SEPARATION AND ATTACHMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Fedora Psyche Conference in Copenhagen, 1999

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Edited by

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TOWARD SEPARATNESS AND BELONGING

Author unknown |

A very lonely and frightened woman was drowning in a corner of the ocean. She went down once and then again. As she did all of her life passed before her eyes. She knew then she was about to die. As she went under for the final time, and was about to lose her life, she gave birth, and her infant buoyed her up and saved her life. They swam and played together for a time in their little corner of the ocean. As the little child grew older it began to swim in larger and larger circles around its mother and noticed that when it was farthest away from her, uncomfortable feelings of tension and fear welled up on its insides.

And so the child would swim back a little closer and they would relax together. One day the little child knew that it was time to swim away and find its own special place in the ocean, the place where it was meant to be. With a little smile on her mouth and a great sadness in her eyes, mother wished it well. The child swam away, and as it moved out toward the horizon, farther away that it had ever been before, it looked back and saw its mother drowning again. The young child stopped and was torn. It wanted so much to find a place of it's own, but also needed its mother to live. So it swam in a circle at the end of their cord, half its body within the circle, the other half on the outside.

It didn't feel very good, but at least they were alive.

I am delighted to provide an introduction to this excellent publication on the theme of "Separation & Attachment." It has been produced under the aegis of the FEDORA Psyche group whose members are primarily psychological counsellors to students in higher education institutions across Europe. Psyche's main aims are the development of new concepts for counselling in the field of higher education, improved communication and co-operation and better understanding of student counselling in European Universities. Their work supports the view that successful academic learning is not only a matter of acquiring knowledge, but also of personal growth and development.

This report brings together a large number of articles by members of FEDORA based on their contributions to a symposium organised by the Psyche Group in Copenhagen in 1999. The range of topics addressed range from "Academic Achievement & Attachment" to "University Life and the Delay of Adulthood" and covers a multitude of other considerations related to separation and attachment in between. Attachment theory was originally developed to explain and account for the attachment behaviour of infants, but it has proved applicable to other areas of life and gives valuable insights into the current socio-emotional development of individuals. For student counsellors, this theory might be useful in improving counselling styles on issues of separation and attachment in an academic environment. It is also worth noting that attachment theory stresses the influence of socio-emotional development during infancy as an important factor for later attachment behaviour, so it is necessary to consider the student's past attachment experience in order to better understand his or her present situation as well as the counselling process itself. I recommend this valuable report to all those with an active interest in understanding and supporting the personal development and well being of students.

Margaret Dane
FEDORA President

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PREFACE

In a world that is becoming increasingly flexible, rapid changes in the economy and in society are to be observed. These changes include the development of new working environments and family structures as well as the need for increasing mobility.

As a result of globalisation and the development of new technologies, greater flexibility is opening new perspectives for societies and for the individual. This flexibility may lead to greater autonomy, the development of new skills and open-mindedness and the enhancement of personal opportunities and development. The changing nature of work demands new qualifications. These demands make it possible to develop and to apply knowledge based competencies for a large sector of the population at a high level.

However, change can also be negative. It may imply instability, a state that causes insecurity and loss of trust. Globalisation creates open competitive markets in which national economies have to react very fast in response to the locational advantages of other economies. The consequences of such competition may be decreasing job opportunities, dismissals and deteriorating working conditions. From this perspective economic change may well lead to confusion in society. With the influence of traditional values diminishing, this confusion may grow.

Today people often have to move from one town to another in order to get a job. Families are separated, divorce rates are increasing, and parents often do not have the opportunity to spend enough time with their children. Fukuyama uses the term "great disruption" to refer to some of the negative aspects of change and deregulation (Fukuyama, 2000). Undoubtedly, this disorder - and the possible threats to social order that it entails - are not only a national but also an international phenomenon, often simply referred to as "chaos".

Students react to these conflicting demands and requirements in various ways. A common denominator of such reactions is great uncertainty and fear of failure. It is obvious that increasing flexibility in their past, present and future life often implies additional stress and pressure put on them. Higher educational institutions as a whole must learn to cope with social and economic change, not only for their own benefit but in order to help students adapt to and profit from the expectations imposed on them - both within their higher education environment and in view of their future personal and professional life. As McDevitt (2001, p. 1) puts it: "change is always challenging and a central chall-

lenge for staff in higher education is to be able to understand the significance of developments so that the current, changing needs of students are responded to appropriately."

Universities may react to increasing flexibility by providing students with important cross-disciplinary skills and knowledge. They can combine students' academic work with perspectives on future employment to improve both academic learning and professional competencies. The changing needs of students should be taken into account when setting up university curricula, so as to be able to impart key qualifications (e.g. self-reliance, self-confidence, flexibility) as well as interpersonal competencies and the strategies for coping with uncertainty. It is essential to learn how to prepare oneself for examinations and similar challenges, and to develop a critical view of one's environment, if one is not only to adapt to changes but to actively create new environments. As Tony Watts put it, the individual needs "to develop a concept of serendipitous planning, planful serendipity" (Watts, 1995, p. 32).

Guidance and Counselling services have the additional responsibility to help students balance their position in life, through perception and identification of the limits of their development. As Craig McDevitt observed, the younger generations nowadays show an increased tendency to introspection, to blame themselves if things are not working out that well. They have "high expectations of themselves and a lot is expected of them" (McDevitt, 2000, p.5). Thus it is important for counsellors not to assume that young people can manage themselves, but to realize that they may need help, and counsellors should be able to give it to them in a differentiated way.

In all these issues, concepts of attachment and separation play an important role for personal and social development. They connect social reality with deeper evolutionary-based psychological and emotional needs and enhance cognitive and behavioural competencies.

In this context the working group Psychological Counselling in Higher Education (PSYCHE) within the European Forum for Student Guidance thought it useful to take a closer look into some of the topics connected with separation and attachment. We turned our attention to the Attachment Theory (Bowlby) which was originally developed for the early stages of childhood. We found out that questions concerning attachment and separation are not only important for work with young children but also for work with young adults interacting in the world of higher education - as well as for the improvement of guidance and counselling in higher education.

During our research we came to realize that there were still many questions which needed to be clarified and that further discussion was necessary. So we organized a conference on "Attachment and Separation" in Copenhagen from 15 -17 September 1999. Some of the conference papers are attached to this electronic publication. We hope to offer some new and interesting views in this field, relating not only to psychological guidance and counselling but also to students' social identity. The focus here is on "the concept of transition within the context of the students' struggle to grow and develop - academically, emotionally, and socially" (Ann Conlon).

FEDORA-PSYCHE, the professional European network on psychological counselling in higher education, will be happy if this publication enhances debate and provides some clarification for some of the important issues touched upon in its pages.

Gerhart Rott, FEDORA-PSYCHE Co-ordinator,
on behalf of the Editorial Team

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ATTACHMENT AND SEPARATION THEORY IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT COUNSELLING

Gerhart Rott |

ABSTRACT

This paper stress' the importance of understanding the current interaction of higher education and psychotherapy within students' contextually defined environment. This environment doesn't mirror an objective point of view but is always constructed in an individual world. It is a psychological context which is related to others e.g. learning environments and institutional settings.

Thanks to attachment theory (Bowlby, J. and Ainsworth, M. and others) we can better understand the ways interactions in early childhood influence the kind of context one creates as an adult. In students' lives, in their learning environment, and in higher education in general, transition processes play an important role. (e.g. entry into university, leaving the university). Within those transitions separation and attachment are newly balanced.

To clarify some of the risks and resources for these transitions the balancing process presents itself as a developmental perspective on student counselling and higher education in which both - student counselling and high education - might be realized as resources for each other.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I would like to draw attention to attachment theory developed by Bowlby (1973 / 80) and extended by Mary Ainsworth (1978) in the late 1960s. This therapy originally focused on the behavioural patterns of infants but has, especially in recent years, been adapted to discuss attachment behaviour in adolescents and adults. Attachment theory thus offers a promising approach to student guidance and counselling. I begin by describing students development and then, I briefly sketch out the history of attachment theory before going on to discuss its applications in higher education. I conclude with some practical observations deriving from this discussion.

THE STUDENT

The transition from secondary to tertiary education is characterised by many challenges affecting the student's educational, social, and financial life. It is therefore important to note that the acquisition of a degree in higher education requires full participation in the academic environment, with all that this entails. Before entering the academic environment, the student's personality has been shaped by various factors such as individual ontogenesis, family background / circumstances, peer-groups and education in school. Successful involvement in the academic environment requires the acquisition of a fair number of new skills. Students who leave their hometowns have to get used to a new environment and possibly to living on their own for the first time. Separated from their family and friends, they have to make new contacts and build up relationships with people in the new environment. On a financial level, students might be forced to reduce their expenses or get a job in order to increase their income when entering the academic environment - if they are not fully supported by their parents or don't receive a scholarship. Challenges also occur in the ongoing course of education. In contrast to school education, students are free to choose their own subjects. This leads to a more individual approach towards knowledge. The student is, however, now responsible for his or her own educational career. The acquisition of knowledge and the anticipated achievement of a university degree depend entirely on the student's motivation and organisation. The student is, furthermore, expected to start making preparations for a professional career while still at university.

ATTACHMENT THEORY - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

John Bowlby's research (1973) on the necessity for and impact of attachment behaviour in early childhood was conducted at a time when the assumption that the infants need for nourishment as the only factor dominating the early infant-adult relationship was gradually being rejected. After the two World Wars, many children throughout Europe had lost their parents and families and had been placed in orphanages. In these institutions, as well as in the special institutions for abandoned or abused children that had been established in the United States, it soon became apparent that the majority of children showed signs of serious psychological dysfunction despite optimal nutritional, medical and physical care. An experiment by Harlow and Zimmerman (1959), who separated monkeys from their mothers and raised them with inanimate surrogate mothers, provided further proof for the assumption that social interaction between infant and caretaker (contact comfort) was as important for the development of the infant as the provision of food.

From these data, Bowlby concluded that there was a need for social interaction in early infancy apart from the need for nutrition. He soon expanded his thesis on an evolutionary-biological level and argued that attachment serves the survival interests of a child. Assuming that human survival mechanisms date back to life in the savannah grasslands, Bowlby suggests that the attainment of physical contact with an adult guaranteed protection. In order to maintain proximity, infants are equipped with a repertoire of innate behaviour like crying, sucking, smiling and grasping that Bowlby refers to as proximate mechanisms. Adults on the other hand are able to perceive and interpret the signals which cannot be explained by the theory of secondary drive.

Bowlby's attachment theory (1973 / 80) comprises the following elements:

a |
attachment / attachment behaviours:

Bowlby differentiates between the terms attachment and attachment behaviour: He refers to attachment as an affectional tie or bond that serves a specific purpose and to attachment behaviours as the behaviour that aims at forming and maintaining the bond.

b |
development of attachment bonds: According to Bowlby there are four stages in the development of attachment bonds: birth through 8-12 weeks, orientation and signals without discrimination of figures; 6-8 months, orientation and signals directed towards one (or more) discriminated figures; 6 months onwards, maintenance of proximity to a discriminated figure by means of locomotion as well as signals; 3-4 years, formation of a goal-corrected partnership, the child becoming less egocentric and able to perceive other people's needs.

c |
internal working models: From the middle of the first year onwards infants store experiences on past interactions and convert them into a pattern that is designed to predict the partner's behaviour as well as helping to plan the infant's own response. Bowlby named these dynamic representations internal working models. They are valid for the infant itself as well as the caretaker and because they derive from actual transaction patterns between the infant and the caretaker they complement each other. Although the internal working model developed in early childhood has an impact on attachment relationships in other spans of life, it is not static but capable of further development based on different experiences.

Mary Ainsworth (1978) supported Bowlby's attachment theory and provided further evidence for the thesis of the infant's attempt to initiate and maintain attachment bonds. It is important to note, however, that Ainsworth concentrated on attachment behaviours that children display in an already existing relationship (critical attachment behaviours) whereas Bowlby focused on precursor or mediating

attachment behaviours which exist even before an attachment figure is evident.

The diversity of attachment behaviours was convincingly proven by a laboratory situation developed by Ainsworth known as the "Strange situation". This laboratory situation focuses on the third stage of Bowlby's assumption on the development of attachment bonds. The "Strange situation" consists of an introductory episode of 30 seconds and seven 3-minute episodes in which mother, baby and a stranger participate. Special attention is given to the infant's behaviour during the two episodes where mother and baby are separated and reunited. Based on these observations, Ainsworth was able to identify four groups of attachment behaviour displayed by one-year-old children:

Group A|
insecure-avoidant, little or no tendency to seek proximity to or interaction or contact with the mother, even in reunion periods, tendency to treat the stranger much as the mother is treated
Group B|
secure, baby actively seeks contact and proximity with mother especially in the reunion episodes, wants to maintain contact
Group C|
insecure-ambivalent (anxious), baby displays contact- and interaction-resisting behaviour towards mother as well as moderate-to-strong seeking of proximity and contact, the latter especially in reunion episodes
Group D|
insecure-disorganized, emergence of a variety of disorganised behaviour that cannot be described by the ABC classification e.g. infants display a combination of strongly avoidant and resistant reunion behaviour (this group was not identified by Ainsworth but was later added by Main and Hesse (1990). In subsequent decades, the attachment theory has been applied to other spans of life in order to explore and explain attachment behaviour in adolescents and adults. In the early 1980's George, Kaplan and Main (1984) developed an interview strategy that aimed at gaining insight into an adult's (including parents') current thoughts and feelings about their own childhood attachment experiences (The Adult Attachment Interview). The evaluation of questions was not so much determined by the actual content but rather by the internal coherence and organisation of the statements. Three patterns of response were discovered: secure-autonomous (adults who reflect on and evaluate their attachment experiences and give information on an objective level), dismissing of attachment (adults who deny the importance of attachment in childhood and give contradictory statements) and preoccupied with attachment (adults who describe themselves as lacking in autonomy or were not able to verbalise an overall impression of their attachment experiences). In a second step parents' attachment experiences were compared to the current attachment behaviours of their children.

