

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **SELF-EVALUATION BY THE ADOLESCENT, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE BLACK ADOLESCENT**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence stands out as a fascinating, interesting and challenging period of human growth and development. To suggest that every young person experiences severe stress would be misleading according to Ralston & Thomas (1974:18). Some young people manage to endure this period of “travail” with a minimum of discomfort. The severity of any adolescent’s turmoil will depend on the individual himself/herself and his/her family background.

Feshback & Weiner (1996:577) regard adolescence as a transitional period in human development between childhood and adulthood, from the onset of puberty to the early twenties. Gouws & Kruger (1994:3) put the lower and the upper limit of adolescence between 11 years and 22 years respectively. They conclude that the period of adolescence can be divided into three stages, namely early adolescence, mid-adolescence, and late adolescence. As far as this research is concerned, adolescents are deemed to be people who would normally form part of the secondary school population.

It would seem that the difference between black and white adolescents is not only in colour, culture, creed and language, but in other dimensions as well. Whilst there are differences in cultures and languages amongst the black people, including the Venda, there are many similarities as well. Some of the differences between black and white adolescents will be listed below. From research conducted in four high schools in Cape Town, South Africa, by Mboya (1994:163), the following findings have emerged:

- Black adolescents scored significantly higher than their white counterparts in global self-concept.

- White adolescents scored significantly higher than their black counterparts in the physical ability and emotional stability self-concepts.
- Poor African Americans and Native American adolescents perform well below white in all subjects and at all grade levels (Davis & Reed:291).

It appears that the value placed on self differs between black and white adolescents. For example, Black adolescents regard physical appearance as an important component of their total view of themselves, whilst white adolescents perceive physical abilities and emotional stability as important components of their self-concept (Mboya 1994:164).

### **3.2 THE ADOLESCENT**

Feshback & Weiner (1991:278) defines adolescence as a period of transition; the adolescent is in the process of moving from the status of child to the status of adult. It is a period of development marked by profound physical, social and psychological changes. The term “adolescence” derives from the Latin verb *adolescere*, meaning to grow up or to grow to adulthood (Vrey1990:165).

Adolescence usually starts when an individual attains sexual maturity and ends when he/she becomes legally independent of his/her parents. It is easy to determine the onset of adolescence, but it is not easy to determine its end. The onset of puberty is characterised by physiological changes in a child’s body, but the end thereof is determined by cultural factors.

Because there are many cultures in the world, each culture will have its own criteria of determining the end of adolescence. Gouws & Kruger (1994:3) state that, unlike the onset of puberty where physical development is the main criterium, a variety of social, legal, psychological and economic criteria are applied to determine the end of adolescence.

Different authors have different descriptions of the end of adolescence, the following descriptions are but a few:

- Adolescence ends with an individual's ability to live by his/her own means and to follow a successful occupation (Gouws & Kruger 1994:3).
- From a social perspective, adolescence ends when an individual assumes adult roles such as matrimony or parenthood (Gouws & Kruger 1994:3).
- Hurlock states that adolescence ends when an adolescent becomes legally independent of his/her parents (Ramalebana 1995:6).
- Legally, adolescence ends when an individual becomes eligible to vote (age 18) (Louw, Botha, Gerdes, Louw, Meyer, Piek, Raubenheimer, Schoeman, Thom, Van Ede & Van S Weirt 1992:377).

Stanley Hall (Ramalebana 1995:10) believed that young people's efforts to adjust to their changing bodies ushered in a period of "storm and stress". In those days, the adolescent was also regarded as an individual racked by inner turmoil. This view seems to have changed or is in the stage of changing. Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:13) state that, despite all these changes, the adolescent is perhaps at the most wonderful time of his/her life, for the following reasons:

- He/she is at the peak or nearing a peak of physical fitness.
- His/her health is good.
- Socially he/she enjoys the companionship of his/her peers and is making lasting friendships.
- He/she is able to take part in arguments, debating logically.
- He/she looks forward to a future career with its possibilities of studying further or training.

The above-mentioned facts concerning the adolescent indicate to us that the stage of adolescence is not just doom and gloom; it is also a period of glory. With proper guidance from educators, adolescence may change from being a stressful period to an enjoyable one.

It is a fact that some adolescents are impossible to cope with because they are rude, cheeky, naughty, truant and moody. We can, however, not generalise and say that all is not well with all adolescents. The fact of the matter is that adolescents are in a period of transition, and any transition is hard to cope with, whether it is social, political or otherwise.

### 3.3 THE ADOLESCENT AND SELF- EVALUATION

It seems reasonable to assume that adolescents self-descriptions will be more favourable than descriptions provided by their parents, teachers or even peers. Several studies for example by Carlisle & Changs (1996:20), Stone (1997:660), Pakaslahti & Keltikangas-Järvinen (2000:177) and Cliffordson (2001:38) have shown that adolescents manifest more positive opinions of themselves than others have of them.

Adolescents have a much more sophisticated view of what is involved in a sense of self than younger children. Whereas the self-descriptions of younger children tend to centre on concrete characteristics, the self-descriptions of adolescents are centred on interpersonal relationship, self-evaluation, and conflicting feelings. During adolescence, self-conceptions also become more differentiated and better organised. Conger (1991:59) gives an example of the concrete flavour of the nine-year-old boy's self-description, emphasising his age, self, physical characteristics, and his likes and dislikes. The self-description reads as follows:

- My name is Bruce.
- I have brown hair.
- I have brown eyebrows.
- I am a boy.

Conger (1991:59) also gives a 17-year-old girl's self-description. It is set out as follows:

- I am a human being.
- I am an American.
- I don't know who I am.
- I am an ambitious person.
- I am a radical.

From these self-descriptive statements it is evident that young children mostly emphasise their gender or physical features like brown hair, for example; they mainly describe how they look (eg brown eyebrows). The self-concept of adolescents is, however, somewhat different from that of younger children. The adolescents describe themselves in terms of their beliefs and personality characteristics, qualities which are more essential and intrinsic to the self and which produce a picture of the self, which is sharp and unique (Conger 1991:59-60). Adolescents are able to express their aspirations and desires, for example “I am a radical”.

According to Suls & Wills (1991:33) how one’s ability compares with that of a friend may matter a great deal more than if it is compared with a stranger’s ability, not because one gains a more accurate self-evaluation, but because one’s emotional ties with friends give the comparison more impact. Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:206) state that self-evaluation is usually arrived at by aligning or comparing oneself with peers or admired others. Suls & Wills (1991:32) contend that a swimmer evaluating his/her swimming speed, would consider not only other swimmers’ swimming speed, the dimension under evaluation, but will also consider other dimensions, such as other swimmers age and gender. For example, a girl who is evaluating herself in high jump will compare herself against other girls. She will compare herself with girls of her own age. If a girl of her age jumps higher than herself, she will then know that her high jumping skill needs improvement. If she jumps higher than girls of her own age, she will regard herself as a good high jumper. If a girl can jump higher than boys of her age, she will regard herself as very good. This will not only make her feel happy, but it will make her feel proud and perhaps boastful that she has physically performed even better than some of the boys.

