescents' sense of self reflects what is commonly referred to as the **self-concept**, which is defined as the ideas and perceptions individuals have of themselves (Cobb, 1992). It implies a developing self-awareness of who and what one is. Although it is often referred to in the singular, the self-concept is essentially a multidimensional construct involving a collection of integrated self-perceptions comprising of the physical, the personal, the family, the social, and

the moral self (Gouws et al., 2000; Openshaw & Thomas, 1986). The self-concept is developed through specific meanings that are attached to daily experiences, resulting in theories being constructed about the self to assist in explaining how these various parts of our 'self' function.

The self-concept takes on a more abstract and adaptive nature during adolescence. Adolescents' self-awareness is heightened through cognitive maturity and they begin to link their different experiences to make general assumptions about themselves. Their ability for self-reflection creates concern and an opinion about themselves, and they begin to assess and attribute personal characteristics to themselves, which are integrated into the self-concept, for example, 'I am a caring person' (Cobb, 1992). However, the self-concept is not constructed through self-reflection alone. As many of these beliefs about the self are newly formulated, adolescents lack the experiences that confirm their beliefs resulting in the vulnerability of the new self-concept to confirming or disconfirming evidence from others.

Carl Rogers (cited in Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1989, p. 380) believed that individuals need unconditional positive regard, which is the "approval, appreciation, love, admiration and respect" of others, in order for them to meet their own needs for positive self-regard. Therefore, the development of the adolescents' self-concept is reliant on the esteem from others. From early childhood the self-concept is strongly influenced by the perception of others, and with the onset of adolescence, these perceptions exert an even stronger influence on the adolescents' perceptions of themselves. It is conventionally accepted that parents are the major sources of young children's self-concepts through their position as significant others providing relevant feedback (Jaffe, 1998). However, most self-concept theorists consider the feedback from peers as salient during adolescence (Dacey & Kenny, 1994; Jaffe, 1998). The adult influence on attitude development does begin to diminish and the importance of the peers' view begins to increasingly colour adolescents' view of themselves. Since the peer group is the predominant reference group from which they derive their support and identity

during this developmental stage, adolescents' self-concepts are developed further as a result of their relationships with their friends. It is through their relationships with others, both friends and family, that they learn about and come to define themselves.

Do I Like Myself?

Adams et al. (1994, p. 253) describe the self-esteem as, "a sense of self-acceptance, a personal liking for one's self, and a form of proper respect for oneself". More specifically, it involves the adolescents' feelings of approval or disapproval stemming from a process of self-evaluation associated with the self-concept (Jaffe, 1998; Openshaw & Thomas, 1986). If their self-evaluation leads to recognition and acceptance, and consequently a feeling of self-worth, adolescents have a high self-esteem. Conversely though, if their perceptions are negative, the result is a low self-esteem. According to William James (cited in Covey & Feltz, 1991), the self-esteem of adolescents is fostered by their observations of their abilities and their experience of accomplishment or failure, particularly in an area that is considered to be important.

It appears the foundation of self-esteem emerges in the family. Studies reveal that high self-esteem is associated with positive perceptions and interactions with parents from an early age (Ostgard-Ybrandt & Armelius, 2004). This may be established in infancy and extend throughout childhood and adolescence when the parent-child relationship is characterised by love, concern, interest, warmth, and support. As a result, infants may discover that their caregivers will meet their needs and a sense of trust begins to be developed. However, if these needs are not met, mistrust in their environment and in others may develop, and a feeling of insecurity and threat may pervade their future development. This is supported in the literature whereby people with low self-esteem generally feel socially insecure and anxious about the future (Kernis et al., 1993). Rosenberg (1985) concurs, and suggests a relationship exists between self-esteem and psychological well-being. He found an association between low self-esteem and depression, negative emotional states, anxiety, irritability, aggressiveness and alienation. The opposite

was also observed concerning high self-esteem and feelings of life satisfaction, a sense of command over one's life and a willingness to take moderate risks.