Based on the model of the Adult Attachment Interview, Kobak and Sceery (1988) conducted interviews on childhood attachment experiences with college students. As a result, the three major response patterns discovered by George, Kaplan and Main proved themselves to be valid even on a level that dismisses the issue of parenting. In 1987, Hazan and Shaver presented a method called Adult Attachment Styles which aimed at assignment to one of the three "Ainsworth-Styles" (secure, avoidant, ambivalent) by the participants themselves. The model of Hazan and Shaver leads, among many others, to the classification of attachment styles as an important tool for analysing interaction and partnerships in adulthood.

Attachment theory was originally developed to explain and account for the attachment behaviour of infants. But it has proven applicable to other areas of life and gives valuable insights into the current socio-emotional development of individuals. For student counsellors, this theory might be useful in improving counselling styles on issues of separation and attachment in an academic environment.

ATTACHMENT THEORY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Within the domain of student guidance and counselling I would like to approach the attachment theory in three ways: by pointing out the importance of focusing on the student biography, the importance of orientation towards specific systems and the amalgamation of attachment theory with other theories.

FOCUS ON THE STUDENT BIOGRAPHY

Attachment theory stresses that processes such as detachment from parents and striving for autonomy, as well as the ability to initiate and maintain contacts to other individuals are influenced by the emotional experiences of an infant in the first year of life.

One way of approaching the problems that students in tertiary education are confronted with could therefore be to focus on the student's biography. For example, what kind of attachment patterns have been experienced in early childhood and (in what way) have they changed since then?

Within the biography, the process of secondary individuation is of special relevance because it is still occurring during the course of student life. According to an investigation undertaken by Scott Boles (1999), individuation is a mediating variable between parental representation and psychological adjustment. It can be assumed that the quality of an individual's image of the parents can either facilitate or complicate the process of individuation: The results provide favorable support for the idea that individuals who possess mental representations of their parents as warm, affectionate, and encouraging of their autonomy are more likely to experience themselves as psychologically differentiated from significant others; whereas individuals who possess mental representations of their parents as lacking in warmth, affection, and encouragement of autonomy are more likely to experience themselves as psychologically dependent on significant others. (Boles, 1999, p. 508). On the basis of these facts we can assume that individuals who view themselves as psychologically differentiated from signifi-

cant others are more likely to adjust positively to new situations or systems than individuals who view themselves as psychologically dependent on others.

The successful process of secondary individuation during adolescence has an impact on adulthood. For student counsellors, it might be important to find out if failure in taking responsibility, coping with increasing demands and creating individual value systems might be due to a specific mental representation of the client's parents.

Another important consideration in the student's biography is the coining and development of internal working models. Bowlby (1973, p. 205) suggests that: In the working model of the world that anyone builds, a key feature is the notion of who the attachment figures are, where they may be found, and how they may be expected to respond. Similarly, in the working model of the self that anyone builds, a key feature is the notion of how acceptable or unacceptable the individual is in the eyes of the attachment figures.

Although it is proven that the working model developed during the first year functions as a basis for subsequent socio-emotional interactions, it must also be pointed out that working models are constantly modified by experiences in the developmental process. This knowledge might be important for the client in order to cope with present situations.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS SPECIFIC SYSTEMS

Bowlby states that the family is the first system a child actively takes part in. This system doesn't exist from the beginning but is rather a construct of the infant's experiences. Attachment figures develop on the basis of response to early contact-promoting signals like crying, grasping and smiling and the provision of physical and psychological comfort. On the one hand the infant has to adapt to existing conditions within the family, but on the other hand it achieves a degree of self-efficacy because it learns that its demands are respected. The process of becoming a member of the system "family" is a foundational experience for being able to adapt to different systems such as peers and school or generally for finding one's own place in the world. Experience in the family influences a person's general attitude towards integration in any other system.

The complexity of these systems is not to be underestimated. The functioning of a system is influenced by the quality of attachment bonds to different individuals who belong to the system. McCurdy and Scherman (1996) researched on different family structures and their effects on the quality of self-esteem and personal awareness. The research provided further evidence for a conclusion drawn by Lapsley, Rice and Shadid (1988, p. 293) that "a conflictual relationship with even one parent is associated with lower personal adjustment." In addition, McCurdy and Scherman (1996) were able to show a strong influence of the father-adolescent relationship on the development of self-esteem. Although the attachment bond to the mother might be more stable, it seems to be the quality of the attachment to the father that is dominant in the development of self-esteem. Adolescents who grew up in divorced or remarried families or were raised by just one parent (mainly mother-custody arrangements) are more likely to lack self-esteem.

The academic environment is one of the systems that the student has to become a part of. This is done by seeking contact and orientation on the basis of earlier attachment experiences. The system "University" is one that many thousand of students are involved in. Nevertheless, every student has his or her own way of connecting this system with past experience.

The ability to get involved in the system of higher education has been shaped by participation in other systems. Research by Frederick Lopez (1997) on attachment styles of students in an academic environment points out that students' childhood attachment bonds with their parents might be reflected in the quality of student-professor relationships. It has to be kept in mind, however, that the internal working model of the student is likely to have been modified since childhood days. Interestingly, Lopez's research indicates a connection between the quality of relationships to professors and fellow students and mastery-learning attitudes. Students who displayed a secure attachment behaviour were able to establish secure relationships to professors and peers and were able to cope with disappointments and demotivation during their studies. Students with an insecure attachment behaviour, however, seem to be more hesitant to get involved with people from the university community and were not as strong in opposing anxieties and failure.

The inability to detach from mentally strong systems like "family" might lead to difficulties in becoming involved in other coexisting systems. In her article "Student poverty" Patricia Wade (1995) gives an example of a young male student who wasn't able to integrate into the university system because he couldn't cope with the separation from his mother. Going home at the weekends by public transport led to severe financial problems and deprived him of social contact with other students and integration in the university community.
So far, I have pointed out the difficulties students might have in adapting to the systems inherent in the process of higher

education because of earlier attachment experience, and it seems that patterns of attachments do have an "extreme stability" (Schmidt & Strauß, 1997, p. 12). Yet Bowlby (1969, 1973) has already made the point that critical life events and psychotherapy might be able to modify the internal working models. There is a developmental perspective within the challenge to balance autonomy and relatedness within one's social context. One should not overlook the fact that internal working models are established on the basis of internal-external relationships which become increasingly internalised. Internal models always remain in contact with external stimuli and open to adaptation. One might compare this process with the assimilation and accommodation concept developed by Piaget. It remains necessary to find out if the university and its educational quality as an external factor is interacting with the students' internal models, either in a suppportive way by establishing a feeling of security or in an obstructive way by provoking anxious ambivalence and avoidance.

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CONNECTION BETWEEN ATTACHMENT THEORY

AND OTHER APPROACHES

Bowlby and Ainsworth have always stressed the importance of intermingling, attachment theory with other approaches aimed at explaining human behaviour. From its very beginning, attachment theory integrated a broad scope of theoretical backgrounds. Bowlby's attachment theory stemmed from a convergence of several important trends in the biological discipline of ethnology and its insistence on viewing behaviour in an evolutionary context; with psychobiology and its focus on neurophysiological, endocrine and receptor processes that interact with environmental stimuli to activate and terminate the activity of behavioural systems; with control

systems theory, which directs attention to "inner programming" and links behavioural theory to an information processing model of cognition; and with Piaget's structural approach to the development of cognition (Ainsworth 1978, pp. 3-4).
It was the scope of this theoretical framework that invited others to relate attachment theory to emerging psychological and psychotherapeutic concepts as well as reformulate aspects of attachment theory within newly emerging concepts such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1991), emotion and self-regulation (Thompson, 1990), emotional competence (Saarni, 1990) and the motivational approach to self (Deci &

Ryan, 1991). In clinical psychology the relation between attachment behaviours and bonds and specific disorders (like depression or borderline symptoms) have been looked at (cf. the overview given by Schmidt & Strauß, 1997). Bowlby saw the child as a constantly active organism whose main interest is to explore his or her surroundings. During childhood the basis for the degree of self-esteem and self-efficacy is established. With its close connection to the self as an active organism it seems that attachment theory contributes to an empirical way of supporting the clarifying process as well as to the establishment of coping strategies. Both of these explain the effects of psychotherapy according to Grawe's Psychological Psychotherapy (Grawe, 1998). Attachment bonds and behaviours explain the meaning of goals for the individual subject and the complex ways in which they are fulfilled.

The notion that attachment theory has become a "modern" (Schmidt & Strauß, 1997, p. 13) approach in clinical psychology and therapy might be due to its ability to relate productively to other theories and psychological concepts. This goes hand in hand with the attempt to integrate various theories and concepts that are a distinctive feature of contemporary developments in clinical psychology. For the complexity of personal development within higher education with regard to the interplay of cognition, emotion and behaviour (Rott, 1996) such an integrative approach seems to be the most promising currently available.

CONCLUSION

If these are the factors that emerge when attachment theory is applied to emotional behaviour in adolescence and adulthood, what implications does this have for guidance techniques in student counselling and how does it affect the university as an institution of higher education?

So far as student counselling is concerned, we should pay attention to the following: since attachment theory stresses the influence on socio-emotional development during infancy as an important factor for later attachment behaviour, we must conclude that it is necessary to consider the student's past attachment experience in order to understand his or her present situation as well as the counselling process itself.

Research by Frederick Lopez (1997) indicates that a client's attachment behaviour might influence the development of counselling sessions. Clients who are labelled secure to be more open towards the counsellor-client relationship. They are able to describe their situation and feelings from an objective point of view. Clients whose attachment behaviour is avoidant or ambivalent are hesitant to initiate contact with the counsellor. They have difficulties in presenting their state of mind and might be reluctant talk about past experiences.

Issues related to attachment bonds may arise at various points within the transitional process of higher education: relations to the family and intimate partners, to peers and members of the teaching staff. Important events like examinations and the relation to academic work or psychological processes like procrastination may also be crystallising points. All those places and processes embody and reveal the way students connect to their "social network" and their world in general.

Counsellor and client should be aware of the presence of internal working

models and the individual's opportunity to modify them. Although patterns of attachment seem difficult to change, there is a special "plasticity and dynamic within post-adolescent developmental processes" (Leuzinger-Bohleber, 1997, p. 60). If an internal working model cannot be modified it might be useful to look for a strategy that enables the client to cope with the existing working model.

Bowlby (1995) presents five main tasks that a therapist should take into account when applying attachment theory to counselling:

The therapist is to appear as a reliable person who functions as a basis for the client's approach to coping with problems.

The therapist is to encourage the client to think about present feelings for the people he or she relates to most closely.

The client is to be asked to consciously check the counselling situation for statements or incidents that might give information about self esteem or the mental representation of his or her parents.

The client is to be encouraged to compare actual impressions and feelings with those that occurred in childhood.

If possible, the client is to be made aware of the fact that negative experiences as well as the perception of oneself and others have their roots in past conditions that may not exist anymore.

These tasks provide hints for strategies of intervention that might be incorporated in different ways within the various psychotherapeutic approaches.
The following issues seem relevant to the university as an institution of higher education:
The university is a social and communicative network that students relate to in a very important period of their life, namely in early adulthood. Higher education can become an opportunity within the development of internal autonomy and self-reliance but it may also be obstructive to the positive development of adulthood.
The concept of internal working models shows that there are obvious limits to the extent to which the institution may influence personal development, but contacts within the university play an important role. The university should especially be concerned with:

The initiation of contact among students as well as students and teachers.

Sufficient orientation for students in order to help them organise their studies.

Its responsibility to facilitate the process of transition by clearly presenting the system's composition and offering access to its various subinstitutions.

Transparency in the demands made on the student.

The provision of counselling and guidance facilities for those who have pro-

blems in adapting to the university structure.

For integrative institutions like the Zentrale Studienberatung in Germany, in which orientational guidance and psychological as well as psychotherapeutic counselling are integrated into one service, conclusions drawn from the attachment theory may influence both areas of activity. In psychological counselling services in all kinds of systems student counsellors with a consultative role may help their institution to raise awareness about facilitating adaptation to the institution and supporting mastery-learning attitudes.

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ATTACHMENT STRATEGIES IN THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIPS

VALUING A LOOK AT BOTH SIDES OF THE DYAD

Peter Figge |

ATTACHMENT STRATEGIES AND THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

Therapeutic research has well established the fact that the quality of the therapeutic relationship may be assumed to be one of the major factors responsible for therapy outcome (Grawe 1990a, b, 1994, Figge, 1980, 1982, 1999). Therapists in the process of therapy have been described by clients and outside raters, using different means such as questionnaires, pictures, tape, and video), and research has described connections between of therapist quality and therapeutic change. Recent publications have focused on aspects of the pre-therapy situation. On the influence regarding the expectation of clients towards the relationship to their future therapist and on the compatibility of attachment strategies of client and therapist (Höger 1995, 1996).

Therapists offer professional types of well defined relationships, mostly dependent on the professional school they belong to, dependent on their professional experience or the therapeutic setting - and of course dependent on the therapists' personal background. Clients on the other hand are generally looking for professional help, and are mostly lacking any experience of this type of relationship. Thus their expectations and wishes cover a wide range of conscious and unconscious contents.

Client and therapist have one thing in common though. They can both look back on their individual backgrounds of personal attachment experiences. Usually the difference between client and therapist can be found in the degrees to which they have access to these experiences and have integrated them into their personality.Having been introduced to the subject of our conference by previous papers I would like to skip outlining the framework of attachment theory (especially referring to the research of Bowlby (1987, 1988), Ainsworth (1978), and Main and their coworkers (1985).