Suls & Wills (1991:106) suggest that individuals presumably interested in self-evaluation will first select information about the highest performing others when similar others provide a better chance for accurate self-assessment. If an educator produces a D symbol in Mathematics in Grade 12 in a school where the best symbol in previous years was an E in Grade 12 Mathematics, such an educator will regard himself/herself as good. If such an educator can produce a B or an A symbol, he/she will regard himself/herself as the best when comparing himself/herself with the educators who taught Grade 12 Mathematics before him. Suls & Wills (1991:106) maintain that related attributes seem to be useful in

serving the goal of self-evaluation because related attributes allow one to understand the meaning or implication of one's standing on the dimension under evaluation much better.

According to the explanation by Diggory (1966:102), self-evaluations are made exclusively in terms of comparisons with others. He further states that self-evaluation may, to some extent, be determined by the superiority of the group of which one is a member, and that one changes things on the basis of the capacity one has, which other people may not have. Boys will normally compare themselves with other boys, while girls will compare themselves with other girls. If a junior athlete can perform better than a senior athlete in the same event, the junior athlete will regard himself/herself as good in athletics.

Other adolescents act as yardstick by which an adolescent can measure and evaluate the self. When an adolescent has some shortcoming, he or she may see the need to transform, it is mainly as a result of comparison between one's self and others that personal weaknesses are detected and can be improved. If weaknesses are improved, they lead to strengths. It is usually those adolescents who evaluate themselves negatively, who may not succeed in their future lives.

Research has proven that there is a positive relationship between self-evaluation and achievement or performance in school (Friedland 1992:97). Friedland (1992:97) further states that this positive relationship is also confirmed by other top researchers in this area. If an adolescent evaluates himself/herself positively, chances are that he/she may also succeed, not only in school but also in life. Adolescents will otherwise exhibit distorted values, lack proper discipline and have unrealistic goals. These would translate into low interest, low motivation and low achievement in both school and life. Research conducted in New Jersey found that subjects were most distressed by their failure in a task that was personally important to them when a peer or friend performed better than them (Suls & Wills 1991:33).

As already stated above, an adolescent always evaluates himself against others. Vrey (1990:47) maintains that one anticipates the judgement of people whom one esteems, and this gives rise to the subjective standards by which one evaluates one's actions, and in fact one's total identity. It has already been mentioned elsewhere in this study that self-evaluation has a subjective nature. One's sex or name,

height or weight and prowess in reading, prose-writing or mathematics, are evaluated as good or bad against one's own subjective standard. This self-evaluation is a basic component of self-perception. Webster & Sobieszek (1974:41) are of the opinion that to say an individual has a high self-evaluation, without specifying that his/her self-evaluation is high relative to the evaluation he/she holds of some others, gives little information about his/her likely interactional pattern with others. Festinger (Rosenberg, Schooler & Schoenback 1989:1006-1007) also maintains that in the absence of objective information about themselves, people judge themselves on the basis of comparison with others. Furthermore, he states that those who do well should receive more favourably reflected appraisals from significant others.

In almost the same description, Gouws & Kruger (1994:6) contend that when people evaluate their own achievements and actions, they do so subjectively because other people's reaction to their achievements affects their self-evaluation.

The role played by peers is sometimes also influenced by gender. As far as boys are concerned, they only have peers of the same sex or own sex to worry about, but it is different with girls. With regard to boys, Harper & Marshall (1991:806) state that the masculine and achievement roles of adolescent boys fit them well enough, but the feminine and achievement roles of adolescent girls are in conflict.

Consequently, high achieving boys can reasonably expect peer and overt teachers' acceptance. High-achieving girls, on the other hand, may gain success only at the expense of peers, not only of boys, but of other girls as well.

### **3.4 GENDER AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCE IN SELF-EVALUATION**

Adolescents differ according to how much they have planned the future, the extent to which they believe they can influence it, and how optimistic they are. Nurmi & Pullianinen (1991:35) contend that a number of factors, such as age, family support, self-esteem and sex or gender, have been shown to explain these differences in adolescents' orientation to the future.

A number of studies have found that adolescent girls report lower self-esteem than adolescent boys. According to Harper & Marshall (1991:801), an explanation for these findings has been that they reflect the evaluation of women by a society that promotes masculine over feminine attributes. Research conducted in Australia has showed in a graph comparing boys and girls on the self-esteem scale that, as an adolescent grows older, the gap appears to start widening significantly in favour of boys having a higher self-esteem (Burnett 1990:162).

At present, the Republic of South Africa is said to be a non-sexist country and, according to her constitution, no person shall be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly on the grounds of, for example, sex (RSA Government Gazette 1994:810). Research findings (Harper & Marshall 1991:800) have revealed that there is a significant difference between boys and girls in respect of their self-evaluation. Harper & Marshall (1991:800) also state that a common finding has been that girls are troubled by interpersonal relationships while boys are concerned about finance, education, and vocational issues. From the study conducted in England and Ireland, results exposed that boys were more concerned with authority, restriction and rules and being combative and aggressive, while girls were more self-critical, self-aware and perhaps more neurotic (Harper & Marshall 1991:800).

Research conducted in Queensland, Australia, on gender and developmental differences in self-evaluation and self-esteem revealed that boys reported higher scores than girls on descriptive and evaluative statements about their physical abilities and mathematics, while girls reported higher scores on descriptive and evaluative statements (Burnett 1990:159).

Although women's movements have promoted a notion that girls can do anything and despite affirmative action and equal opportunity efforts, employers all over the world probably remain conservative in their view of what women can do in the work force. According to Harper & Marshall (1991:800), the impact of these opposing forces on women's self-esteem is unclear.

The result of an instrument of gender effect on the self, developed by Mathews and Angulo in Australia (Sharpley 1993:120-123), revealed that adolescent males had significantly higher scores than adolescents females. The subjects in this research were an equal number of boys and girls, 40 in each



group. All subjects were white - and there were no black students - and all came from a middle-class group. They responded to the study on how a person sees himself or herself.

Boys and girls are also judged differently by peers. As far as girls are concerned, research findings have revealed that, in their search for identity by progressively adopting the mature female role, girls may become confused and conflicted as a result of inconsistent expectations of peers or others about their behaviour. It has been assumed that movement toward adoption of the maturing male role by boys is less conflicted, particularly as it relates to achievement (Harper & Marshall 1991:806).

In a study conducted in Ottawa, Canada, in 1990, a review of the substantive literature involving gender differences in self-concept yields overwhelmingly discrepant findings. Hansford and Hattie (Byrne 1990:255) argue that researchers have addressed substantive questions of sex differences in self-concept before the questions related to theory and measurement have been resolved. They cite limitations such as:

- the lack of a psychometrically limited instrument
- the use of simplistic or inappropriate methodological procedures

These researchers test specifically for the invariance of the multidimensional structure of the self-concept displayed in adolescent boys and girls. Results have indicated non-equivalencies that are relatively minor with respect to the self-concept structure for each sex (Byrne 1990:256).