The self-concept seems to be the developmental precursor of self-esteem. Individuals must first form a belief in themselves, by assessing their strengths and weaknesses (self-concept), before being able to determine the degree of satisfaction or esteem to be accorded to this belief. The importance of these two constructs is their effect on the adolescents' ability to adjust. A negative self-concept and consequently low self-esteem, impacts on the adolescents' evaluation of their ability to realise their potential and therefore has a decisive influence on their behaviour and adjustment to the stressors they may face (Frydenberg, 1997). This is supported in the literature where studies reveal that low self-esteem is consistently associated with destructive and maladjusted behaviour in adolescents, such as, problem eating, suicidal ideation, and depressive symptoms (Groleger, Tomori & Kocmur, 2003; McGee & Williams, 2000; Pelkonen, Marttunen & Aro, 2003). A study by McWhirter et al. (2002) further revealed that low self-esteem along with low social coping successfully predicted social loneliness in adolescents, which may have significant implications for adolescents as their interactions with the peer group assist in their emotional and social development. Lastly, low self-esteem has also been associated with the increased risk of drug use in adolescents; however, in the same study it was revealed that a positive self-concept is an important protective factor for such behaviour (Smetana, Abernethy & Harris, 2000).

The value of a positive self-concept and high self-esteem in the prevention of long-term impairment of adolescents is evident. It has consistently been shown to be a reliable measure of mental health (Rosenberg, 1985), the ability to cope with problems (Fickova & Korcova, 2000; Frydenberg, 1997), to function under stress, and to form relationships with others (Heaven, 2001).

Emotional Development: Personal Identity

The constructs of self and identity are closely related. The self-concept consists of the varied perceptions that we have of ourselves. However, identity provides a sense of coherence and continuity to our understanding of our self (Cummings, 1995). Therefore, while we may play different roles at different times, our identity reassures us that we are the same person. Identity formation and development is synonymous with the work of Erik Erikson (1968). His theory of the psychosocial stages of development encompass the whole of the life span and take into account the individual's psychosocial relationships within the larger society. Each stage comprises two opposing poles, each reflecting a developmental possibility, which Erikson terms a developmental crisis. These possibilities are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, the solution to the crisis emanates through a fusion of both choices, thereby enabling individuals to proceed to a level of emotional development that is more advanced.

Erikson (1968) proposed that adolescence is the ideal time for deconstructing one's childhood identity and reconstructing a viable adult identity. Therefore, the crucial task of this stage of development is the resolution of the conflict of 'identity versus role confusion'. Adolescents experience an 'identity crisis', with the best possible outcome being a sense of continuity between their past, their current identity, and their future plans and goals, as well as congruence between how they and others perceive them (Irwin & Simons, 1994). An alternative outcome could be role confusion. This is defined as a difficulty in arriving at a self-definition, which may result in an extensive time being taken to reach adulthood (Kroger, 1996). In the search for identity, adolescents are confronted with the necessary task of making definitive choices for themselves from the experiences and possibilities available to them. Some of these choices involve values, past and present skills, behaviour, and future goals. As a result of role confusion, Adams et al. (1994) believe adolescents may experience this decision making as threatening as they have not immersed themselves in the exploration of the self and are unprepared to make the choices expected of them by society. A certain amount of identity confusion is to be expected though (Balk, 1995), and possibly explains

both the chaotic nature of their behaviour and their painful self-consciousness about their looks. Further confusion may be exhibited in their regression into childish behaviour to avoid resolving conflicts or by committing themselves impulsively to poorly thought-out courses of action.

Implicit in identity formation is role experimentation (Newman & Newman, 1988). Within the adolescents' environment, there is a growing awareness of behaviours, roles and life-styles, which encourage modelling from external agents. The peer group plays a prominent role in this experimentation as they provide the playground and encouragement to engage in new behaviour as well as important social feedback to adolescents. Within the limitations set by the family, adolescents are likely to experiment with a range of behaviours and roles as they set out to achieve their identity. This behaviour is likely to challenge the family norms, which may lead to misunderstandings between parents and adolescents resulting in conflict. Role experimentation extends further into heterosexual relations, with friendships and instances of being in love. These relationships act as a sounding board that reflects the adolescents' own values, attitudes and emotions. Erikson (1968) considered that becoming intimate with another person and sharing thoughts and feelings, as moments where the adolescent offers up his or her own tentative identity, sees it reflected in the loved one and is therefore better able to clarify the self.

The fundamental virtue arising from the 'identity crisis' is fidelity, which is sustained loyalty, or a sense of belonging to another person (Erikson, 1968). Self-identification emerges when adolescents choose values and people to be loyal to, rather than accepting them from the significant adults in their lives. This ability to make a personal choice represents an extensively developed sense of trust. It is no longer only important to trust others, but also to be trustworthy oneself. Adolescents will now begin to transfer their trust and loyalty from their parents to others who can help guide them through life.