My personal interest as a clinical psychologist has lately focused on the possible contribution of attachment theory to improve aspects of therapy indication. In improving therapy prognosis it doesn't seem sufficient taking into account if a certain type of therapy would be suitable for an individual client.On top of this it should be kept in mind that a therapeutic relationship is not only a meeting of two functions, that is of a therapist and a client but of two individuals with their different, highly personal attachment strategies and their respective representations. And I believe that the compatibility of these strategies - in whichever dynamic form - might have a decisive influence on the outcome of the therapy

ASSESSING ATTACHMENT STRATEGIES:

THE "BIELEFELD QUESTIONNAIRE ON CLIENT´S EXPECTATIONS"

Before I make you acquainted with a client of mine whom we will call "Ann" for this purpose - let me shortly make you familiar with a questionnaire of Diether Höger (1999) which has been used in Germany in the last years to describe dimensions of attachment. It is called "The Bielefeld Questionnaire on Client's Expectations" (see Annex 1), and has been validated mainly with clients in client-centered psychotherapy. It should be mentioned here that I am very thankful to have had such competent help by Helen Veasey of the University of Surrey in translating this questionnaire.

Factor analysis leading up to this questionnaire yielded three dimensions of client's expectations towards their future therapist:
a. problems in feeling accepted
b. readiness for self-disclosure
c. need for care
In the following process of cluster analysis Höger used these dimensions in order to identify attachment styles in the therapeutic relationship. He could confirm the three basic types of attachment as found by Ainsworth, being able to differentiate however within the avoidant and ambivalent subgroups according to the degree of selfdisclosure (Fig. 1).

1 STRATEGIES OF ATTACHMENT |

Z- SCORCES - DISTANCE FROM MEAN

THE BIELEFELD QUESTIONAIRE ON CLIENT´S EXPECTATIONS |

HÖGER ´96
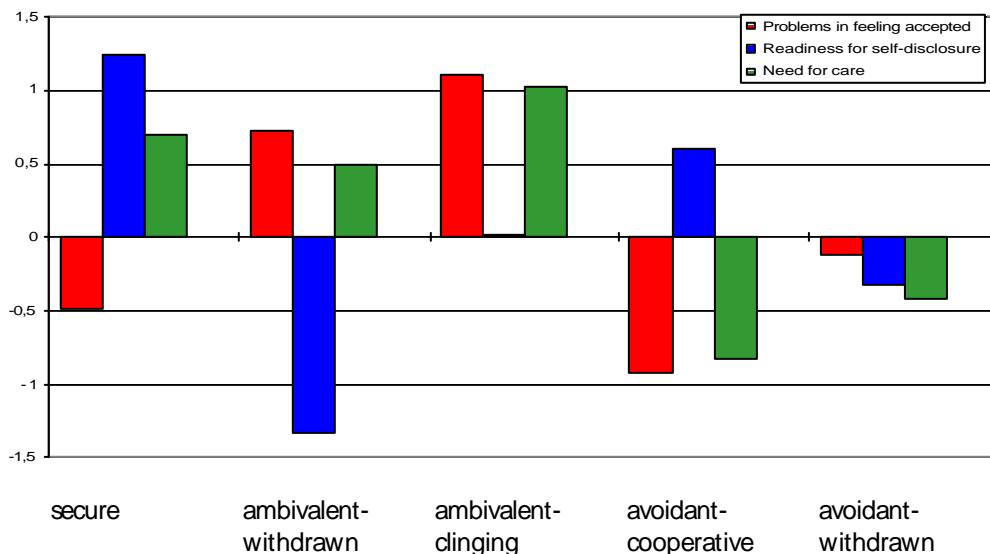
ASSESSMENT OF CHANGE[1]

Data gather in questionnaires before, during and after therapy indicate a positive development for Ann.

Taking a look at the time progressing I suggest not presenting details of the results at this point. Instead I would like to introduce you to some approaches on the compatibility of client and therapist attachment strategies.

As an example might serve the results of the Gießen-Test (Beckmann & Richter 1975). describing individual self and ideal concepts.

It has been suggested (Butler & Haigh 1954) that for example extensive discrepancies between individual concepts of the self and the contrasting ideal self may reflect individual incongruence which motivates clients to seek psychotherapeutic help.

Correspondingly positive therapy outcome is associated with a significant decrease in the self - idealself dimension, reducing significantly the discrepancy of how "I see myself" and "how I want to be" to a manageable and healthy tension between the experience of the self and the aspirations and hopes embedded in a potential ideal self.

The following illustrations demonstrate the process of change:

positive | pliant | over | depressive | retentive | socially |
resonant | controlled | impotent

Fig.2 describes Ann's self/ideal self-perception gathered at the first testing. Apart from noting a self concept that can be characterised as highly depressive and retentive, a large discrepancy between self and ideal self can be observed in the these variables. At the end of therapy (Fig.3) this discrepancy has not only been remarkably decreased, but marked changes can also be observed regarding self as well as ideal self-concepts within the different dimensions (social resonance openness, social potency). Data from other assessment instruments which I do not report at this time yield similar findings and support the observation of a positive therapeutic outcome.

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[1] The chapters of the original version of this article deal additionally with the life's history of a client named Ann; a history of separation and attachment leading to psychotherapy. This is followed by a report on the process of her psychotherapy with the author including the special relationship that developed. Due to reasons concerned with the protection of the client's privacy I decided not to include these chapters. The very personal content suitable for communication to a limited number of colleagues at the Copenhagen Conference does not seem to fit into the framework of an electronic publication. Please contact me in case of special interest. PF

2 | CASE STUDY »ANN«

GIESSEN-TEST | SELF AND IDEAL-SELF | PRE-TESTING

resonant   controlled   impotent

negative resonant   dominant   under-controlled   hypomatic   open   socially potent

- Self - prae
- Ideal - prae
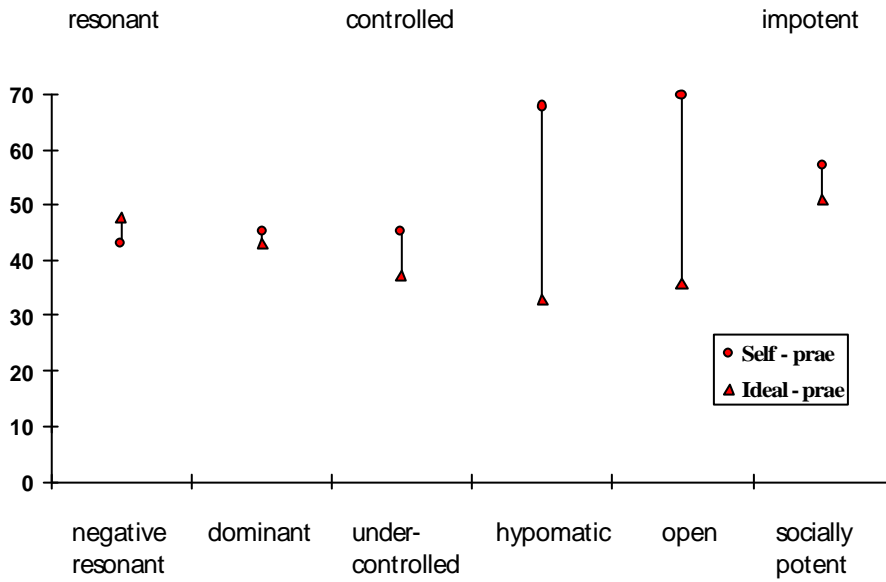
3 | CASE STUDY " ANN "

GIESSEN-TEST | SELF AND IDEAL-SELF | POST-TESTING

positive resonant   compliant   over-controlled   depressive   retentive   socially impotent

negative resonant   dominant   under-controlled   hypomatic   open   socially potent

- Self - post
- Ideal - post
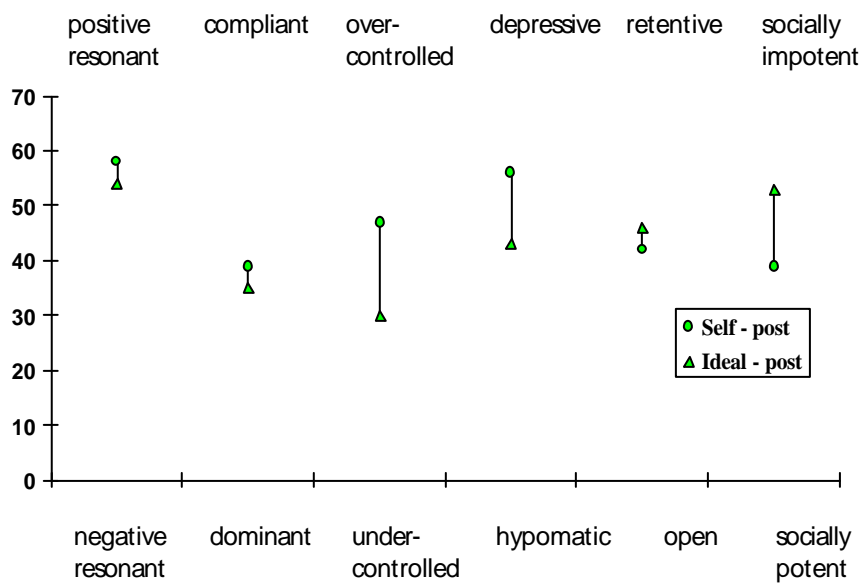
COMPATIBILITY OF CLIENT AND THERAPIST ATTACHMENT STRATEGIES

It was a quite pragmatic way in which I approached the question in which way attachment strategies of clients might have influence on the outcome of a psychotherapy.

Among other data gathered at the beginning of therapy I asked Ann about her expectations about me as her future therapist - using the BFKE. But I also asked myself about my assumptions, "what would Ann expect of me, what were her hopes, her fears and her wishes".

Fig 4 describes my assumptions - I thought that she might doubt very much if I would accept her and I estimated that she was very unwilling to let me see very much of what occupied her.

She might concede however her need to be taken care of, which I had experienced so well. In short I assumed her attachment strategy to be of "ambivalent-withdrawn" type. (in comparison: Fig: strategies of attachment)

However, when I looked at the results of her questionnaire (see Fig. 5) it turned out at the first glance that I had widely overestimated the degree in which her expectations ranged. I quite correctly judged that Ann would rather be doubtful of being accepted and that she would be quite retentive to open up. But I clearly overestimated the degree to which she would admit to be in need for care. In all - her expectations would be classified as an "avoidant-withdrawn" strategy.

4 | DIMENSIONS OF ATTACHMENT | CASE "ANN"

Therapist´s pre-therapy assumptions regarding client´s therapy expectations attachment strategy: ambivalent - withdraw | Distance from Mean in s.d. | Z-score

- Problems in feeling accepted
- Readiness for self-disclosure
- Need for care
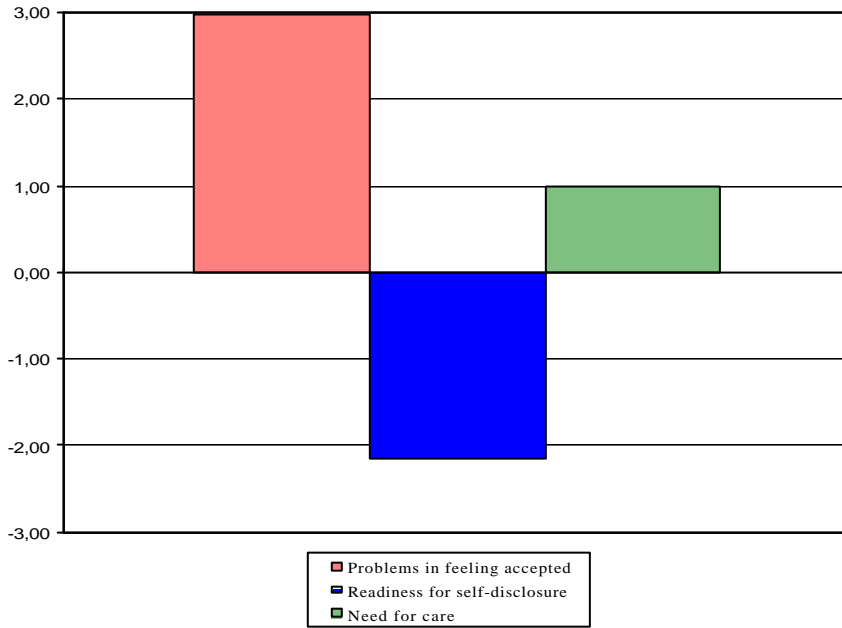
5 | DIMENSIONS OF ATTACHMENT | CASE "ANN"

Clients pre-therapy expectation regarding her own therapy

- Problems in feeling accepted
- Readiness for self-disclosure
- Need for care
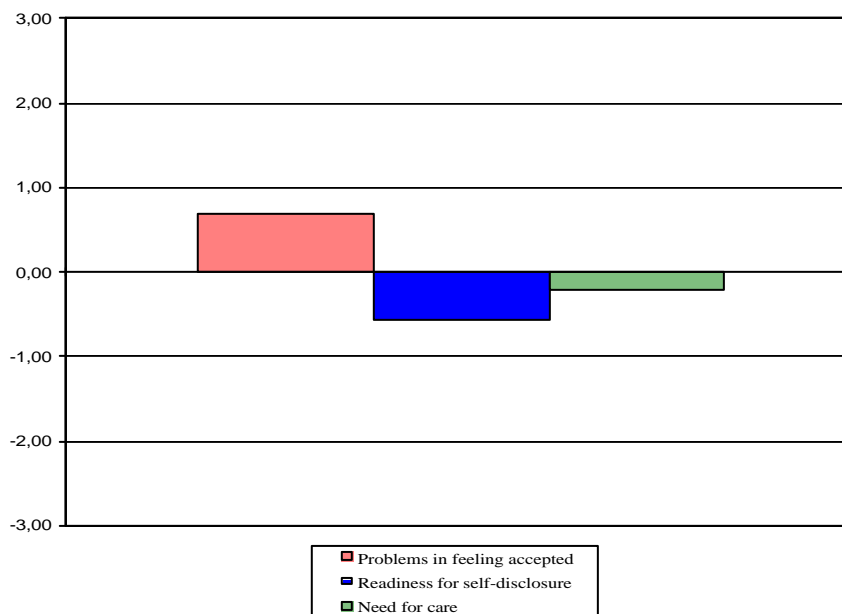
In view of her early experiences with her family and other therapists she also hoped for little in our relationship. She seemed to protect herself against disappointment by withdrawing herself in an avoiding attachment strategy.