The difference in gender does not only manifest itself in matters relating to self-evaluation, but is also extended to other spheres. Kim, Plate and Wise of the University of Nebraska have found that there is a differential performance in mathematics achievement between boys and girls as early as first grade. Byrne (1990:275) contends that the discrepancy between boys and girls regarding mathematics achievement appears to increase in later grades. In the studies of mathematical achievement and sex differences reviewed by Fenmema in 1974, boys performed better than girls in tests measuring mathematical reasoning ability. The study conducted by Watt (2000:331) found that boys had higher

perceptions of mathematics talent than girls. This may be attributed to their higher self-evaluation in mathematics.

Byrne (1990:267) concludes that, although results based on the examination of parameter estimates have suggested possible gender differences related to self-concept, firm evidence can only come from a more stringent test of hypotheses related to their invariance in boys and girls. As far as academic self-concept as measured by the Lickert and Guttman scales is concerned, there is a significant difference between adolescent boys and girls. The findings suggest that scores are more reliable for adolescent boys, than for adolescent girls. For the adolescent girls, on the other hand, distinctions are more clearly differentiated; self-evaluations of their ability in one area appear to have little bearing on perceived abilities in other areas (Byrne 1990:270).

### **3.5 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND SELF-EVALUATION**

It seems that demographic factors will have a direct bearing on adolescents' self-evaluation. Adolescents from a wealthy background will possibly not have the same self-evaluation as adolescents from a poor background. The definition of socio-economic status as used in this research will include aspects such as the following (Rosenberg et al 1989:1008):

- fathers' occupational status
- parents' education
- possessions in the home
- number of books in the home
- number of rooms per person

It would seem that adolescents from a poor background will also have a low self-evaluation, whereas adolescents who come from a wealthy background will have a positive self-evaluation as a result of a higher self-esteem. Self-esteem as used in this study does not imply feelings of superiority or perfection, but feelings of self-acceptance, self-respect and generally positive self-evaluation (Rosenberg et al

1989:1008). Research on the relationship between socio-economic status and self-esteem has already been conducted in Maryland, USA, and the findings are as follows:

In the lower socio-economic status (SES) of adolescents, self-esteem is boosted by delinquency, whereas in the higher and middle (SES) groups, it is exactly the opposite, conclude Rosenberg et al (1989:1011). It is, therefore, predicted that even in matters related to self-evaluation, the socio-economic level of the adolescent will have a significant role to play.

From the researcher's observation of Venda adolescents in different Venda secondary schools, it is clear that adolescents from a high or medium socio-economic status have a positive self-evaluation, while adolescents from a low socio-economic status have a negative self-evaluation. If this status quo continues, it will give rise to a vicious circle, because adolescents from a low socio-economic class with a negative self-evaluation will also end up in a low socio-economic class, just like their parents.

Similarly, their offspring (adolescents' children) will be born in a low socio-economic class, then most probably behave as their parents have done and also end up where their parents have been. From the study, it is evident that Venda adolescents from a low socio-economic class do not accept themselves. They also do not care about anything good, including attending school. In general, they do not enjoy a good relationship with their parents, possibly because many find themselves in large polygamous families.

### **3.6 DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BLACK ADOLESCENTS**

The different dimensions of development will be mentioned and discussed in this section. As the adolescent grows physically, he also develops psychologically, emotionally, socially and otherwise. This leads to the development of personality, self-concept, self-evaluation, and so on. We should be mindful of the fact that the different dimensions of development take place simultaneously.

#### **3.6.1 Physical development**

Authors and researchers who are and have been concerned with the adolescent, all agree that the first phase of adolescence is characterised by sexual maturity. As early as 1952, that is more than 50 years ago, Malm & Jamison (1952:73) postulated that the beginning of adolescence was marked by physical growth and the ability to be sexually excited, and to feel sexual desire. The onset of adolescence is characterised by sexual maturity, irrespective of colour or race.

Research conducted by Grinder in the USA reveals the following results concerning black and white adolescents' characteristics of physical growth. Whereas black boys are slightly taller at 7 and 9 years, white boys are slightly taller from 9 to 12 years, the two groups are virtually identical in mean heights from 12 to 14 years, and the height of white boys consistently surpasses white girls from 7 to 14 years of age, but from 14 to 17 years the mean height of white girls become slightly, but consistently greater. The mean weights of black girls are greater than those of white girls from ages 11 to 15 (Grinder 1978:52-54). Grinder (1978:54) concludes that the discrepancies between the height and weight growth patterns of white and black youth may, in part, be accounted for by nutritional factors.

### **3.6.1.1      *Body image***

Body image has an impact on a person's self-evaluation. Mendelson et al (2001:90) state that body esteem refers to self-evaluation of one's body or appearance. Body esteem measures do not always distinguish between self-evaluation of appearance and of weight.

The adolescent's body image (ie his/her perception of his/her body) is associated with his/her sense of his/her own worth and is determined by his/her experience of how others see his/her (Gouws & Kruger 1994:22). Gouws & Kruger further contend that aspects of an adolescent's physical development, such as early or late development, sexual maturation and obesity therefore affect his/her body, which, in turn, impacts psychologically on his/her self-concept and personality development (Gouws & Kruger 1994:22). Smart, Smart & Smart (1978:30) and also Eagle and Schwartz (1994:142) agree that self-concept is affected by adequacy of appearance and type of physique, and these influence the expectations and evaluations of others. Personal appearance becomes a preoccupation that is

determined by the group. These authors conclude that problems may arise when a child reaches puberty earlier or later than most children of his age, since social demands and opportunities are often consistent with physical maturity rather than actual age (Smart et al 1978:30).

For most children, puberty begins around the age of 12. By definition, puberty refers to hormonal changes leading to the development of secondary sexual characteristics, including body changes in height, weight distribution, facial structure and extremities (Eagle & Schwartz 1994:10). Never before and never again in his/her life cycle does an individual have to cope with the impact of so many biological and psychological changes as in adolescence. All these changes lead to a heightened awareness of the body and preoccupation with the self. Rogers (1977:4) states that the period of adolescence is marked by a spurt in physical growth, by changes in body proportions, and by the maturation of primary and secondary sexual characteristics.

As the adolescents body changes in appearance, questions arise such as: “Who am I?” and “What do I look like?” Such questions are critical for the development of the self-concept of an adolescent.

Gouws & Kruger (1994:22) distinguish the following three types of physique:

- ectomorph      --      tall, thin build
- mesomorph    --      normal, average athletic build
- endomorph    --      compact, chubby build

According to research conducted by Montein in 1988 and by Siam and Ugwuebu in 1980 (Gouws & Kruger 1994:22), adolescents in Western culture generally prefer the ectomorphic and the mesomorphic type, the South African black people prefer endomorphic type of physique.

The researcher’s experience of Venda adolescents is that they feel proud when they are hefty and stout. They enjoy being asked why they are so “weighty”. They associate obesity with wealth and high status. To them, being fat or hefty symbolises that one is enjoying oneself in life. Venda adolescents hate being

asked why they are so lean. They associate being lean with misery, being unfortunate and suffering. If one is lean, they normally ask, “What is eating you up?”.