Although Erikson's theory remains the starting point for research on identity, other researchers have expanded on his theory in an effort to refine this construct. James Marcia (1980) elaborated on Erikson's fifth psychosocial stage of identity versus role confusion. In accordance with Erikson's theory, Marcia identified two variables that are vital for the attainment of a mature identity, namely exploration (crisis) and commitment. According to Marcia (1980), adolescents are faced with selecting various behavioural and attitudinal options (exploration). They can either search for what fits them best (commitment), or they can forgo making any choices and be guided by their parents' values. This process of achieving a personal identity is demanding as it may involve challenging parental figures in the course of making decisions for themselves. However, this is necessary if adolescents are going to achieve a sense of 'self' and not a sense of how their parents view their 'self'. With the employment of these two variables, exploration and commitment, to Erikson's fifth stage, Marcia identified the following four identity statuses:

- *Identity Diffusion*

These adolescents have not yet made personal commitments to a set of beliefs. These adolescents appear to have a lower self-esteem and experience feelings of inadequacy and alienation. Their unwillingness to enter into an exploration of the self results in an acceptance of incorrect descriptions of themselves and a readiness to be influenced by peers. Consequently, they are more likely to engage in deviant behaviour to satisfy the meaninglessness they feel (Muuss, 1996).

- *Identity Foreclosure*

Any significant identity exploration has on the whole, been avoided by these adolescents, and usually through premature choices endorsed by their parents. For the most part, they have made a personal commitment to certain beliefs. However, since they have not yet experienced a crisis, they have not been confronted with making their own decisions (Muuss, 1996). These adolescents blindly adopt their parents' beliefs as their own and strongly support authoritarian

values, such as obedience, strong leadership and respect for authority (Marcia, 1980).

- *Identity Moratorium*

These teenagers are experiencing a delayed drawn-out exploration of their identity and have not made any choices or a personal commitment. They are engaged in a personal struggle and are evaluating the alternatives. Experimentation with a variety of roles and behaviours is to be expected, which can be observed in the consistent change of friends and 'what's in'. Understandably, these adolescents experience increased anxiety due to their prolonged state of uncertainty (Atwater, 1996); however, their self-esteem appears to be stable. They are introspective and explorative, and aware of their thoughts and feelings. As a result, they are capable of intimate interpersonal relationships. Although parents may find this stage of exploration and consistent change tedious, it is very necessary for identity-achievement.

- *Identity Achievement*

This stage signals the resolution of the identity crisis and is synonymous with maturity and identity formation. Having confronted the crisis(es) and made a personal commitment, individuals have effectively linked future aspirations with the past, thus creating a sense of personal continuity (Muuss, 1996). These individuals reflect self-confidence, security, and emotional maturity and their commitment to friends and heterosexual relationships is strong and well established.

Although the theories of Erikson and Marcia are neatly delineated, it should be kept in mind that the process of identity formation is characterised by uncertainty and the exploration of a multitude of choices that are neither clear nor without risk.

Personal Relationships

Adolescents' development of an identity is significantly dependent on their separation from their parents. However, they still require support and guidance in making the transition to independence. The effect that this separation has on the parent-child relationship will be explored as well as the relationships with peers - the people to whom they turn for emotional support.

Relationships with Parents

In order for adolescents to achieve a personal identity or sense of self, relationships with parents need to be redefined and a certain amount of detachment needs to take place. The parent-adolescent relationship is not always characterised by conflict, as traditionally believed. Early developmentalists such as Hall and the traditional psychoanalysts described adolescence as a period of "storm and stress" (Jaffe, 1998, p. 16), where cataclysmic events perturb parent-adolescent relationships to the point where it is impossible for the family to maintain emotional balance (Cobb, 1992). This view has been criticised for being established upon research that was conducted on the clinical cases of troubled teens, and generalised to the population. Investigations on 'normal' adolescents revealed that although there does seem to be an increase in conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship, this does not preclude them from remaining close (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2002). Relationships with parents remain both important in adolescence **and** they are renegotiated (Steinberg, 1987b; 1989). They are therefore characterised by both change and continuity (Cobb, 1992).