Now who of you would be sure to give a answer what kind of therapist-attachment-style would correspond best to Ann's way of relating to people ? A style quite similar to hers, or a style completely different? Or does she need a therapist well trained in establishing professional relationships where the personal attachment strategies of the therapist would not have any influence on the therapy process at all?.

I'm sorry, I don't know if I can come up with an answer but as a CC psychotherapist I set out by assuming such as:- if I don't know much about compatibility of attachment styles there is at least one thing I could be sure of. If I would be able to understand and share her feelings of not being accepted, of not wanting to disclose much of herself, even being in need of help - then this would be a precondition for empathy towards her. Would empathy towards her attachment strategies imply that we had something in common or would my being completely different further this understanding ?

So I tried an experiment As a means of finding out more about my own attachment strategies in a situation comparable to Ann's - I asked myself, about my own expectation when assuming I would be starting psychotherapy (see Fig. 6). Under this assumption I filled out the BFKE and was quite amazed to discover that my apparent strategy was in tendency quite similar with the one I supposed Ann to have: some doubts of being accepted, a reluctance to open up - and bit of wanting to be cared for - in all a typical ambivalent strategy with tendencies to be quite careful in offering too much of myself.

6 | DIMENSIONS OF ATTACHMENT | CASE "ANN"

Therapist´s pre-therapy expectation regarding a potential own therapy
Attachment strategy | ambivalent - withdrawn | Distance from Mean in s.d. | Z-score

Problems in feeling accepted
Readiness for self-disclosure
Need for care
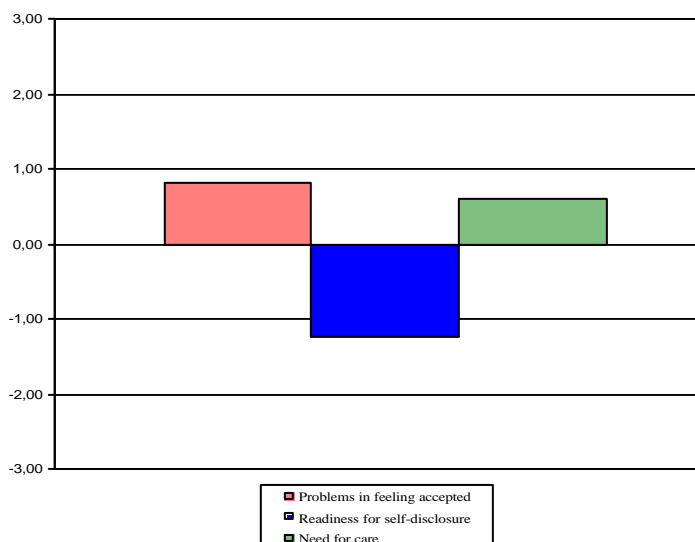
Compared to Ann's own data again it seemed quite similar. Just with the exception of my admittance of being needy - this would make me ambivalent, and her avoidant.

Could it be that I was able to understand Ann just because I would tend to have similar expectations? Could it be that my own attitude made me especially sensitive to her secret, unspoken need for care?

A first tentative hypothesis developed. Similarity of client and therapist attachment styles might be an adequate prerequisite for therapeutic empathy. If the therapist is in contact with feelings of the client out of his own experience he might have a special pass of admittance to the feelings of the client.

But what about the danger of collusion, the consequences of the unspoken, secret accordance of attitudes, emotions and behavior ? Would identification be responsible for a loss of therapeutic distance hindering me to differentiate between myself and the client ?

Again what helps is research on CCP. In order to come up with some tentative answers on our questions let me just take you for a short excursion into CCP.

I suppose you are familiar with the three classical attitudes of CC psychotherapists towards their clients: empathy, unconditional regard and congruence. Additionally it has been shown that concepts of engagement and social power form part of the clients' perception.

Mainly those clients who observe the therapist as being highly congruent and empathetic profit most from psychotherapy. Further research (Figge 1994, 1999, Figge & Schwab 1997) on the development of the client-therapist relationship during the course of therapy indicates that the clients' experience of congruence of the therapist (i.e. the perception of his or her genuineness, honesty and reliability) may be a precondition on which the offer of empathy is being accepted and therapeutically used by the client.

Congruence is understood as the therapist's process gaining access to his/her own feelings and being open to the process of it's adequate symbolisation and integration - in order to be able to understand the client empathetically (Biermann-Ratjen et al. 1995).

A congruent therapist seems to be valued by clients as an important other who understands and accepts the client's experiences from the client's viewpoint but being aware of their different status in the relationship. Thus the promise of a congruent CC therapist consists in attempting to understand his/her own feelings in the therapeutic setting in order to be able to offer unhindered empathy to the client.

The original tentative hypothesis is carried on - being able to understand the client by sharing similar attachment strategies would ask for a congruent therapist in order to avoid the danger of collusion. A suitable instrument for the assessment of therapist attitudes as seen by the client has been introduced by me at other occasions (Figge 1994, 1997, 1998). It is the Questionnaire of Therapeutic Relationship (see annex 2).

7 | DIMENSIONS OF A THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP | CASE "ANN"

Ann`s perception of therapeutic relationship | Figge 1980 | Answering range: 1 - 7

Legend:
- Empathy
- Active Engagement
- Congruence
- Positive Regard
- Social Power
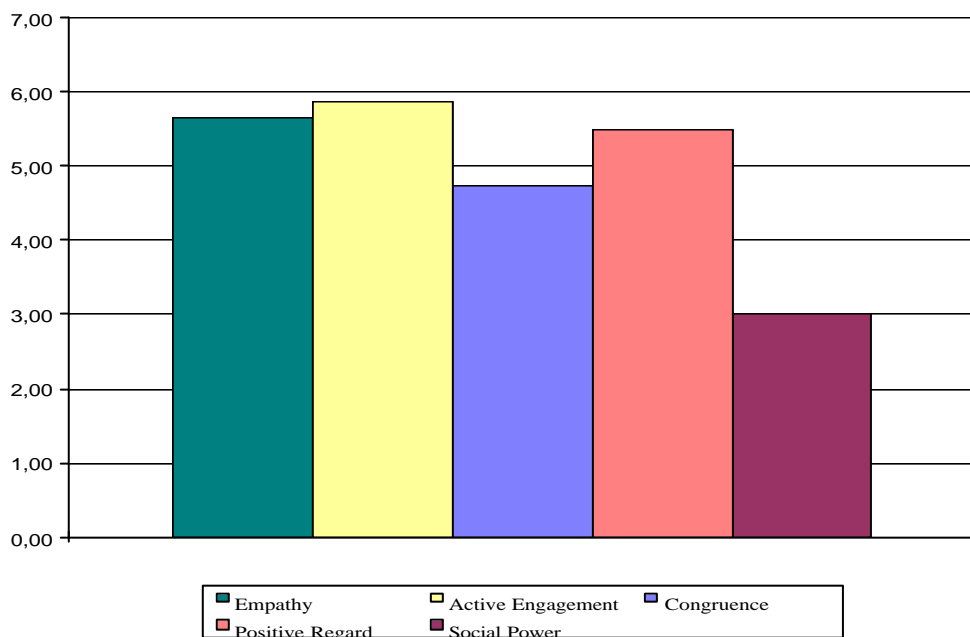
Fig 7 illustrates how Ann saw me during therapy in relation to the five therapeutic attitudes named before. Out of experience with administering the questionnaire it might be said, that the results reflect high ratings regarding therapist empathy, engagement, congruence and positive regard. The findings suggest a congruent and helpful therapeutic relationship, the therapist not being experienced as the overpowering other.

Apparently our therapeutic relationship had developed into a reliable, congruent and non-threatening coalition, understanding growing out of related attachment styles.

SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

Let me finish with a short summary of this first excursion into the connection of attachment theory and therapeutic relationship. There are indications that a positive therapy outcome is furthered if the therapist has access to, has empathy for the attachment strategies of his client. One way of understanding a client better consists of sharing not only feelings and wishes but also of being in contact with a client's attachment strategies out of own experience. Consciously taking care that therapist attitudes do not obstruct or distort therapeutic empathy. The degree of congruence might be an indicator if the therapist succeeds in this.

And the outlook? - We need to find out if there is something to this assumption - taking a closer look on how attachment strategies of a larger number of different clients and therapists relate to each other and take influence on the therapy outcome. And at the end we might gather some more knowledge to include aspects of compatibility between attachment strategies of client and therapist in the process of indication: which client with what kind of diagnosis will be best taken care of in which form of therapy and which therapist.

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CUORI:

A PLACE FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO DISCOVER THEIR ADULTHOOD

Susanna Maione and Alessandra Franceschini |

ABSTRACT

In Italy the separation/ attachment phenomenon is more accentuated than in other European countries. Young people leave their parent's home very late, living, protected in a situation where they have no responsibility. The assuming of an adult identity is therefore postponed, as is also the moment of separation from the family and the autonomy of the young person. CUORI (University centre for counselling and information) a psychological counselling service of ESU (Organisation for the rights of study) is a neutral and undifferentiated place for college students. CUORI seeks to meet a student need to be looked after but the same time his/her need to be autonomous, encouraging his/her growth and exploration of his/her own resources and self-determination abilities. In this paper a few cases are presented that could explain the kind of counselling that our centre offers to college students. Each case is presented bearing in mind the aforesaid Italian separation/attachment phenomenon, considering also attachment in its cross-cultural meaning.

A PROBLEMATIC PHENOMENON: THE PRESENT CONDITION OF ITALIAN YOUNG PEOPLE

In Italy there are 13½ million people between 20 and 34 years of age, representing 23% of the population. Among this group, 6 million (47% of the total) maintain they have no intention, at the moment, of leaving their families, not even in the near future. Why should they leave since they have the possibility of being autonomous even though living with their mother and father?
As a matter of fact:

71% of the total have one room at their own to welcome friends or partners;

More than 50% can organise home parties without asking mother and father for permission; the percentage rises to 90% if they ask for permission;

40% do not contribute to family expenses in any way, although having a regular wage; nor do they contribute to housework (cleaning, cooking, shopping, little repairs); if the mother is a housewife, the youth is then exempted of any kind of housework.

Basically, there are no family conflicts: it is a peaceful and quiet living and the "sitting-hen" parents are very much appreciated by the "chick" offspring who award mum (10/10) and dad (8 1/2 /10) Parents do not impose any restriction that may cause tensions or quarrels: lack of understanding decreases (and in some cases even disappears) with the growth of the child (ISTAT, 1998). The need for autonomy and independence typical of young people of this age does not seem to be present for this cohort, even if 75% of them report that they would be willing to move, not only to another city, but also to a foreign country.
Along with the very desire to leave the home, there is an accurate, rational estimation of the many, but not only discomforts, problems, difficulties, that young people would have to face once they leave the family. According to the Italian youth, the opportunity to leave the maternal/paternal house may be taken into consideration only if you have:

A partner to get married to (less if we talk about a mere cohabitation);

A regular job;

A wage of about two millions lire | parents would prefer it to be even higher;

The ownership of a flat | or house;

A standard of living very similar to that experienced during the life in common with the parents

A spontaneous question emerges from these data, which have already been analysed by several sociological and anthropological studies (CNR, 1999; COS-PES, 1999): do young people have a real insecure (or ambivalent) attachment, or could they simply be only just a little opportunist, or even astute and well adapted to the social conditions offered by the country they live in? Within the Italian situation, in the light of attachment theory, a number of issues emerge.

ATTACHMENT THEORY: A CRITICAL APPROACH

Bowlby imagines a link between the first relational experiences of the child with his caregiver and the psychological structures that develop throughout the childhood and into adult life. What develop from the first interactions between the mother and the child, the relational styles typical of the latency age, the adolescent's inner world and the ability to mediate and to represent the self and the other, typical of adults.

It is up to the internal working models (IWM) - memories of inward objectual relationships, outline processes which imply both affective and cognitive components, guides for relational behaviour and screen (filter) for new experiences- to convey the attachment patterns to the individual's subsequent developmental phases.

Several authors (M. Ainsworth et al., 1978; P.M. Crittenden, 1990) agree that the child's "secure" attachment is the behaviour of closeness to the caregiver at the same time encouraging and allowing interactions with other alien figures and the exploration of the external world. Growing up, the child with a secure attachment shows coping ability even when he is not in the presence of the mother or of the caregiver, thus demonstrating quite a strong self-confidence and also a good confidence in the environment (P.M. Crittenden,

1994). The danger fear is well balanced by the caregiver relationship thus creating a springboard for curiosity and exploration. During adolescence, then, the youth progresses along this developmental line: what follows is the detachment from the attachment figures, tolerating longer separation periods of time, and new attachments (or re-attachments) take place: the adolescent frees himself from the parental links, tolerates the mourning of the loss, goes on through the transitional phase of attachment to a group of contemporaries and continues toward the establishment of an adult relationship with a partner (J. Holmes, 1994).
An adult, then, is going to develop from a steady base, able to establish mutually satisfying close relationships, able to face and live with change, with a good rate of self-consciousness and sense of autonomy (B. Lake, 1985). As many researches show, (P. Shaver and C. Hazan, 1998), those individuals that define themselves as secure, avoider or ambivalent in the couple relationship, report coincident attachment patterns recalling the relationship they had with their parents during their childhood.

The secure attachment generates "emotionally autonomous" individuals: able to experience and to see their own feelings, able to assemble experiences into a

coherent narrative plan, able to face loss and separation with the appropriate anger, sadness and reconciliation, with good social adaptation.

It seems then that Italian late adolescents and the young adults do not show an autonomous attitude consistent with the distinctive features typical of the "securly attached" adult referred to by the theory and subsequent research. Remaining so tied to the original family, they invest very little on personal close relationships and prefer to stay bound to their first attachment figures, thus renouncing the exploration of a new environment and of a different phase of life.