### **3.6.1.2        *The physical development of the adolescent according to sex (gender)***

Whilst the discussions above are applicable to both boys and girls, there are some physical developments that only characterise girls and those that are only peculiar to boys. Psychologically these developments will affect boys and girls differently. It is important to remember that the age at puberty and the sequence of growth vary greatly in both boys and girls. The following developments are common in both sexes:

- Their body odour becomes much stronger.
- They tend to be clumsy and awkward.
- Both sexes grow armpit hair.
- There is a change in muscle strength.
- Their shoulder and hip width change.
- There are changes in their weight.
- There are changes in their height (Mwamwenda 1995:66; Newman & Newman 1970:126-134).

#### **(a)        *The physical development of the adolescent girl***

There are a number of physical characteristics that are typical of girls. The following authors, namely Mwamwenda (1995:66), Gouws & Kruger (1994:22-24), Newman & Newman (1979:126-134) and also Smart, Smart & Smart (1979:48) list the following characteristics:

- Their breasts start developing.
- Their hips and the pelvis become wider.
- Girls have a higher blood pressure than boys (this is reversed after a while).
- Girls experience a deepening of voice (this is less obvious than in boys).

- Menarche (start of menstruation).
- Hirsutism (abnormal body hair growth).

It should be noted that severe limitations in the availability of food will consequently slow down the growth rate in girls and delay the onset of menarche. This means that well-nourished girls will develop faster than malnourished ones. Newman & Newman (1979:137) confirm that the average age for menarche is higher in poor, underdeveloped areas, such as those inhabited by the Bundi in New-Guinea and the black people in of South Africa. Therefore it is expected that girls in the G8 countries (rich countries) will experience their menarche earlier than girls in, for example, Rwanda, Burundi and Venda.

From the researcher's experience of Venda adolescent girls, it is clear that they regard their big breasts with pride, because to them, big breasts are a sign of fertility and seem to attract males more easily than small breasts. Venda adolescent girls with big breasts seem to be extroverts while those with small breasts seem to be introverts. Girls with small breasts normally appear shy and soft spoken, whilst their big-breasted counterparts are normally very talkative and appear extremely sure of themselves.

*(b) The physical development of the adolescent boy*

The following signs constitute the physical development in adolescent boys:

- erection
- ejaculation
- nocturnal semen emission
- deepening and lowering of voice
- facial hair
- gynaecomastia
- body hair (Mwamwenda 1995:66; Gouws & Kruger 1994:22-24; Newman & Newman 1979:131-135; Smart, Smart & Smart 1978:48; Ohlson 1987:21).

The physical development of boys does not only affect them physiologically, but psychologically as well. The fact that boys have more muscles than girls will influence boys to like sports and evaluate themselves positively in physical activities (Gerdes et al 1989:131).

Some elements of the physical development of adolescent boys may be better understood if boys are compared to girls, as Gerdes et al (1989:131) have done:

Physically, boys develop slower than girls.

- Boys have larger hearts than girls.
- There is a higher concentration of red blood corpuscles in boys than in girls.
- In comparison to girls, the body of the boys has less fat.
- A boy's body has more muscles than a girl's body (this explain why boys are physically stronger than girls).

### **3.6.1.3        *Consequences of physical development***

From the discussions above, it is evident that adolescents' physical development and body image (their perception of their bodies) are associated with their sense of self-esteem and self-worth and are also determined by their experience of how others see them. Aspects of their physical development, namely sexual maturity, early or late development, et cetera, are therefore critical factors in the forming of their body image because these will change their attitude towards their own body, which in turn impacts psychologically on their being and on their self-concept and also on their personality development (refer also to chapter 2).

Body image is closely related to self-concept. Most adolescents who regard themselves as ugly and have a negative body image also have a negative self-concept, whereas adolescents who regard themselves as beautiful or attractive have a positive body image and also a positive self-concept (Gouws & Kruger 1994:22). The consequences of positive and negative self-concept on social relationship are as follows:



An adolescent with a positive self-concept will also evaluate himself/herself positively, whereas an adolescent with a negative self-concept will evaluate himself/herself negatively and unrealistically. This has already been mentioned in the previous chapters.

### **3.6.2 Cognitive development**

Psychological growth is just as dramatic as physical growth at the beginning of adolescence. Between 12 and 14 years, on average, thought processes are reorganised on a higher level, distinguishing an adolescent from a school-age child, in the same way that a school-age child is different from a pre-school child (Smart et al 1978:59).

Cognitive development accelerates markedly during adolescence. The dramatic changes taking place in the adolescent's body often obscure the equally significant cognitive changes (Gouws & Kruger 1994:46). According to Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:39), cognitive development is a continuous and accumulative development of the intellect. It proceeds at the individual's own tempo which indicates that there are individual differences, and, for example, that not all 15-year-olds are on the same cognitive level. Gouws & Kruger (1994:46) state that "cognitive development concerns all that has to do with knowing, including perception, conceptualisation, insight, knowledge, imagination and intuition, and is closely allied to experience and internationality". Mwamwenda (1995:89) states that "cognitive development is the development of a person's mental capacity to engage in thinking, reasoning, interpretations, understanding, knowledge acquisition, remembering, organising information analysis and problem solving".

The adolescent's cognitive ability develops quantitatively as well as qualitatively. In this sense, qualitative refers to how cognitive processes operate, for example, how a person will proceed to solve a problem, and also to the qualitative changes in thought processes as individuals mature. In the quantitative sense, intelligence is regarded from a psychometric point of view as a more or less durable human characteristic that can be measured as an indicator of whether an adolescent is capable of performing intellectual tasks and how he compares with adolescents of comparable age (Gouws & Kruger 1994:46).

### 3.6.2.1 *Cognitive development (qualitative)*

Jean Piaget divides child development into phases. He distinguishes three main phases, each of which is subdivided into several segments. With regard to cognitive development, he refers to the following stages:

- the sensory-motor stage (0-2 years) and the pre-operational stage (2-7 years)
- concrete thinking operations (7-11 years)
- the phase of formal thinking operations (11-15 years)

It should be noted, however, that the ages given in brackets are averages and not definite ages.

In table 3.1 below, the three main developmental phases appear in a tabular form, and certain characteristics have been assigned to each phase. See also Gouws & Kruger (1994:47).

**TABLE 3.1: PHASES IN THE COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD**

PHASE	AGE	CHARACTERISTICS
Sensory-motor phase and pre-operational phase	$\pm$ 0-2 years $\pm$ 2-7 years	Changes from a reflex level to a goal-directed activity Sensory and motor adaptations Starts to use memory, thought and imitation
Concrete-operational phase	$\pm$ 7-11 years	Capable of cognitive acts concerning concrete, real matters Understands reversibility
Formal-operational phase	$\pm$ 11-15 years	Can think abstractly and logically, can handle possibilities and hypotheses, thought is more scientific

Source: Gouws & Kruger (1996:47).

According to Jean Piaget (Gouws & Kruger 1994:46), the highest level of intellectual development occurs during adolescence (formal-operational phase) and by the end of adolescence the development of cognitive faculty is almost complete, although further knowledge can still be acquired. For the purposes of this study the researcher will concentrate on the formal-operational phase, as this is the age group under which learners fall who are attending secondary school.