The adolescents' ability for self-awareness leads to their understanding of how their relationships with their parents differ from the ones they share with their friends. In their peer relationships, the distribution of power is generally equal. Therefore, they share in the decision-making and negotiate the differences that may arise in the relationship. However, this differs from parent-adolescent relationships. As children, adolescents held little power in their relationships with parents; they made fewer decisions and usually conformed to parental

expectations (Dacey & Kenny, 1994). As they enter into adolescence, the parent-adolescent relationship is in flux. With their need to achieve a single sense of themselves, adolescents begin to push for fuller participation in relationships with their parents, beginning with the decisions that concern them (Dacey & Kenny, 1994). Many of the arguments between adolescents and parents concern trivial matters such as schoolwork, loud music, personal appearance, and chores; however, underlying most arguments is not *what* to decide but *who* gets to decide.

One of the developmental tasks of adolescence is to become more autonomous, which entails separating from the family and taking responsibility for one's actions. This entails challenging patterns set in childhood, which may be misinterpreted by parents and consequently amplify the already turbulent nature of their relationships (Jaffe, 1998). Although the conflict is not an enjoyable experience for either adolescents or parents, it is a necessary part of adolescents' development towards self-reliance (Baumrind, 1991). In expressing and defending their opinions and differentiating their views from their parents, they are discovering how to think for themselves and gain increased independence.

Since the parent-adolescent relationship is in a state of flux, the disciplinary style of the parent may need to be reassessed as well. Parents need to walk a fine line between granting adolescents sufficient independence to support their development whilst still protecting them from immature lapses in judgement. Steinberg (2001) believes the authoritative parenting style seems to provide this balance, as it offers warmth and acceptance; assertiveness about rules and values, and demonstrates a willingness to listen, explain and negotiate. This is contrasted with the authoritarian style, where adolescents are taught to follow their parents' demands and decisions without question and avoid any decision-making of their own, the permissive style, where adolescents are cared for but are responsible for regulating their own behaviour, and the rejecting-neglecting style where parents do not demand anything from their children, although they are also not receptive of their children's needs (Adams et al., 1994; Baumrind, 1991;

Jaffe, 1998). Authoritative parenting seems to be successful with adolescents as it takes into account their cognitive development. When parents explain the reasons behind a particular stance, they acknowledge the adolescents' ability to evaluate a situation on a more sophisticated cognitive level. The contrary is true for adolescents raised in an autocratic environment where parents stifle the adolescents' attempts to exercise their newfound cognitive abilities in an attempt to control and dominate. Consequently, adolescents raised in these environments may display hostility and resentment towards their parents (Olapegba & Emelogu, 2004). A recent study by Wolfradt, Hempel & Miles (2003) further supports the view that the authoritarian style has a negative impact on adolescents. Their findings revealed adolescents raised in this manner exhibited increased anxiety and a decreased ability to cope, whereas, those raised by authoritative and permissive parents demonstrated enhanced coping behaviour.

The changes to the adolescent-parent relationship is emotionally challenging for both. Adolescents experience a constant tension between trying to establish their own private identity while at the same time staying connected to their parents. The adolescents' emotional turmoil is matched by the parents' ambivalence, which is derived from them simultaneously wanting their children to be independent and wanting to keep them dependent.

Relationships with Peers

The changes adolescents experience during this stage of development reverberate through all the arenas of their lives. However, they are least able to turn to their parents in the face of these changes, as the relationships with their parents are undergoing change themselves. The peer group plays an important role in the adolescents' move towards achieving autonomy and independence from their parents. Jaffe (1998, p. 269) feels that during adolescence, "[m]ost teenagers come to prefer the companionship of peers to that of family members". Within the peer group, they find reassurance in being able to turn to their friends with their concerns, triumphs, secrets and plans and create a relatively safe base for

experimentation to take place. They come to regard loyalty as critical to a friendship, they compete less, and share more with their friends than they do as younger children (Irwin & Simons, 1994). These changes are partly due to cognitive development, as adolescents are able to express both their thoughts and feelings and can also consider another person's point of view.