However, is it right to say that young Italian people remain tied to their parents and are unable to tackle novelty, owing to an insecure or disorganised attachment pattern conveyed by the internal working models acting as inhibitions to change to adult development? Can we interpret that instead as a kind of "opportunism", in which the safe family shell allows them to face life outside - work, study and relationships - and to go back, in the end, to their home in which very little is required and very much is given? Or should we suppose different coexisting causes- psychological, social, cultural- to explain the phenomenon of "mummy's boys"

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT │ FAMILY AND SOCIETY TODAY IN ITALY

An interpretation of the social-cultural Italian phenomenon is possible if we go beyond the attachment theory model. That model focuses on the antinomic pairs such as dependence vs autonomy, secure vs insecure attachment, setting aside any value judgement, in order to reach an objective understanding of a psycho-social-anthropological model which seems to be adaptive in respect to the Italian situation. Such a situation seems to be still linked to rural patriarchal model not withstanding all the major transformations that the Country has undergone. Offspring are encouraged to stay in the maternal- paternal home, with all the problems of cohabitation and dependence that this phenomenon may cause, but at the same time they exploit all the advantages that come from the economic and social solidarity among the family members, that form a sort of micro-society.

Such a model has now undergone deep changes. The solidarity among the members of the standard Italian family (made up of 3-4 persons) is no longer "transversal", not even economically. Instead it has a "one way direction" (from parents to children), though still keeping essentially unaltered the old ambivalent solidarity/ dependence.
We must consider that the State, mainly in the past, didn't devote very much to juvenile and family politics, meeting population's needs, as opposed to what had happened in other countries, in Europe and outside of Europe. In this way the Italian family had to take charge of all the deficiencies of the welfare state, to make up for institutional shortcoming.

This probably encouraged distrust toward the public dimension, and an excesssive turn to the private, which often turned into overprotection of offspring, thus young adults indifferent to the wish of exploring the extra-domestic world (a drive always regarded as maturative), are willing to benefit from all the comforts and leisure offered by cohabitation with her parents.

We need, however, to acknowledge that the Italian family has taken the cultural education of young people upon itself, taken up all the tensions among generations, and has contributed to contain isolation, which differentiates Italy from perhaps other European Countries.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING SERVICE OF CUORI WITHIN

THE TRANSCULTURAL MEANING OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

According to Ammaniti, Stern et al. (1992), each mother-child dyad has a range of relationships at its disposal, but different types of relationships predominate in different cultures, and those are the relational modalities considered to be the most appropriate for that specific culture. Each sample of child-parent interaction has to be considered within the specific cultural context.

R. A. Hinde and J. Stevenson-Hinde (1994), suggest that a distinction be made between biological desiderata (the selective forces that work in our developmental adaptation environment), cultural desiderata (what is suggested by the culture and by the society values), and personal desiderata, represented by mental health, and the psychological welfare. What is culturally selected interacts with what is biologically selected and this interaction contributes to the individual's adaptation to their environment during their development. An adaptive criterion is then established out of the social context in which an individual lives, and in this way it can encourage the selection of relationships that are not fully consistent with the phylogenetic and ontogenetic adaptive principles.

Examining some interviews, which took place in our psychological Counselling Centre with young people attending University, gave us the opportunity to explore this topic in some depth and to draw certain conclusions.

The students attending Venetian Universities can freely enter our CUORI service- Centro Universitario di Orientamento e Informazione (Informative and Orienting University Centre)- where information services, guidance, career service and counselling are contextually present. They can glance through reviews, consult the Internet, ask for advice, examine and find support and help for their way of studying, their own doubts and all the daily difficulties they may encounter.

Case A |
Laura (19 years old), came to our Centre to look for orientation about her University choice. Her paternal grandmother, very authoritative, decides everybody else's fate at home and the girl feels as if she has a mask: apparently she tries to do what she is asked to, but deep inside she hides a big anger. She feels that her parents didn't protect her from this situation and didn't understand her. Maybe they were too busy with each other and at trying to mention the very fragile family balance. Laura has both very strong aggressive impulses, even if inhibited, and a clear senses of guiltiness, only part of which are expressed with words and which are mainly acted through non-verbal ways, eg, low directed glance, a rigid position on the chair, long silences.

The opportunity to talk about her negative emotions in counselling, feeling that they are accepted and contained, allowed Laura to look at aggressiveness in a new and different way and to reshuffle the destructive power she ascribed to at the beginning. Counselling gave Laura the opportunity to meditate on how important her desire to move away/separate from her "prison-home" was, and at the same time on how difficult it was for her to hypothesise autonomous choices since she had so many doubts. Making the University choice autonomously from her family, became for Laura. a way to regard herself as a separated person, able to look after herself and to assert her own decisions even in front of other people.

Case B |
Giulia (22 years old) is in third year Economics and comes to our Centre to change her University course; she wants to move to another city. During her second session of work she says that everybody else's judgement on this topic always annoyed her, and that she is conscious of the fact that what stopped her mostly was disappointing her mother, who expected a

lot from her. Giulia understood, talking together with her mother, that running away was useless and that a vocational course held in the city where she lives would have suited her. Three sessions were enough to help her to verbalise thoughts that she already had in mind and to reassure her about her new choice, less ambitious than the University degree.

In counselling, the attitude of accepting the perplexities and difficulties in her studying emerged for Giulia. "I do not feel shame any more when I tell my friends that I still have to pass one exam, the important thing is that now I have to make up my mind", she says during the third session. It was hard for her to give up the idea of getting a University degree, but she tried to find among her past experiences- of studying, of summer working, hobbies- her own aspiration, her abilities and her interests, in order to find a new path to go along.

Case C |
Paolo (25 years old), having graduated in Economics, ask for a session to help him deal with his first job. He is thin, his glance is low and he dresses quite in an old fashioned way. He is perplexed because his mother wants him to be a manager, but he feels he has no talent for this kind of profession: he admits he is not decided, he is not "ruthless" and he is not very brilliant in conversations. Paolo blames his childhood for his attitude, for when he was between 6 and 15 he actually lived in the mountains with his very authoritative mother and her partner who ran a hotel.
When he is asked about his early years of life, Paolo says he spent them alone with his mother in Milan, and that he cannot remember anything about those years…and quickly moves to another subject.
His fears emerge even when he is in the company of girls; he is not able to relate to them, to step forward, he feels blocked, frozen, so he always stays aside. Nobody sees him, nobody chooses him, similarly with his mother, who acknowledges him only when he does something that she likes, when he dresses as she wants him to dress and when he lets her comb his hair.
Paolo wishes to find a person who can help him in "waking up", as had happened to a friend of his talking with a doctor he trusted. His uneasiness is strong, but he is not able to use the space I offer him. As a matter of fact he phones at the last minute to cancel the session, he turns up after a few days coming directly to the Centre, but he doesn't want to fix a new appointment. He asks for magical formulas to restrain his phobic symptoms, and he cannot stop for a minute to think about himself in a global way. He would like someone to relate to in order to find a little bit of self-confidence, but it seems that relating to people is full of anguish and fear.

Case D |
Elena (19 years old) comes to discuss her wish to study abroad. She says that she likes studying, but she also likes doing many other things: playing volleyball, studying languages, and, above all, having an active social life. Her parents would not like her to move to another town, and she admits that, after all, even if she has the will to leave the "nest", while living at home she is allowed a good deal of autonomy, while at the same time having someone to rely on 24 hours a day. She has a clear and serene glance, she knows what she has at home and, notwithstanding her curiosity for the world, at the moment she doesn't want to forgo it.
These are only some examples of young people attending University who come to our Centre.
Laura and Paolo, just in few sessions, expressed their difficulty in managing the adult situations that life presents to them, eg., choosing a University course and a job. There is a strong and hidden request for support, even if at the same time there is a great fear to show themselves and to give a meaning to what emerges.
Laura has ambivalent feelings toward an

emotionally absent mother, who may have been depressed, and who never gave her the opportunity to understand what was happening at home; double-dealing is also the link between Paolo and the significant people in his childhood.

For these two people we might see how a precarious attachment, in which nobody tries to listen to their real needs, may present subsequent development and their ability to face present challenges.

Our work of counselling is based on the necessity of provoking the birth and the development, in the student, of a kind of continuous line, a kind of articulated "narration", starting from the very life experience which appears to be fragmented and chaotic, in order to give back to the person the sense of belongings to his own story. Giving a meaning to the student's anxieties and emotions, means helping him to date and clarify his experiences, leading him to a real insight and, sometimes, also to a dynamic change (S.M.G. Adamo, 1990). Telling ones own story, gives coherence and cohesion to ones own past and, in this way, can give experience change a new meaning, more genuine and more coherent.

That is exactly what Giulia did autonomously, confronting herself with her mother and with the psychologist; she had the opportunity to think over her uniqueness again, over her ties and feelings, even if painful, reaching to accept a life plan less pretentious, one that suited her better.

Elena, on the other hand, represents the mood of many young Italian people, undecided whether to follow their escapist desire or the sense of safety offered by the family, so clearly felt, and the opportunities that this particular condition allows them to catch and to live in a climate of perpetual reassurance.

If it is true, then, that young Italian people suffer from the Peter Pan Syndrome, they are "mammoni" (bogy-men), childish, unable and not interested in exploring the world outside their nest, should we see this in a negative way, and not make any effort to understand their prolonged permanence in the family as a means of allowing them to adapt themselves in a better way to the social and cultural situation of their Country?

As we can gather from the cases above, sometimes the mood of the students met during our counselling betrays a real story of difficult attachment, but for others we can say that the family represents a safe harbour to take shelter and also the starting point for further explorations. Indeed we have to say that young Italian people are less exposed (more protected) to serious forms of uneasiness, such as juvenile alcoholism, suicides, serious depressions, or undesired pregnancies, which are very frequent phenomena in the North of Europe (Eurostat, 1997).

It is possible to hypothesise, then, two ways of looking at the same phenomenon: one that looks at it only in a negative way, which sees the weakness of young Italian people who barricade themselves within the domestic walls; the other that explains the phenomenon in the opposite way, viewing this kind of behaviour as the best adaptation to the social condition of the environment in which they live.

CONCLUSIONS

The students that come to our Centre represent the typical situation described above; difficulties in finding their own independence, the doubts about themselves, the domestic dynamics, the projections that parents have with their offspring, the condition of safety and warmth that the nest transmits.

The way in which students faces university life; autonomous and self-organised study, distant relationships with lecturers, new social relationships with contemporaries, a new environment to enter; concretely represents what is going on inside; confusion and hesitancy toward the future, the desire of emancipation and autonomy, but also the will to remain tied to the old certainties.

The CUORI Centre, has been set up as a differentiated place, that is to say not just a psychological service, but characterised by the presence of many orienting activities, where students could come without a specific question, and because of this, is determined to support and accompany the student during this transitional phase. It is a kind of bridge between the story of the past and the future plans, between the family house and new life spaces, between the need for support and the desire of independence, between the certainties and moments of crisis.

Within the counselling setting, there is an opportunity to think about the way the student feels himself in relation to the others and to understand his emotional experiences. Indeed through the relationship with the counsellor, the university student will be able to link what happens within the counselling room with what happens outside of it, he will also be able to give a global meaning at his own experience and to join together the fragments of his personality (B. Copley, 1990).

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Group-Psychotherapy makes the Student a better Student

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ABSTRACT

Group Psychotherapy with adolescents can be operationalised as a development oriented model of treatment. Adolescents who are teased by peers when they are 13 years old, do not attach themselves to the peer group. In the therapy group those teased students get the opportunity to attach to a peer group, and so develop their social and scholastic abilities.
The subject of the present research project is the relationship of a good passage through the second false of attachment, what means attachment to the peer group, with study-attitude.

Assessment scales have been used for the group therapy-clients on two different moments with an interval of half a year between them. The following scales have been used: a personality inventory (NVM, this is a shortened MMPI), a Dutch Autonomy scale and two study-behaviour scales. This paper presents the initial finding and a discussion of the relationship between study-attitude and group psychotherapy.

INTRODUCTION

Sander hesitates to participate in the discussion of his study-group, after following group-psychotherapy he starts bringing in his own opinion to the discusssions.
Lisa cannot bring herself to study, she feels guilty about it, but during her participation in the therapy group she discovers that she has chosen the wrong course.

This paper examines the relationship between attachment to the group, in group-psychotherapy, and study-satisfaction and intrinsic study motivation.
First I will dwell on the process of attachment, specifically the attachment of the adolescent, concerning the adolescent-peer relationship. I will use a developmental point of view and the focus of the object-relation theory (Mahler, Blos, Tijhuis, Grunebaum & Solomon), the attachment theory (Bowlby and Marrone) and my own experiences as a group-psychotherapist. I hope in discussing this material, it will become clear to you, why we think that group-psychotherapy makes the student a better student.

I will start with an overview of concepts which are relevant for the diagnosis of clients for group-psychotherapy (see Table 1). It is a developmental scheme, starting with a phase of least developed and ending with a phase of most developed. Group-psychotherapy is most suitable for clients in the middle section. Through group-psychotherapy they will make the transition from the middle section to the bottom section. I like to describe the process of transition and the changes the student is going through and the influences of these processes on his study-behaviour.

TABLE 1

Development in terms of object-relation-theory,
attachment-theory and group-behaviour
Object-relation-theory
Attachment-theory
Group-behaviour in the first three months
No psychological self; No social I
Mother not sensitive-responsive on baby-and child-level;
Mother not sensitive-responsive on adolescent-level.
Does not comply with the group-rules,
without feeling guilty;
Discusses in a overt, but non- interactive way:
'This group does not help me'; Group wants person to leave the group.

OBJECTRELATIONS

All sorts of births of the human species exists, a biological, a psychological, a social, a cultural, and a spiritual one. Birth represents the transition from one reality to another and contains for that reason always a separation-individuation process. Here we are concentrating on social birth. Before social birth there is biological and psychological birth.