“The adolescent’s formal-operational ability leads to increasing introspection, that is self-consciousness, which prompts deliberate self-criticism, self-evaluation and efforts at self-improvement as part of a quest for identity and self-knowledge” (Gouws & Kruger 1994:53). They go on to state that adolescents’ critical mindset prompts them to compare themselves constantly to ideal models or peer groups. However, this may lead to a sense of inferiority and a personal sense of dissatisfaction. The adolescent’s ability to think deeply about himself/herself is therefore important for development of his/her self-concept or sense of identity (Gouws & Kruger 1994:53).

### **3.6.2.2          *Cognitive development (quantitative)***

The quantitative (psychometric) approach to intelligence covers a perception of intelligence as a measurable human characteristic. The concept “intelligence” has been a source of considerable difficulty over the years, and up to today there has been no consensus about a definition of intelligence (Gouws & Kruger 1994:56). According to Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:119), there is a serious debate as to whether the IQ (intelligence quotient) is a measure of performance or capacity. In 1975, Gordon described intelligence as an ability that reflected the organisation of a person as a whole and that influenced his/her general experience, cultural environment and human relationships (Gouws & Kruger 1994:56). Vrey (1990:156) confirms this view by stating that intellectual development is determined by the culture into which a child is born. And culture is strongly influenced by technological developments, and therefore by cultural changes.

Just like in the discussion of cognitive development (qualitative) above, it has been decided to indicate the IQ classification in a tabular form, shown in table 3.2 below (Gouws & Kruger 1994:57, Jordaan & Jordaan 1989:471, Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:199).

**TABLE 3.2: IQ CLASSIFICATION**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>% of population</b>
140+	Genius	1%
131-140	Very superior	1%
121-130	Superior	7%
111-120	High average	16%
90-110	Average	50%
80-89	Low Average	16%
70-79	Borderline (Mentally defective)	7%
69 and below	Mentally deficient	2%

Source: Gouws & Kruger (1996:57).

Although a relationship exists between heredity and environment, culture and intelligence, gender differences and intelligence, motivation and intelligence, and language and intelligence, the researcher decided to concentrate on the relationship between intelligence and self-concept in the study of self-evaluation.

Adolescents with a positive self-concept are able to undertake their studies enthusiastically and successfully and to see these through to the finish. In the same breath, adolescents who form pleasant associations with and achieve success in their studies will usually display a positive self-concept. Adolescents with a negative self-concept normally perform poor academically because a negative self-

concept leads to a poor academic predisposition, resulting in an unrealistic self-evaluation (Gouws & Kruger 1996:60).

### **3.6.2.3      *Cognitive development in black adolescents***

The discussions of cognitive development by Piaget and others are mainly European products. The test subjects in Piagetian studies are whites in Europe. In the discussion below, the researcher will concentrate more on the cognitive development in black adolescents. According to Mwamwenda (1995:108-115), studies conducted in Africa based on Piaget's theory have revealed the following facts and findings:

- In Nigeria (Yoruba) the research conducted to test children on conservation of numbers and continuous quantity, has revealed that children of educated parents outperform the children whose parents are less educated. In fact, it has been revealed that children of educated parents perform at the same level as American children of comparable age. The study conducted in Algeria by Bovet also reveals similar findings.
- The study conducted in Nigeria (TIV) on conservation of continuous and discontinuous quantities has revealed that there is no difference in performance between African and European children.
- In the Ivory Coast, Dasen concluded in 1975 that ecological factors influenced the rate of cognitive development to the extent that nomadic hunting and gathering societies facilitated the development of spatial concepts, whereas sedentary and agricultural societies fostered quantitative reasoning.
- In the Republic of South Africa, in Ciskei (which is now part of the Eastern Cape), the research conducted on conservation of volume and mass among black South African students, reveals that learners in the experimental group have performed significantly better than learners in the control group. The experimental group consists of pupils who study science and interact with the learning material; the control group consists of learners who study science but do not interact with the learning material.

- The research conducted in Botswana testing adolescents on conservation of numbers, length, mass and weight, serialisation and classification has exposed the following findings: The performance of Botswana's adolescents is comparable with the performance of Western adolescents and other African children in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia.
- Piagetian studies carried out in North, West, East and South Africa (Ciskei and Transkei) have confirmed, however, that Piaget's theory can be validated cross-culturally. It has been shown that, averagely speaking, the performance of African adolescents is comparable with that of Western adolescents both qualitatively and quantitatively. It has also been observed that in a number of cases, dialogue with African subjects has not been such a successful testing instrument because the subjects' cultures do not facilitate or encourage intensive discussions between an adult and a child. It has also been shown that where subjects have been provided with familiar materials and have been encouraged to reflect on their answers, results are likely to be more positive, with more subjects passing the tests given.

#### **3.6.2.4      *Consequences of cognitive development***

It has already been mentioned that no two people are the same. Generally, the adolescent leaves the world of childhood and now enters the adult world of ideas, abstract thinking, problem solving, ideals and reasoning. Adolescents are expected to solve problems, to assess a phenomenon from various angles and see situations from different perspectives. These cognitive abilities of the adolescent often bring him/her in conflict with adults.

#### **3.6.3    *Affective development***

The affective development has to do with aspects such as emotions, feelings, passions, moods, sentiments and whims. It is an overall term for a variety of aspects of the adolescent's emotional life, and not merely a synonym for the emotions. It is the expression of the total human being (Gouws & Kruger 1994:94). The definition and explanations in Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:15)

are almost the same as the above. They state that the affective qualities include man's memory, thoughts, concepts, ways of thinking, responses, association of impressions and experiences joined to every perception, conscious or unconscious, physical or personal.

Though adolescence is not necessarily a period of chaos in a person's life, an adolescent's life is automatically strenuous. This statement is also true in the case of Venda adolescents. From the researcher's experience of more than 30 years among the Vendas, the following was observed:

- Venda adolescents in Grade 8 would normally already have attended the circumcision school; therefore almost all boys/girls in secondary schools in Venda from Grade 8 to 12 are, by Venda custom, already regarded as men/women. These adolescents are regarded as men and women after they have graduated from these circumcision schools. One can only guess at their emotions and feelings in a government school.
- Such adolescents are regarded as ordinary boys/girls in government schools. Government schools do not distinguish between boys/girls who are men/women and those who are pure boys/girls (have not been circumcised).
- Circumcised adolescents regard uncircumcised adolescents of the same age as children. They even refuse to undress in their presence, alleging that they do not wash with the uninitiated or "mashuvhuru".

Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:16) state that because adolescents hover between the expectations of childhood and those of adulthood, their affective development follows an unstable course. Research conducted in Botswana by Mwamwenda (1995:76) has revealed the following findings:

In Botswana most of the adolescents' perceptions of themselves are similar to those reported by adolescents in Western and other African countries. Mwamwenda discusses adolescent boys separately from adolescent girls. In the case of boys, Mwamwenda (1995:77) states that the growing of beards,

armpit hair and pubic hair and also the size of their genital organs normally produce mixed reactions. Some boys are happy and feel good, while others are unhappy. In his discussion on Botswana adolescent girls, he states that menarche is generally regarded as traumatic. But the growing of armpit hair and pubic hair and the development of breasts, which are all signs of physical development, contribute to their emotions (Mwamwenda 1995:78-80).