During adolescence, both males and females regard friends as important. However, the two genders emphasise different aspects of the relationships. For girls, the emphasis falls upon mutual trust and self-disclosure. They are open to disclosing their feelings, especially with reference to the anxieties and concerns they experience regarding their physical changes as well as the changes to their parental and heterosexual relationships (Camarena, Sarigiani & Peterson, 1990; Miller, 1990). Boys, however, place less emphasis on self-disclosure and being emotionally understood, and are more concerned with finding someone who shares similar interests and activities (Camarena et al., 1990; Hartup & Overhauser, 1991). Although intimacy is established through their shared activities and experiences and less through discussing their feelings, they too regard loyalty and trust as an important characteristic in their peers.

Members of adolescent peer groups usually are similar to begin with (Mounts & Steinberg, 1995). The need for similarity in friendships may be important to adolescents' as they have to struggle to differentiate themselves from their parents; therefore they need the support of people like themselves. This need may be exhibited in the manner in which adolescents often imitate each other's behaviour and conform to the norms of the peer group (Atwater, 1996). However, as they become surer of themselves, they may be more likely to make up their own minds and to stick with their decisions in the face of disagreement from either parents or peers.

The Importance of Mothers and Fathers

As children, adolescents gain their first awareness and experience of others within the context of the family. The family plays a pivotal role as a socialising agent, where knowledge of the world is acquired, and as an irreplaceable support system. Consequently, any disturbance to the family, and more specifically, to the parent-adolescent bond, can have disturbing implications for the adolescent. As Pipher (1994, p. 292) states, "[g]rowth requires courage and hard work on the part of the individual and it requires the protection and nurturing of the environment".

It has been a common belief that the father has a significantly smaller impact on the development of the child than the mother. However, the importance of being raised in a home with a loving, involved father is indicated in the research (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Videon, 2005). Nielsen (1996) is of the opinion that adolescents are less aggressive, more self-disciplined, and more successful if their relationships with their fathers are close and loving. This is related to three kinds of behaviour that are mostly gained from the father-adolescent relationship, namely, self-reliance, assertiveness, and self-discipline (Biller, 1993; Snarey, 1993). Traditionally, the father has been the model for children to learn the skills and attitudes for achievement outside of the home. It is his insistence on self-reliance and self-discipline that is especially beneficial during adolescence when the skills to succeed academically, socially, and vocationally are needed.

On Daughters

During adolescence, the time spent between fathers and daughters usually diminishes and the emotional bond weakens. Daughters, however, rely on their fathers during this time to assist them in separating from their mothers and establishing an identity of their own (Secunda, 1992). A close bond with their fathers encourages their self-reliance and individuation from their mothers without losing the support of their family.

During adolescence, the qualities needed for academic and vocational success, namely; assertiveness, competitiveness and confidence, begin to diminish in girls. Seeing as it is traditionally fathers who promote these qualities more than mothers, the fathers' role is imperative in encouraging these skills in their daughters' lives (Biller, 1993; Flouri, Buchanan & Bream, 2002; Snarey, 1993). Mothers are also an important source of vocational information and encouragement for their daughters' intellectual development and financial security. According to Lerner and Galambos (1991), women who are more educated and are recruited into higher paying professions, were raised by mothers who contributed to the financial income of the house. This suggests then that mothers function as role models. As daughters develop, they may set goals for themselves that emulate their mothers' goals, which consequently may influence their pursuit of a career or not. However, the converse may also be true. With the changes to the expectations of gender roles within society and the emancipation of women, daughters may utilise the additional opportunities available to them, such as tertiary education, to exceed their mothers' achievements.

The manner in which fathers respond to their daughters' changing body and increasing sexuality has a significant impact on adolescent girls' feelings and perceptions of these changes. By acknowledging their sexual maturity and encouraging romantic relationships, fathers are able to reduce some of the anxiety felt about these awakenings and assist in developing their self-confidence and respect for their body, which is the basis for future intimate relationships. This is supported by the findings of Ellis et al. (2003), who identified a positive relationship between father absence and early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy in adolescent girls. Mothers can further assist their daughters in the manner in which they speak of, and exhibit their own enjoyment and security in their sexuality and appearance. With the emphasis that is placed on appearance by society and the pressure to conform and fit in during this awkward stage, mothers have the opportunity to illustrate to their daughters the importance of accepting themselves (Byely et al., 2000; Flaake, 1993; Flax, 1993).