The psychological birth of the human infant is a slowly unfolding intrapsychic process. Mahler wrote a lot about this separation-individuation process. I assume that you are familiar with Mahler's theory, so I will start to describe the social birth. The social birth takes place in the adolescent phase. It is the second separation-individuation process and the family and peer-group play the principal part. Tijhuis wrote about the adolescent: 'His concept of self and this discovery of the self within the interactions and relationships in the affectionate context of the group, supports the individuation-process and the development of identity of the adolescent and helps him make a transition in his development.
Grunebaum and Solomon say about this theme: 'Adolescence self-object relations occur primarily in the context of the peer group rather than the familial group. A crucial developmental task for the child is that of learning how to manage their peer-relations. The child's self-esteem mirrors his relative success or failure in accomplishing this developmental task. Self-esteem and the quality of peer-relationship are two sides to the same phenomenon, the person-in-the-social-world: the dialectic between the "I" and the "We."

Parents can only help a child get ready to join their peers. Parents may provide a foundation of security that enables the child to separate and seek out to discover peer-relationships. It is, however, through actual interaction and play among equals (of a positive nature) that the child becomes less afraid of others, can bear to see them more as they really are, to see himself in their reflected appraisals, that he can take their point of view as well as his own. And as the child develops a better sense of self and self-esteem, it affects the nature and quality of interaction and play with peers.

Group modality may be the treatment of choice for those with impaired self-esteem. The group-process in the therapy group appeals to the intra-psychic and interpersonal functioning of adolescents: the separation-individuation-process can come to life in the therapy group in the object relational development of the sec-

ond individuation of an adolescent. In the development of the group process the critical moments occur in these focal conflicts and group themes. Movements from one group stage to a related one and developmental transitions are signaled by a shift in the participation pattern in the group. These movements are particularly characteristic of adolescents groups: one moment the group may be discussing mature points of view and adult topics, the next moment the therapist may sudddenly be confronted with an acute regresssion and a primitive response to a situation in the here and now which an individual or group will have to deal with.

These regressive-progressive group processes are part of the struggle toward individuation during adolescence.
The process of separation-individuation in the peer-group takes the same course as the process of group development in the psychotherapy-group. We can distinguish four phases:

Involvement Through Universality
Mastering Disappointment
Achieving Independence
Facing Separation (Brabender 1985)

We will discuss each of these phases to clarify the process of social birth.

INVOLVEMENT THROUGH UNIVERSITIY

The major occurrence during this phase is members attempting to bond with one another through the establishment of commonalties in their situations outside of the group. This attempt to bond through the discovery of shared experience is in itself an effort to fulfill the primary developmental task of this phase.

In the peer-group it is the same, where they wear the same clothes, listen to the same music, use the same words or terms. These habits ward off the anxiety of exclusion (expulsion) and fuel expression of the wish to join the group.

Often this is a difficult period for parents, because the peer-group culture can differ a lot from the family culture. The adolescent wants to become a member of the peer-group, even if it is against the wish and will of his parents. Through the subcultural difference his perspective changes, he sees his parents with other eyes. The adolescent loosens infantile object ties, when he finds extra-familial love and hate objects in the peer-group.

MASTERING DISAPPOINTMENT

In the therapy-group members are no longer able to sustain the belief that the group will gratify their needs, they experience themselves as being 'all talked out'. The group-members express negative affect toward the therapist and the therapist tolerates this expression and stimulates it. The group theme refers to a series of focal conflicts linked by a similarity in their disturbing elements. General group themes as focal conflicts can arise such as those highlighting dependency issues around the therapist or conflicts between individuality and self-determination versus intimate cohesion and group conformity.

In the peer-group the members find out about the leader and they are going to dress a little bit different, more in lines with their own taste. The relationship with the parents changes gradually, whereby the students offer less resistance to their parents.

ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE

Once the group-members have ventilated their negative feelings, the climate in the group changes. Members make better eye contact with one another, more frequently ask questions of one another and express a greater range of affects towards one another. Members are able to establish relationships characterised by reciprocity and intimacy. In this phase members are able to accept differences in the group.

In the peer-group you can also see differentiation. Some members become dearest friends and others become less important. With their parents they start to relate on a footing of equality, because they accept themselves and others. Also in the cognitive field there are changes. There is usually some relationship between an individuals self-evaluation and his actual achievements. The achievements improve when the self-evaluation becomes higher. Work requires also the ability to interact successfully with ones peers, so in this area there is also improvement.

Facing Separation

In the therapy-group the task is recognition of the diverse affects associated with loss, both the pleasure and the pain of having the group end. Also in the peer-group there is separation, for example the school ends and members of the group are moving to another city because of another study, or someone gets a girl- or boyfriend and wants to spend more time with her/him. The separation from the peer-group is often the beginning of becoming a new individuated adult member of society.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment theory involves:
a developmental theory | concerned with both normal and pathological development;

a theory of sensitive responsiveness as psychic organizer;

a theory of internalization and representation; and

a theory of anxiety.

I will discuss these sub-theories and relate them to object-relations. In attachment theory there is not such a clear difference between the infant and adolescence- period, so I will describe these periods together.

A DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

Bowlby used the concept of 'developmental pathways' whereby human personality is conceived of as a structure that develops unceasingly along one or another of an array of possible and discrete pathways. All pathways are thought to start close together so that, at conception, an individual has access to a large range of potential pathways along any one of which he might travel. The choice of pathway is determined by the interaction between the individual and his environment. The pathway along which the individual is going to develop is largely determined by the way his caregivers treat him, not only during infancy but throughout his childhood and adolescence as well.

In this context, psychopathology is seen not as the result of fixations or regressions, but as the result of the individual having taken a sub-optimal developmental pathway either right from the start or at some point in the course of childhood or adolescence (as the consequence of deprivation, ill-treatment, trauma or loss).

Change towards either a more optimal or less serviceable pathway is possible at any point in the course of development (from infancy to late adolescence). However change is constrained by prior development.

A THEORY OF SENSITIVE RESPONSIVENESS AS PSYCHIC ORGANIZER

An important notion in attachment theory is that 'sensitive responsiveness' is a major psychic organizer. In infancy, the parent's sensitive responsiveness includes noticing signals from the baby, interpreting them accurately, and responding appropriately and fairly promptly. Later, throughout life, sensitive responsiveness plays an important role in evoking a sense of self-integration and self-worth as well as in eliciting loving, co-operative and reciprocal responses. In childhood and adolescence, one major characteristic of sensitive responsiveness is the parent s capacity to see the child as a separate human being, with his own needs as separate from those of others.

The notion of "sensitive responsiveness" is similar to that of "empathy". However, the word "empathy" implies identification with the other's mental state Sensitive responsiveness, instead, involves some internal negotiation between the momentary state of feeling like the other and the ability to react as a separate being.

A THEORY OF INTERNATIONALIZATION AND REPRESENTATION

Attachment theory recognizes the fact that the pattern of parent-child interaction (which takes place in a social context) tends to become a property of the child himself. This representation is defined by the term "internal working model" of self and other. The working models that a child builds of his main caregivers and their ways of communicating and behaving towards him, together with the complementary model of himself in interaction with each one of them, are built by the child during the first few years of his life, continue to be built during the years of immaturity and, during this long period, become firmly established as influential cognitive structures. Bowlby said that there is strong evidence that the form these internal working models take is based on the child's real-life experience of day-to-day interactions with his parents. What the individual represents is basically a relationship. This representation is not a simple transposition but a process mediated by language and a system of meanings.

A THEORY OF ANXIETY

Bowlby saw anxiety as a reaction to threats of loss and insecurity in attachment relationships. Psychoanalysis indicates that often the source of anxiety is not a concrete threat to the person's biological survival but to his/her psychological survival (to the 'self'). This often occurs when the subject is implicitly or explicitly led to believe that he is nothing in the eyes of the significant other.

DISCUSSION

When we compare the two theories, object relations and attachment, we can identify similarities. Both theories for example, recognize that the developmental process will be determined through interaction during infancy, childhood and adolescence. Change is possible at any point in the course of development, so it is possible to do a developmental task over again in therapy. According to both theories it is important for the child to be seen as a separate human being with his own needs for the development of self-worth. The inner structure of a person is formed on the base of relationships. Relationships affect also cognitive structures by both theories.

There are also differences between these two theories:

First in attachment theory there is nothing specifically mentioned about the role of the peer-group in the development of the adolescent. (Although the relationship between children's experiences with their age-mates and social adjustment is acknowledged.)

Attachment theory does not emphasize the separation of the adolescent from his family. In the attachment theory they use the term sensitive-responsiveness. This term supposes a changing attitude of the parent following the development of the child, so sensitive-responsiveness involves other behaving of the parent in relation to a baby or a child or an adolescent. Sensitive-responsiveness by an adolescent means to notice and understand: his/her need for freedom, for exploring sexual relations, for experimentation with alcohol and other drugs. And to react and negotiate about these things, and also set limits to this discovery-behaviour. The term sounds simple, but operationalising it can be difficult.

Our group-therapy clients often have overprotective parents, parents who treat them as if they were children instead of adolescents. In table 1 I refer to them as: " parents sensitive-responsive on baby-and child-level."

Through the group-therapy the students become attached to the therapy-group and this loosens their family-ties. They start to interact different to their parents, more according to their own wishes, more autonomous. In reaction also parents will change their attitude and become sensitive-responsive on adolescent-level.

CONCLUSION

Back to the thesis: Group-psychotherapy makes the student a better student. A student gets the indication group-psychotherapy when he/she has problems in the social field, when he/she has problems in relating to other students. These students have developed a psychological self, but not a social I (see table 1). In group-therapy they pass through the separation-individuation process I have described earlier. When they have closed the therapy, they have developed a social I (see table 1).

And in the attachment-theory there is change in sensitive-responsiveness on adolescent-level.
When we look in table 1 to the group-behaviour we see the following diffe-rences: the client now complies with the group-rules, and the group lets go of the person. The person can comply to the group-rules because, when it suites him/her not to come to the group, he/she will talk about it, rather than acting it out. With a developed self-esteem he/she can discuss things in a open way. When he/she has self-esteem, he/she can also communicate this decision to leave the group and lets the others know how he/she feels for certain, and the other members of the group will understand him/her and let go the person.
 We see that the students are more able to choose for themselves. They do not look through the eyes of their parents, so they need not to be a good student for their parents or a anti-student in resistance to their parents. Willing to be a perfect student in the eyes of the parents results in anxiety and being against one's parents results in watching television a lot, or playing computer-games or other kinds of time-consuming needless things. They study for themselves, they can follow the study they want and sometimes they decide to stop with the study when it is more suitable, they are more internally motivated.

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ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTACHMENT

Jean Paul Broonen |

ABSTRACT

Very little information is available about why, in French-speaking Universities so many students withdraw from or do not participate in support sessions during the academic year. Romainville (1992) and Broonen (1998) proposed hypotheses to explain why some or most of the students do not participate in helping sessions: self-reliance inside an individualistic society, instrumental attitude rooting in secondary school, self-handicapping, procrastination, external locus of control, etc. The present study aims at exploring the relationships between collective self-esteem and, firstly, participating in help sessions after failing in examinations, and secondly, achievement in the next set of examinations by undergraduate students. Data presented here pertain to the measure of students' collective self-esteem as applied to the academic institution and include comparison on that construct between students who participate in help sessions and students who do not.

INTRODUCTION

In the literature, theoretical models have been proposed to explain college student retention (e.g. Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Tinto (1993) explains the process by which students voluntarily choose to withdraw from an institution refering to personal attributes (e.g. skills and abilities or prior schooling), educational goals, and commitment to institution before entry. Commitment to remain or to leave an institution of higher education is supposed to be critically determined by integration into the academic and social communities of these institutions. Students well integrated into these communities are predicted to be more likely to remain; students' educational goals and commitment to the institution are further strengthened by positive integration. Students who are less integrated are expected to experience decreased commitment to the institution and to educational goals.

IDENTIFICATION

As far as the measurement of constructs like commitment and related concepts is concerned Zea et al. (1997) measured identification with the university with an adaptation of the Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) Collective Self-Esteem Scale. Luhtanen & Crocker (1992) note that collective identity is in American terminology similar to Tajfel and Turner's social identity in European social psychology, in reference to the part of the self-concept that is based on membership in social groups or categories. Collective identity points out those aspects of the self-concept that link to for example feelings of belonging in one's community. Social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel and Turner, 1986) denotes the evaluative nature of the personal and the social aspects of identity. Apart from a positive personal identity, people also try to maintain or enhance a positive collecti-

ve identity. If an individual's social groups are valued and compared favourably with relevant comparison groups, individual's collective identity is positive. Luhtanen & Crocker (1992) remind us that other social psychological theories of self-esteem have emphasised the more individualistic, or personal, aspects of the self-concept (e.g. Taylor & Brown, 1988). Also, the individualistic character of the measurement of self-esteem is clear: " A common characteristic of the existing self-esteem measures is that they are individualistic, in that they focus on individuals' self-evaluations based on their personal attributes, whether in relation to private or interpersonal domains. As such, these measures assess the level or positivity of individuals' personal identity (and/or ... social self-esteem) and fail to consider the positivity of their collective identity as conceptualised in

social identity theory" (p. 303). As a consequence Luhtanen & Crocker (1992) constructed a scale (16 items) to assess individual differences in collective, rather than personal, self-esteem. This scale consists of four subscales, each assessing a possible aspect of collective self-esteem: (a) Membership self-esteem refers to items involving individuals' judgements of "how good or worthy they are as members of their social groups" (p. 304), (e.g. "I feel I don't have much to offer to the social groups I belong to"). "The other three types of items are more directly relevant to social identity theory, which considers both self- and perceived other-evaluation of one's social groups to contribute to the positivity of one's collective identity, given that the social groups have some emotional significance to the individual" (Ibid.). Thus (b) private collective self-esteem items assess "one's personal judgements of how good one's social groups are" (Ibid.), (e.g. "I often regret that I belong to some of the social groups I do"), (c) public collective self-esteem items assess "one's judgements of how other people evaluate one's social groups" (Ibid.), (e.g. "Overall, my social groups are considered good by others"); and (d) identity items assess "the importance of one's social group memberships to one's self-concept" (Ibid.), (e.g. "Overall, my group memberships have very little to do with how I feel about myself").Actually Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) measure was originally developed to capture positive identification with ascribed groups (e.g. racial, ethnic, or gender). Zea et al. (1997) note that the concept, however, can be applied to acquired groups and organisations, such as universities. They adapted Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) original scale to refer to their university community. In the present study (in French) Zea's et al. adapted version[1] is reworded into two scales to refer firstly to the University of Liège and to the Department of Psychology. Thus, 32 items 2 x 16 7-point Lickert-type scale: 1, strongly disagree, - 7, strongly agree were reworded and administered as a measure of social integration and identification with the University of Liège (ULg) and with the Psychology Department (PD) to 111 first year students in psychology. Two subgroups were included in the sample. The first group was composed of 100 first and second years students who failed in examinations on June and were involved in support sessions during July and August to prepare September examinations. The second group was composed of 11 students who failed in examinations on June and were not involved in support sessions on July and August.