Mwamwenda concludes that it is amazing how a simple feature like armpit hair can contribute to the feelings and emotional development of an adolescent. The findings by Mwamwenda given above do not seem to differ from the signs of development occurring in Venda adolescent boys and girls today.

### **3.6.3.1        *Consequences of affective development***

The above expositions about adolescents (Botswana adolescents and Venda adolescents) seem to have obvious educational implications. In the case of Venda adolescents, from the researcher's vast experience in Venda secondary schools, they seem to evaluate themselves as follows:

- Venda adolescents who have been initiated do not feel that they are boys or girls anymore. They regard themselves as men or women and as such despise school. They think that the government school is treating them like children while at the bush school they have graduated to become adults. At government school they are either moody or depressed.
- Venda adolescents feel that they are adults. Because they are sexually mature, they indulge in premarital sex and, as early as 12 years, as Ramalebana (1995:28 ) puts it, some of them have already become parents. The fact that adolescents find themselves between childhood and adulthood makes them unstable.
- Venda adolescents feel that their teachers are their equals. After all, they argue that the teachers are men and women just like they themselves (learners).



From the discussions thus far, it is evident that Venda adolescents' attitudes toward school will be negative. They do not display any emotions of joy about school. The following speculations will possibly throw light on the reasons:

- The fact that Venda adolescents have their own bush schools makes government school unpopular to them.
- The duration of bush school is a matter of weeks and then they graduate, whereas it takes years in the government (or formal) school before they can graduate.
- In bush school, every learner is doing the same grade, whereas in government school, there are many different grades.
- After Venda adolescents have graduated from their bush school, such a school is burnt down. This may explain why there is such a high rate of vandalism in Venda secondary schools, and also why Venda secondary schools were often burnt down.

#### **3.6.4 Social development**

Social development is the development of relationships and associations with others. It is marked by mutual interaction, friendliness and generality, with a view to enjoying the society or companionship of others. Social development is dependent upon relationships and is learned. Such development is essential for healthy growth to adulthood (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:214). Festinger (Rosenberg et al 1989:1006-1007) maintains that in the absence of objective information about themselves, people compare themselves with others. He further states that those who do well should receive more favourable reflected appraisals from significant others. In almost the same description, Gouws & Kruger (1994:6) contend that when people evaluate their own achievements and actions, they do so subjectively because other people's reactions to their achievements affect their self-evaluation.

The role played by peers is sometimes also influenced by gender. As far as boys are concerned, they only have peers of the same sex or own sex to worry about, but it is different with girls. As far as this is concerned, Harper & Marshall (1991:806) are of the opinion that the masculine and achievement roles of adolescent boys fit them well enough. The feminine and achievement roles of adolescent girls are in conflict, however. Consequently, high achieving boys can reasonably expect peer and overt teacher acceptance. High-achieving girls, on the other hand, may gain success at the expense of acceptance by their peers. In the discussions below, the social and the socio-economic dimensions will be discussed interdependently.

Gouws & Kruger (1994:110) state that in addition to his/her bodily, cognitive, affective and moral maturation, an adolescent also has to develop to social maturity. They contend that among the most critical developmental tasks that have to be performed by adolescents, are those of socialisation, carving a niche for themselves in society, acquiring interpersonal skills, cultivating tolerance for personal and cultural differences and developing self-confidence.

During adolescence, involvement with peers is paramount and yet the adolescent will still rely on parents in many areas and hold on to their fundamental values. Peers and parents, including other relatives, are not in conflict but are regarded as guides in the different areas on this matter. Mwamwenda (1995:72) agrees on this point.

Because adolescents are social beings, comparisons with others seem to be useful in the goal of self-evaluation. If an adolescent compares himself/herself to others and seems to be better than them, he/she regards himself/herself fit to be part of society.

Gouws & Kruger (1994:110) state that consequently the adolescent gradually moves away from his/her parents, and acceptance by and consorting with the peer group assume increasing importance. Friendships with members of the same sex deepen and heterosexual relationships rapidly assume a romantic or sexual dimension. This social emancipation of the adolescent increasingly confronts him/her

with situation in which he/she has to take his/her own decisions, in which he/she will be pressurised to conform and in which his/her values and principles are questioned and tested.

One of the tasks an adolescent faces in establishing an identity of his/her own is to outgrow dependency on his/her parents. This frequently involves a struggle that is mixed with rebellion. But when adolescents cross this hurdle satisfactorily, they will be capable of self-direction without feeling a need, as they grow older, either to depend on their parents or to defy them. To achieve stature as adults, adolescents must outgrow their childhood dependency on their parents. They must renounce their allegiance to their parents. They must be able, under normal circumstances, to shift their allegiance to prospective mates. According to Mwamwenda (1995:22), this sort of change may cause conflict. This conflict, according to Jersild, Brook & Brook (1978:304), leads adolescents to defy parental authority at times. Adolescents may want to be treated like adults while adults would still like to treat them as children.

From research conducted by Mwamwenda (1995:71-72) in Europe, North America and Australia, findings have shown that mutual interactions, relationships and associations with others, of the adolescents in those countries, are similar to those of black adolescents in other parts of the world, for example, Africa.

#### **3.6.4.1        *Consequences of social development***

As a child grows, the level of his/her dependency on his/her parents is reduced. Some of the consequences of social development of an adolescent are as follows:

- Unlike his/her childhood years, the adolescent moves away from his/her parents and becomes more independent.
- During adolescence, peer influence becomes more important than the influence of parents and other adults. To be absorbed into a peer group, an adolescent must conform. Because he/she

is anxious to be accepted into a group, he/she will conform willingly to that group (Vrey 1990:171).

- Adolescents will choose friends of the same sex, and they tend to rely on them and trust them more than their parents.
- Adolescents will also choose friends of the opposite sex. Vrey (1990:173) contends that heterosexual relationships between adolescents are a fact. These heterosexual relationships might develop into sexual relationships and may even lead to unwanted pregnancies.
- Adolescents need to be emancipated from their parents. This emancipation may lead to conflict between adolescents and their parents.
- Peers are readily available for the adolescent, while parents are no longer as available as in childhood years.

It is during this period of adolescence that proper guidance from parents, educators and other adults is of paramount importance so that adolescents can manage the transition to adulthood. Because it is possible that adolescence may lead to either self-realisation or self-destruction, responsible pedagogical assistance and support is a matter of urgency (Vrey 1990:173).

### **3.6.5 Conative development**

Conative development is concerned with the basic, driving forces that give rise to our behaviour and includes aspects such as needs, tendencies, impulses, aspiration, motives, aims, drives, wishes and the will. There must be a goal to be pursued and a desire or drive to achieve. No one can achieve anything worthy by accident, but only by striving towards the realisation of a goal. First there must be a motive and then the will is moved into action. Where there is a will, there is a way. Aspiration and will lead to success which is the outcome of perseverance (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:46).