It may be difficult for most fathers to allow their daughters the independence they seek as they mature into young women. However, it is suggested by Secunda (1992), that the manner in which fathers respond to their daughters' individuation, can have far reaching consequences. If fathers react by withdrawing from their daughters, this lack of support in their independence can encourage a continuation of dependency on them. To attain the approval of their fathers, daughters may develop false selves, which are qualities of the self that are created exclusively to please their fathers. If taken to the extreme, they may become co-dependent in future relationships, especially romantic ones, where they will sacrifice their own needs to please and satisfy the needs of others. As Snarey (1993) describes, it is fathers' involvement in their daughters' adolescent development that allows them to successfully negotiate the establishment of an autonomous identity and provide opportunities for them to be constructive in assertive interactions with males.

On Sons

Traditionally, fathers have more authority and command than mothers in the family. Therefore, they are more likely to help their sons develop more adaptive and mature ways of thinking and behaving; thereby limiting the possibility of them acting out exaggerated notions of their masculinity, such as extreme aggression and sexual promiscuity (Snarey, 1993).

Fathers play a further role in their sons' vocational and educational achievements (Biller, 1993; Flouri et al., 2002). In the course of adolescence, boys look to their fathers as role models and require their fathers' encouragement in preparation for financial independence. It is generally believed that sons will follow in their fathers' footsteps in terms of socio-economic level. However, differences can occur where sons will fail to emulate their fathers' accomplishments, or they may transcend their fathers' achievements or lack thereof, which is usually then a source of pride for most fathers.

Although the relationship between fathers and daughters is important, it is indicated in the literature that it is sons who need their fathers most (Barber & Delfabbro, 2000; Biller, 1993). When entering adolescence, teenage boys look for approval from their fathers that they have entered manhood, and left their boyish years behind. However, for boys to realise the self-reliance, self-discipline, and social maturity needed for the approval from their fathers, it is necessary to establish some independence from their mothers. Since the approval of mothers is more easily gained than from fathers, the surrender of this comfort and approval requires assistance from mothers in separating from them. The process of individuation from mothers is in danger when the father is absent due to traditional gender roles in our society that imply sons should take responsibility for their mothers, both financially and emotionally (Biller, 1993).

The father-son relationship becomes increasingly competitive and argumentative throughout most of adolescence. Sons require this competition and emotional distance from their fathers to explore their beliefs and opinions separate from their fathers in an attempt to foster their self-confidence, to become self-reliant, and develop an identity of their own. In gaining independence from their mothers and creating emotional distance from their fathers, adolescent boys are able to realise their identity (Biller, 1993; Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 1997; Snarey, 1993).

Whether we are talking about sons or daughters, the importance of both parents in the lives of adolescents is evident. In striving for autonomy and recognition, and the establishment of a unique identity, most adolescents do not need to separate themselves completely from either parent. Instead, it is necessary for adolescents and their parents to redefine the connections that have been established in childhood.

Conclusion

Adolescence is the period of development between childhood and adulthood, involving multiple dimensions. It is unlike any other stage of the life span, where adolescents navigate a 'no-man's land'. Each change that the adolescent experiences, from the physical and sexual awakening of their bodies, to the boundlessness of their cognitive processes, transforms the life they once knew. They are consumed with a feeling of uncertainty and fear; fear of being talked about, teased and being different. Their relationships with parents are perturbed and they spend much of these years finding their way through the uncertainty with their ill-equipped peers as their companions. Their emotions are heightened by unfulfilled expectations of obtaining the freedom to decide for themselves, to exert their own independence, and to assume responsibilities. At the essence of their development though is their search for who they are and their place in the ever-changing world. As they try on identity after identity, they begin to choose their own values, beliefs, and goals that are required for the next stage of their journey into adulthood.

Heaven (2001) believes adolescence in the twenty-first century is more challenging for adolescents than in previous centuries. Some of the difficulty can be attributed to the secular trend, where adolescents spend an increased length of time in this period of development. Other reasons are the adolescents' increased exposure and access to substances such as drugs and alcohol as well as the deterioration of support structures such as the family (Hamburg, cited in Heaven, 2001). Therefore, adolescents who are managing the normative challenges of this developmental stage and are further required to cope with the non-normative stressor of their parents' divorce, may be increasingly vulnerable to emotional and behavioural maladjustment. The following chapter will give an overview of the current understanding of the impact of divorce and attempt to highlight the manner in which adolescents cope with the changing family.