The first problem to solve was validation of the psychometric structure of the new versions. As far as the comparison between the first and the second group of students is concerned, an adapted statistical procedure was used for practical reasons. Also, because many students of the second group did not send back the questionnaire, data of only 11 students of this group were recorded.

RESULTS

1 | FACTORIAL ANALYSIS

Following Luhtanen et al. (1992) who proposed a four-factor model, I examined the factor structure of the two adapted scales using confirmatory factor analyses (Maximum likelihood method of estimation, Bentler, 1989. Several models were tested for each of the two scales: (a) a one-factor model;(b) a four-factor model where the factors are uncorrelated;(c) a four-factor model where the factors are correlated;(d) a five-factor model where some factors are correlated.

The (d) model proved to be the best fitting to the data for the two scales, the membership subscale being split into two new subscales I named active membership and passive membership.

2 | SCORES ANALYSIS OF THE TWO SCALES

Scores analysis of the two scales.

The total mean scores are not very high: 4.02 for the ULg and 4.39 for the PD (p < 0.000) seem to indicate a quasi-neutral collective self-esteem (CSE). However, the PD CES is significantly higher. This result was not unexpected: the specific Department (Psychology) is supposed to be more strongly connected to the students' intellectual interests and professional and/or life values than the institution in general. Attachment to the Psychology Department is more central than attachment to the institution.

The analyses of the subscales are more informative.

Passive membership is a rather important part of the CSE (ULg: 4.51; PD: 4.71, ns).Even students having failed in the examinations on July feel they are worthy as members of their University and their Department.

Active membership is low (ULg: 3.01; PD: 3.18, ns).This observation was expected: opportunities for first or second year students of actively participating in the University and Department life are rather scarce.

Private CSE is above the neutral point, private PD CSE being higher than private ULg CSE is (5.49 vs. 5.13; p = 0.002): students feel good about these two entities.

Public ULg CSE is above the middle of the scale and higher than PD CSE (ULg: 5.48; PD: 3.79, p < 0.000): students believe that their university has a good reputation, but not their PD (as compared to other departments).

PD Identity is slightly above the middle of the scale (4.33), but ULg identity slightly below (3.48) (p < 0.000). Their University is not important for the students' self-concept, but their PD is considered as slightly part of their self-concept. These data are unsettling: failing in examinations on June may affect the part of the self-image which was invested in the psychological sciences; alternatively withdrawing this specific investment from the self-concept could be a way of escaping from the narcissistic stroke associated with the failure. Further investigation is requested to test these hypotheses.

3 | DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS

HELP VS. NON-HELP SESSIONS STUDENTS

Students who were involved in support sessions provide a Psychology Department CSE overall score higher than students who did not attend (4.45 vs. 3.86; $p < 0.05$).

This result may reflect a more intensive motivation to make an effort in order to succeed among students with a positive PD CSE.

CONCLUSION

1 |

The CSE concept derived from the social identity theory was applied to a specific university (University of Liège) and a particular department (Psychology) and was proved to provide a way to analyse the attachment in an academic context.

2 |

University CSE and Department CSE are distinct psychological constructs.

3 |

Scores corresponding to the multiple facets of CSE are more informative than overall scales mean scores.

The highest scores (above the middle of the scale) concern the private CSE (ULg and PD) and the passive membership (ULg and PD).

The lowest scores concern the active membership (ULg and PD).

ome differences appeared between ULg and PD in identity and public subscales.

4 |

The Psychology Department CSE overall score for students participating in the help sessions is higher than the students' who did not. No such difference occurred in the ULg CSE overall scores.

5 |

Even among students who failed at the examinations, some aspects of the University and Psychology Department CSE are positive.

6 I

No difference by sex in the two CSE scales was observed.

Looking forward, new findings are hypothesised to occur by correlating the CSE scores with the examinations results. Also other results might be expected from linking the CSE construct with other constructs such as motivation, intention to succeed, study methods etc.

Of course increasing the sample size of the second group would be necessary to put to the test the strength of the observed differences between students who use to seek help inside the institution and student who think of themselves in a self-reliance way.

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Student Stress in the Context of Attachment and Separation

Declan Aherne |

ABSTRACT

An exploration of the development of the dependence-independence polarity of both male and female students.

Kegan (1982) and others have described the development of both dependence and independence in the young adult. Gilligan (1982) highlighted differences in this aspect of development between males and females. Aherne (1997) sugggested that student stress for many students may involve struggle with this aspect of their development e.g. male students many have more difficulty than females in forming relationships, whilst females may struggle more with separation issues. Aherne (1997) has proposed a profile of stressed students congruent with this aspect of development and stress. The aim of the current paper is to explore this matter in greater detail amongst students attending for counseling.

Individual case studies will be used regarding the nature of the students development of independence. Included in the study will be an assessment of the therapeutic process in resolving any polarity issues.

INTRODUCTION

In the present paper, I begin by clarifying the position of attachment and separation in relation to development. I then proceed to examine the concept of stress within this developmental framework. Finally, by focusing on gender differences in development I establish how such differences might impact on student stress in particular. In my conclusions I outline some possible implications for interventions.

SEPARATION, ATTACHMENT AND THE DEVELOPING SELF

Kegan (1982) in "The Evolving Self" suggests that rather than understanding issues of differentiation and integration or separation and attachment (I will use these terms interchangeably in this paper, alongside such terms as belongingness and autonomy in order to develop my argument, while accepting that these terms are not always synonymous) in the context of infancy, the phenomena of infancy are better understood in the context of the psychological meaning of evolution, a lifelong activity of differentiation and integrating, what is taken as self and what is taken as other. Central to this developmental theory is an understanding of motion as the prior context of personality, the motion of evolution, with evolution as a meaning constitutive activity. Evolutionary activity involves the very creating of the object (a process of differentiation) as well as our relating to it (a process of integration). Early infancy therefore is not, in its most fundamental respect qualitatively different from other moment in the lifespan. What is taken as fundamental is the activity of 'meaning constitutive

evolution'. Growth is a process of emergence from embeddedness (an evolutionary transformation) where for example what was me becomes not me. Life then is a succession of 'holding environments' (Winnicott), a history of embeddedness. There are the psychosocial environments which hold us (with which we are fused or attached) and which let go of us (from which we differentiate or separate).

The development of the self can be understood in the context of these polarities of relationship and independence. Numerous theorists have agreed that the developing self can experience its existence in two such forms: as (a) being a member of a group, being in relationship and connection with others and (b) the progressive development of individuality in terms of clarity, achievement and authenticity (Rowe, 1987; Kegan, 1982). The threat of self-annihilation (Rowe, 1987), resulting in the experience of stress, can then be due to the fear of either (a) "complete isolation, being kept totally, utterly and forever alone, thus withering, fading away,

disappearing into nothingness" or (b) " as losing control of yourself and your life and falling apart, falling into chaos, fragmenting, crumbling to dust" (see Rowe, 1976). Rowe, influenced by the writings of Carl Jung (1971) on psychological types, argues that people have a preference for either inclusion or independence. Kegan (1982), on the other hand, views development not as an 'either/or' predicament but as revolving around these two fundamental 'yearnings', what Bakan (1966) refers to as 'the duality of experience'. The self seeks to integrate the need to be included,

through intimacy and relationship (Kegan, 1982). The autonomy/relatedness dualism remains a central problem for contemporary developmental theorists (Hoffman, 1992). The present paper highlights the importance of these polarities (i.e. separation and attachment / independence and inclusion) in the development and related stresses of young adults.

INCORPORATING THE SELF WITHIN A DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF STRESS

The developmental model of stress (Aherne, 1998) explains stress within the context of the development of the self. The self is what we refer to when we wish to single out one person from the rest. The basis on which one is singled out can be many and varied. The self can be considered as 'that zone of mediation where meaning is made' (Kegan, 1982),. This definition fits comfortably within the self-adequacy model of student stress (Aherne, 1998) incorporating, as it does, the importance of appraisal (i.e. the process that imbues a situation with meaning, see Lazarus, 1976) as part of person-environment interaction.Psychodynamic and trait-based definitions of stress have been replaced with interaction-based definitions (Endler and Edwards, 1987). Interaction models of stress, however, fail to recognize that the self can be defined in interactional terms. Developments within the interactionist tradition, such as that of Lazarus (1976), suggest a model of stress requiring a central position for the self. Yet models of stress, including the appraisal model of Lazarus, do not contain any specific reference to the self. Instead, these models include factors, such as personality, as one of a range of personal variables that interact with environmental variables,

resulting in stress. Aherne's (1998) model of stress treats the person and environment as inseparable i.e. it is not possible to consider the person without considering the environment with which that person is in contact. Simplistic notions of, for example, the student and the campus environment as two separate variables in an interaction model of student stress, do not adequately capture the nature of interactionism. In the history of interactionism, going back to the formulations of Lewin's (1951) field theory and Murray's (1938) need-press theory, we find the basis for an understanding of interactionism which views the person and environment as a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. The formulation of clear person-environment contact allows persons to meet their needs in the environment (Korb et al., 1989). This process of need satisfaction is what Perls considers to be the driving force of growth or development. The self is the organism's system of contacts with the environment integrating all levels of the organism's needs. The internal developmental process, with particular reference to the development of autonomy and inclusions, lies at the heart of an interactionist approach to student stress.

GENDER DIFFERENCES AND STUDENT STRESS

Many of the major development theories, including those of Erikson (1950), 1968) and Chickering (1969), were developed from in-depth interviews with 18 to 24 year old middle class white American male students. The theories of Erikson and Chickering, therefore, have not adequately described the development of women (Greeley and Tinsley, 1988; Stonewater, 1987; Straub, 1987; Straub and Rogers, 1986; Rossi, 1980). The vectors of developing autonomy and freeing interpersonal relationship have been of particular interest to researchers investigating sex differences. In a further study by Greeley and Tinsley (1988) it was found that women scored higher than men on the mature interpersonal relationships task. Obviously this discrepancy has raised important questions about the content and process of women's development in comparison to mens.

A study by Taub and McEwan (1991) supports previous findings which indicated a delay in the development of autonomy for women, with a hugh increase in autonomy scores for final year female students. Gilligan (1982) supports this view, according to which women's development is more concerned with connections and relationships than with issues of autonomy as indicated by Chickering. Gilligan (1982) suggested that because women develop in the context of relationships - whereas men develop in the context of separation - they will develop intimacy prior to or at the same time as autonomy. According to Gilligan, separateness occurs at a later stage in women's lives.

Taub and McEwen (1991) found that women develop more gradually in the area of interpersonal relationships than in autonomy. Female development of intimacy occurs throughout the four years of college and not just the final two years. Chickering (1969) had suggested that autonomy developed in the first two years, and intimate relationships in the later years. This proposition now needs to be reviewed for women. A broader definition of autonomy may be needed, according Taub and McEwen (1991), and may include tasks normally associated with the development of interpersonal relationships. Chickering and Reisser (1993), in their revision of Chickerings (1969) original vectors have taken these views somewhat into account. For instance the fifth vector, 'freeing interpersonal relationships', was renamed 'developing mature interpersonal relationships' and was moved to an earlier point in the sequence, prior to 'establishing identity'. This change was in order to give recognition to the importance of students' experiences with relationships for the formation of their core sense of self. Likewise the vector 'developing autonomy' was renamed 'moving through autonomy toward interdependence'.

Kegan (1982) maintains that men have more difficulty moving from autonomy and women have more difficulty moving from inclusion i.e. there is an intrinsic bias in men toward separation and in women toward inclusion and attachment. Regardless of gender, however, Kegan maintains that human beings need to find the balance between too much dependence and too much independence. According to Kegan (1982) development for both sexes is a spiraling process between the poles of attachment or inclusion and separation. In "The Evolving Self", Kegan proposes a dynamic between:

The yearning to be included, to be a part of, close to, joined with, to be held, admitted, accompanied and the yearning to be independent or autonomous, to experience ones distinctness, the self-choseness of one's direction, one's individual integrity.

According to Josselson (1987) these paradoxical needs for self-assertion and union, with their accompanying dangers of isolation and annihilation are a set pattern which continue throughout human deve-

lopment and are not gender specific. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs also recognises both the need for belonging and the need for competence as necessary for growth to occur.

In the context of student stress, the key issue here is whether or not a particular developmental pattern is healthier for either gender e.g. would men be better off, health wise, to be less focused on the development of autonomy, since autonomy may lead to a neglect of emotional and interpersonal needs. Holmbeck and Wandrie (1993) an Kenny and Rice (1995), for example, suggest that complete disconnection is maladaptive for men whilst excessive levels of connection is maladaptive for women. The research has not established whether students in general have more difficulties regarding connection or separation. The relationship between health and the development of connection and separation has, also, not been researched adequately.