Today the adolescent finds himself/herself in a rapidly changing and complex world, mainly owing to the development of science and technology, including aspects of the communication media, urbanisation,

overpopulation, violence and unemployment. To the adolescent, this is an unknown world altogether. In the midst of this world, the adolescent has to set objectives and take decisions, no matter how binding they are, in order to attain self-actualisation. Attainment of self-actualisation is not automatic (Gouws & Kruger 1994:146). Gouws and Kruger say that the adolescent also shows an emphatic preference for or aversion to things he/she wants to do or does not want to do. The function of the will is, therefore, to actualise possibilities and achieve particular aims. By implication, motivation and choice are components of the will. The adolescent is always effectively, cognitively and conatively involved in every act of his/her own will (Gouws & Kruger 1994:146). Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:46) state that a motive should exist before the will is moved into action. The following example of the driver of a coach will help to magnify the role of the will in normative development. The will is a coachman on the coach of life, and the aspirations are the horses drawing the coach. The will acts as a coachman with a particular course in mind along which it steers its aspirations. Vrey (1990:36) contends that the task of the will lies in the action by which the self is actualised and its life-world structured. It includes the dynamic progressive orientation and re-orientation, shaping and re-shaping of an entire life that is constantly changing.

Malm & Jamison (1952:60) are of the opinion that the younger adolescent looks forward to immediate pleasures or those not too far distant, while the older adolescent not only looks forward to pleasures close at hand but also looks ahead to the more remote future. The adolescent is thinking about college or else about getting a job, though, unsuspected by many adults, the adolescent is also down-to-earth, realistic and conservative in the hopes he/she has for himself/herself.

Sigmund Freud (Ohlson 1987:66) believes that essentially all behaviour results from certain drives and needs within us. Other psychological theorists have supported this idea. Psychologist Abraham Maslow provides us with another perspective of development of human behaviour. His widely accepted work on motivation shows that needs are arranged according to a hierarchy, with the most basic needs being met first. Ohlson (1987:66) states that when parenting or working with adolescents, we try to

understand which level of need they are expressing through their behaviour. Starting at the most basic level, the author has identified the following needs:

- Physiological needs (food, sleep, sexual release, etc)
- Safety needs (protection from bodily harm, need for security, etc)
- Belonging needs (acceptance, affection, etc)
- Esteem needs (status, self-respect, etc)
- Self-development needs (personal growth, movement towards fulfilling one's created potential)
- Knowledge and understanding needs (quest for information, reading, etc)
- Spiritual needs (religious activities, aesthetic experience, etc)

Conative or aspirational development is a longing for that which is beyond one, for what is out of reach at present. It implies goal setting by the individual, which has a personal significance. One of the greatest aspirations of the adolescent is to be totally emancipated from primary and secondary educators. High aspirations are continually reinforced by success and they become a significant factor of intrinsic motivation. However, when adolescents meet with constant failure and disappointment regarding their efforts, their aspirational level will decrease or may even disappear. They will set unrealistic goals (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:47). Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg state that a positive self-concept will enable the adolescent to understand and accept his/her limitations and thus to know his/her interests, skills and abilities.

From the researcher's observation of more than 20 years (1975 to date) as a teacher in different Venda secondary schools, the following conclusion is drawn concerning the conative dimension:

Venda adolescents evaluate themselves negatively, and they do not aspire to greater heights.

- They seem not to be able to differentiate between needs and wants. They struggle to achieve minor goals in life and to ignore major goals. According to Ohlson (1987:74), drives and needs

“push” the adolescent into action. Wants tend to “pull” or attract the young person into activity or toward a desirable goal or object.

- They seem to think that they are only good in being parents and having children at an early age. This may explain why the rates of pregnancy and adolescent motherhood and fatherhood are so high. In 1985 and 1986, two girls aged 12 years delivered babies in Venda hospital (Ramalebana 1995:28). The fact that adolescent pregnancy is now allowed in schools worsens these problems.
- In respect to careers that may pose a challenge to them, again Venda adolescents evaluate themselves negatively. The fact that there are very few Venda medical doctors practising in Venda today serves as a demotivating factor. There are, however, more than a thousand qualified jobless Venda teachers in Venda today. Findings from research conducted among Venda adolescent girls show that the majority, that is 27 out of 45, of the adolescent mothers in Venda secondary schools prefer to be nurses and teachers (Ramalebana 1995:81).

#### **3.6.5.1      *Consequences of conative development***

If an adolescent is willing, he/she will be involved in every aspect of learning and becoming. He/she will intentionally orient himself/herself in relation to people, objects, ideas and himself/herself. The level of involvement is in relation to the degree of perseverance, attention, interest dedication, et cetera. An adolescent being happy or sad gives an indication of how a situation is being evaluated. As seen in chapter 2, self-evaluation is a subjective matter. In a situation where an adolescent experiences success, his/her self-evaluation will be positive. The opposite will be where the adolescent experiences frustration. Vrey (1990:36) concludes that cognition and conation go hand in hand and we cannot have the one without the other.

#### **3.6.6    Normative development**

The term “normative” refers to that which is accepted and practised by the majority, thus establishing norms or standards (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:156).

Adolescents as members of society are confronted with values, norms, urges, traditions, customs and religious beliefs. Society also lays down guidelines, principles, rules and norms expressing its conception of right and wrong, proper and improper and good and evil.

Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:56) state that one of the main tasks of adolescents is to develop a personal value system. Normative development is a core element of adolescents’ overall development and it involves their conative life. Normative maturity is based on consciously applied religious principles according to which good and evil are evaluated and behaviour is regulated. Gouws & Kruger (1994:174) maintain that adolescents’ normative life includes moral and religious development.

Morals are not inherited, and they are not hereditary. No child is born with morals; morals are acquired or learned. Jordaan & Jordaan (1989:547) state that moral learning occurs when a person learns the ethical codes of behaviour which have been adopted by a particular community and culture, or which are universally accepted, and in accordance with which a person’s actions are judged, by himself/herself or by other people, to be morally justified or morally unjustified. At the same time, a person also acquires an ability to exercise self-control, in other words he/she learns to do what is right in terms of the ethical codes, and to avoid doing what is wrong in terms of these codes. Grinder (1978:264) defines moral development as the learning of moral disposition to facilitate self-control, that is, internalisation of socially sanctioned moral standards. Regarding the moral development of the adolescents, Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:149) caution that peer groups and the mass media will not make up the deficiency or lack of morals in adolescents. They also state that although schools, in only a by-the-way manner, teach manners, courtesy, tolerance and respect for the law, many of the teachers do not take the question of morality seriously. Morals, however, should be taught and learned and given meaning, and this can best be done by discussions and clarification and exchange of views, thereby



stimulating an adolescent to think and take action. Adolescents should be helped to recognise that moral values are important enough to be given formal attention.

Though schools try to contribute significantly towards moral development of adolescents, they cannot replace the primary educators. Parents are bound to make sure that their children's character and moral development will be of a reasonable standard. In this regard Grinder (1978:283) states that consistency in moral conduct is likely to be highest in families which emphasise disciplinary practice and where principles of justice and respect for the dignity of human beings prevail. He further states that moral decisions are based ideally on principles that transcend self-interest, that are free of conflicting social pressures, and that promote human dignity (Grinder 1978:284). Moral development contains a clear cognitive component. The adolescent becomes increasingly capable of conceptualising and generalising moral norms. Vrey (1990:181) describes the gradual transition from heteronomous to autonomous moral judgement. The former means a morality based on rules or norms prescribed by others, while the latter is based on a person's own convictions and judgements.

Initially a child accepts the moral values of his/her educators without question, but adolescents gradually become aware of their educators' fallibility and of alternative moral codes. Adolescents react to educators' general behaviour rather than to their verbal utterances (Gouws & Kruger 1994:167). To this end, Vrey (1990:182) says that the norm practised by parents will be the norm followed by the child, whether positive or negative. Gouws & Kruger (1994:176) further state that given the complexity of modern society, in which numerous factors have to be weighed up against each other, many adolescents struggle to be consistent in applying their moral principles. In addition, adolescence is characterised by conflict, mainly with parents, about moral issues.

#### **3.6.6.1        *Consequences of normative development***

An adolescent, who is disciplined, is able to choose between right and wrong. Such an adolescent will also exercise self-control, will accept others and will also be accepted by others, young and old alike. Adolescents who abide by the rules and norms do so in relation to others.

### **3.6.7 Religious development of the adolescent**

According to Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:194), the term “religion” refers to a spiritual bond or relationship that exists between people and a supreme being, and it implicates people’s notions about their origin and existence, and about the ultimate destiny of the universe. Jordaan & Jordaan (1989:825) define religion as a system of beliefs and practices through which a group of people interpret and react to that which they regard as supernatural and holy. The following quotations about religion are also found in Jordaan & Jordaan (1989:824)

- Religion is a road by which men escape from circumstances to ecstasy.
- Religion is the flight of the alone to the alone.
- Religion is what a man does with his solitude.

Adolescents begin to question religion and God and generally start doubting whether there really is a God. They realise that adults sometimes say one thing and then do the another. They become aware of the hypocrisy of adults and realise that, at times, adults do not preach what they practise. Adolescents do not seem to see the value of having faith in an abstract God. They question and query religious practices.

In his book, *Read and wake*, the black president of Senegal, Leopold Senghor, has pointed out that black communities generally have a holistic view of life. To the black man, the world is an indivisible whole, in which people, animals, spirits, dreams, plants and God form a single unity (Jordaan & Jordaan 1989:832-833).

There is a serious shortage of literature concerning Venda as a people and Venda religion in particular. But from the researcher's vast experience amongst the Vendas and in Venda secondary schools, the following has been observed:

- The Venda God named "Mwali" (Phaswana 2000:10), is seldom mentioned, and has very few followers, if any at all.
- In theory, Venda adolescents know that there are their gods called "Vhadzimu", but in practice, nobody seems to honour these gods.
- Venda adolescents believe in God in heaven or God of the Bible, as others prefer to call him. Morning devotions where a biblical scripture is read and prayer is said are conducted in all secondary schools in Venda today.

In terms of religion, Venda adolescents seem to evaluate themselves in the same way as their white counterparts. Just like white adolescents they believe in a Jesus Christ of Nazareth. There seems, therefore, to be no significant difference between Venda and white adolescents in terms of their religion. As stated above, almost everybody in Venda is a Christian in one way or another. Phaswana (2000:147) found that 77 percent of the Venda people are Christians (European-type, eg. Lutheran Church), 18 percent are Afro-Christians, and 5 percent of the people are undecided. The total percentage of people who are definitely Christians is 95. Milubi (1997:91) confirms it by stating that the majority of the Vhavenda (Venda people) believe in faith and in the mercy of God through Christ.

#### **3.6.7.1        *Consequences of religious development***

Gouws & Kruger (1994:190) believe that religion gives adolescents hope and confidence, and it also presents the prospect of eternal life. Adolescents hope on and believe in a life hereafter.

One of the aims of education is to bring a child to a point where he/she supports the norms of his/her society from personal convictions. His/her culture contains moral, religious and other norms deriving

from the corresponding value esteemed by the community. The totality of these values is subsumed in the way of life maintained by that community. This way of life embodies the vital values from which no one can dissociate himself/herself, because he/she is always confronted with values (and their implied norms), to which he/she must give concrete form by assuming a stance towards all that make up his/her world (Vrey 1990:181). Vrey further states that according to Christian perspective, man's relationship with God comes first and his relationship with his neighbour second. An adolescent's relations with religious and moral values develop to a point where he/she will conform to religious and moral norms out of his/her own free will.

Religion has always played a crucial role in people's lives. For an explanation of the universe, previous generations have depended much more on religion than is the case today. Today the emphasis has shifted to scientific explanation that enables people to arrange the details that are known about the universe into a meaningful pattern (Gouws & Kruger 1994:188). Among adolescents today there is a move away from traditional religions towards a more political and social activism and protest, with a renewed interest in religious ethics (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:196). Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg state that the quest to meet an individual spiritual need has shifted to a quest to reform society. Some adolescents are simply tired of being told about life and religion and want to find out for themselves.

The adolescent needs a religion that is continuous with life, consistent with the workday world, can provide a faith to live by and will enable the adolescent to withstand conflict and doubts. Religion should be meaningful and personal to him/her as an individual. The adolescents seek a more meaningful association; a religion that is alive and that works practically for him/her, one with which he/she can easily identify and which relates to the problems he/she meets in his/her everyday social life. In the process of becoming more independent, the adolescent is faced with questions which will force him/her to search within himself/herself to find answers. The adolescent is inquisitive, and in the process of meeting that challenge, he/she must also gradually develop a philosophy of life, a view of the world and

a set of guiding moral beliefs and standards that, however simple and basic, are non-negotiable to him/her (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:196).

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

It has already been stated several times that the end of adolescence is a matter which is subject to different cultures. But if an adolescent is 20 years and above, we expect him/her to have started to overcome problems related to accelerated body growth and problems relating to gaining independence. Eagle & Schwartz (1994:214) state that by 21 years of age, these struggles should be resolved, so that a young adult will have a more confident sense of self, his/her value and future plans.

In contrast to the smooth period of childhood, the adolescence period is characterised by rapid and accelerated growth and change. This chapter has tried to put the adolescent under the spotlight. In contrast with Stanley Hall's belief in 1904, today adolescence is also regarded as a joyful period. It is not a period only full of doom and gloom. Different dimensions of self-concept have been extensively discussed in respect of the adolescent in particular.

The role played by peers has been found to have greater influence on the adolescent's self-evaluation than the role played by parents. The study also demonstrates that there is a significant difference in the self-evaluation by adolescent boys and by adolescent girls. Therefore, sex difference or gender should not be taken for granted in matters concerning self-evaluation.

From the discussions thus far, it has been evident that individuals seek to maximise their self-evaluation. It has also become evident that a positive self-image is pleasing to an individual, and it is frequently assumed that people will consciously direct their activities to obtain the highest possible self-evaluation in a given situation.

It has become clear that it is impossible to separate the self, I, self-evaluation and self-concept. These concepts can only be identified for the purpose of study but they should never be seen in isolation.