Studies of eating disorders amongst college women by SteinarAdare (1989) and Wurman (1989) are specific examples of the limited research that provides some insight into attachment/separation difficulties for women. The developmental risk for women (i.e. what is at stake), given greater orientation to the perception of others in their identity development, is said to be 'an underdeveloped inner voice or core self'. Psychodymanic conflicts arising from 'an over identification' with approval from others are said to be exacerbated in the contemporary cultural context which increasingly values individual initiatives, control and autonomy for women (Hoffman, 1992). For women, socialization experiences are cultural expectations are said to be conflict, particularly where early family relations jeopardized the development of an individuated self with which to negotiate the new expectations for female adulthood. For Stenier Adare (1989) and Wurman (1989), the contemporary prevalence of bulimia among young women is attributable to this cultural double bind. The bulimia is considered to represent a dramatic effort to present the new public persona of a self-made, in control, needing nobody, autonomy which masks an absence of self. There is an inability to define an identity without the approval of an external audience. For some women, the resolution of the autonomy-relatedness dichotomy is a drastic splitting of public

And private selves conforming on the surface to cultural ideals but privately battling selves experienced as both needy and greedy. Self destructive eating patterns became the battle ground for this conflict between externally imposed standards of achievement and beauty and internally felt needs for care and connectedness. This theoretical understanding of bulimia concurs with Aherne's (1998) model of student stress. It focuses on the needs of the developing self, with particular reference to the autonomy-inclusion dichotomy.

Results from a previous study (Aherne,1998) identify the stresses for both male and female students in developing independence from home, so as to function as autonomous adults. Developing competence and achieving success is a means by which some students can establish their autonomy and independence. Stress for these students also occurs where they do not experience intimacy in their lives due to their lack of self-confidence in forming close relationships. In this sample the male students, in particular, encounter difficulties in meeting their needs for intimacy, while both male and female students struggle with their need for achievement/competence. These results indicate that student stress is often due to a difficulty with, or neglect of, the need for intimacy and inclusion. Some students compensate for this neglect by over-identifying with academic achievement. Male students, in particular struggle with wanting to be intimate but lack the necessary social skills and self-confidence to do so. Feeling of social acceptance and belonging are lacking for many of the sample of male students. There is a difficulty for these men in fitting-in with others. The problem of fitting-in may be influenced by external factors such as the expectations of others but is ultimately

due to a lack of a personal sense of self-adequacy. What is significant about these men is that they do not conform to the stereotypical male image of acquiring a social identity through separateness and achievement (Kegan, 1982). Based on these results, some men encounter great difficulty in acquiring a sense of belonging and inclusion, confirming Gilligan's (1982) theory that the development of inclusion come more naturally for women than for men. This difficulty becomes particularly stressful for males who, at a certain point in their development, may show a preference for belonging over separateness. A male perspective highlights the fact that men need to belong as well as to be separate, but in a male dominated society, this can prove considerably difficult.

Put simply, the development of separation may be different for men and women (Stonewater, 1987; Straub, 1987). It is not clear whether these differences have any implications for the health or stress of both sexes. Homlbeck and Wandrei (1993) have suggested that men and women may value different levels of independence and connectedness, but maladjustment will result when optimal levels of either characteristic are surpassed.

Gender differences in the development of autonomy and intimacy present a number of issues for student stress. First, differences between male and female needs may be a source of conflict and strain in relationships and may lead to misunderstandings between the sexes. Second, gender-based behaviors prove stressful where they become stereotyped i.e. where certain behaviors are expected of males and females which are contrary to their individual needs.

Differences in stress for males and females have in the main been neglected by researchers. I have not located any studies in the literature which have looked specifically at gender differences and stress. By incorporating a developmental aspect to our understanding of stress, gender differences in the experience of stress can be examined.

COMMENT

We live in a male dominated culture where individualism triumphs over collectivism Many of our psychological problems can be understood in a cultural context whereby men and women differ in the way by which they try to resolve this cultural imbalance for themselves. In a mans world there has been a misguided notion that differentiation leads to growth and integration leads to dependency. This is a prejudiced view. The most fundamental thing we do is make sense, with the Self is the zone of meaning making. The activity of meaning has as much to do with mans difficulty acknowledging his need for closeness and inclusion or a woman's acknowledging her need for distinctness and personal power.

It is through gender that we come unavoidably face to face with our dual, polar, opposite nature. Male and female differ at a most fundamental level. Therapeutic strategies need to reflect an understanding of this differentiation. The implications are significant in terms of the therapeutic dyad and gender of therapist and client. Gender related issues are in evidence throughout psychotherapy. For example, it has been my experience that women avail of therapy more than men, that students prefer to see a female therapist rather than a male therapist if offered the choice, that clients will have different perceptions of what a male or female therapist might be like and that the ability of the therapist to provide a facilitative environment to a client of the same sex is qualitatively different than for that of the opposite sex.

A model of therapy needs to recognize the significance of the core polarities of separation and attachment and also provides a means whereby the process of separating and attachment can be examined. Yontef (1993) describes Gestalt therapy as based wholly on dialogic existentialism i.e. the I-thou contact / withdrawal process. Contacting is the whole process of acknowledging self and other by moving toward connecting / merging and also toward separation / withdrawal. Contact is the basic process of relationship. The person exists in an individual environment field and the field is differentiated by boundaries, which in fact are processes. A boundary is a process of separating and connecting. Healthy awareness includes the separating and connecting function of the boundary process operating between self (the whole person) and the environment. Insistence on separation can be an avoidance of healthy confluence (attachment), while insistence on no personal boundary can be an avoidance of healthy withdraw (separation).
Therapeutic work in dealing with attachment and separation issues aims at providing a safe environment within which the students could identify with their attachments as well as risking letting go and examining the consequences. This does not mean that there is a clear-cut distinction between male and female stress patterns but it does suggest that therapeutic strategies are likely to have a different emphases based on gender. The gender of the therapist is a further factor worth taking into account in this type of work.

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APPENDIX

PATTERN: SOCIAL INADEQUACY

There are a number of students in the present sample who feel that they do not fit in with their peers. These students very much want to belong and to be close to others. Academic success is not their priority. Typically, these students have poor social skills and report feeling isolated. Self-adequacy is sought through belonging, fitting in and being accepted by others. In each of these cases, identity issues are centred on the student's need for intimacy rather than on the need to achieve academic success.

The socially inadequate students differ from 'the academic over-identifiers', in that they talk about their loneliness and isolation whereas the first group talk more about their fear of academic failure. Both groups, however, lack self-confidence, have poor social skills and lack strong positive relationships with their parents.
All six of the students representing this pattern are male (note: two-thirds of the sample were male), while five of them have been in counselling. Fitting in, appears to be particularly stressful for the male students. This stress may be due to a difficulty for men in acknowledging their need for connection and relationships. Women are considered to develop more naturally in terms of connectedness (Gilligan, 1982).
Examples:

EXAMPLES

STUDENT NO.2

1st Yr. | Male | Engineering Student (client)
This student seems unable to accept himself and seems deeply afraid of being 'different' and unacceptable to others because he perceives himself as lazy and fat.

A most noticeable pattern is evident in this student's experiences. The stress, as he experiences it, is between some ideal/expectation he has of how he should be and how he sees himself. He appears not to know how to handle this discrepancy, even though he is aware of how unrealistic the idea is. This student feels very inadequate and he has not developed a positive identity.

STUDENT NO.5

4th Yr. | Male | Business Student (non-client)
A common theme throughout this student's transcript is that of not fitting in. Related to his not fitting in is his concern over his small stature. He seems to have created an isolation for himself to cope with his feelings of inadequacy. This student lacks self-confidence and social skills and he tends to work instead of mixing with others. He also struggles with his sense of duty at home and yet wants to be independent. (Cont'd)

This student presents with a strong sense of inadequacy, particularly with regard to his social life. His self-adequacy seems to be very much linked to the need for approval and acceptance by others.

STUDENT NO.8

3rd Yr. | Male | Engineering Student (client)
This student has an ongoing issue with not being good enough and feeling left out of things and not fitting in either in his family, socially or academically. His insecurity seems centred on his social life. He compares himself a lot with others and feels he doesn't match up.

This case is a good example of how stress interacts across different experiences. Self-acceptance is lacking, as is the feeling of acceptance by others both at home and socially. He has not invested a lot of energy in academic achievement however, although he does use study as an escape. This student describes how his lack of self-confidence originated for him in his family. In his relationship with his parents, and with his father in particular, he felt unloved.

STUDENT NO.9

4th Yr. | Male | Engineering Student (client)
This student is afraid to express any emotions. He lacks confidence and self-esteem and considers himself inferior to others. His lack of self-confidence is reflected mainly in social situations. Establishing social relationships is more important for this student than achieving academically. In his life, he does not appear to have developed any close/healthy attach-ments. His family and parents in particular have not provided the foundation he would need to feel confident and accepting of himself. As a result this student does not feel OK about who he is.

STUDENT NO.15

3rd Yr. | Male | Engineering Student (client)
This student is struggling with trying to gain independence from home without upsetting his parents. He has been identified solely with his academic success in the past and as a result has not felt valued by others for just being himself. He lacks confidence socially and does not mix well with others. His main concern is that of forming relationships and fitting in with others.
He also feels a mixture of a lack of motivation - he is disillusioned with a purely academic identity - and fear of failure - since academic success is the only thing for which he has gai-ned recognition in the past.

STUDENT NO.17

1st Yr. | Male | Engineering Student (client)
This student presents as quite an anxious young man who has been attending for coun-selling throughout the year. This student is very much affected by his poor relationship with his father. Because of this, home has not provided the secure base from which he can move confidently into adult life, in particular with regard to developing intimate relations. He has low self-esteem which influences his social life, dating women in particular. The stress for him would seem to be that his dad is not the way he would like him to be. Furthermore, he would like to have a girlfriend.

THE TRANSITION INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS

Ann Conlon |

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the concept of transition within the context of the students' struggle to grow and develop - academically, emotionally and socially.

As normal developmental processes, including separation and individuation are inevitably going to overlap with being a student, the academic and social commitments which are essential to university life force the student into facing those developmental issues which will cause difficulty if the individual is not ready to tackle them, or if they have become stuck at some point.

A number of clinical vignettes are presented to illustrate the problems and symptoms which may arise if the transition into university reactivates unresolved conflicts of the past. This will inevitably entail examining the quality of the students' attachment to their family of origin, and of how they were helped or not within their family to cope with earlier transitional phases in childhood and adolescence.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper my interest is in looking at the concept of transition within the context of the students' struggle to grow and develop - academically, emotionally, and socially.

As normal developmental processes, including separation and individuation are inevitably going to overlap with being a student, the academic and social commitments which are essential to university life force the student into facing those developmental issues which will cause difficulty if the individual is not ready to tackle them, or if they have become stuck at some point.

By presenting a couple of clinical vignettes, I hope to illustrate the problems and symptoms that may arise if the transition into university reactivates conflicts of the past. This will inevitably entail examining the quality of the student's attachment to their family of origin and of how they were helped, or not, within their family, to cope with earlier transitional phases in childhood and adolescence.

STUDENTS

The majority of students are late adolescents, generally aged between 18 - 22/23, (as an increasing number now take a year out between leaving school and going on to higher education). There is also a growing number of students in higher education classified as "mature" who can be anything from 21 upwards, to whom returning to education - that is, going back into a dependent relationship, to that of being a student, may result in all kinds of unconscious feelings and difficulties coming to the surface perhaps for the first time. Whatever their age or circumstances, returning to education for any student will entail redefining themselves, their values, their goals, their attitudes, and having to face neglected or denied aspects of themselves.

Most students cope with the transition that has to be made, and with the normal developmental issues of late adolescence, but a significant number do not, and in our counselling service at King's College London, we are seeing an increasing number who present with severe emotional disturbance.

Adolescence is, as we know, a transition state. It fits between childhood and adulthood, and is neither one thing nor the other. It is a time filled with uncertainty and contradiction.

The term transition may be conceptualised as a boundary zone between two life stages. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it is " a passage from one state or action or subject or set of circumstances: the period during which one style is developing into another" .

Both adolescence and transition are very confusing times for the individual. There is no centre ground, and there is a continuous sense of movement and change. At best, it is a time of growing curiosity and fascination with the world, both within and without. Young people think a lot about themselves, their bodies, their friendships and families, and about their achievements and failures. All of it is new, intense, strange, and for some it is overwhelming.

The crises of late adolescence, as Freud originally suggested, usually arise because of the failure to achieve the earlier developmental tasks, especially the failure to resolve the effects of childhood neuroses and other developmental disturbances which have damaged the ego, or have hampered the development of object relationships. This is the time when the effects of deprivation, loss, separation, deficiencies, the difficulties of mothering, and attachment, which resulted in the developmental disturbances of infancy and early childhood become operative again, and can be clearly seen in the difficulties exhibited by the students I am going to talk about. This is the reason for the many typical physical complaints and somatic conditions of adolescence, which are epitomised by eating disorders, sleeping difficulties, and bodily preoccupations.

Levinson (1977) described such a period as both " an ending and a beginning, a departure and arrival, a death and a rebirth, a meeting of past and future" . In a sense, it is a bridge linking the old and the new. The transition into higher education falls within the larger context of what Levinson calls " the early adult transition"

which he feels extends roughly from ages 17 - 22.

According to Levinson, the two major tasks of early adult transition are to terminate childhood, and to begin early adulthood. Both these tasks involve the process of separation from the family of origin, loss of the old familiar environment, and test the relationship to early parental attachment figures. Just as the growing child has to learn that the primary figure to whom she/he is most attached must also be shared with mother or father, and other siblings, which forms the basis of the Oedipal constellation and makes separation and loss an inherent part of the attachment dynamic, so according to Bowlby, the capacity to separate from attachment figure(s) and to form new attachments represents the developmental challenge of adolescence and young adulthood. Transition therefore encompasses both the termination of the departing era and the initiation of the new era of development.

If it is accepted that there is an excitement and a hope inherent in growing up, then the young person in higher education may approach their new situation with the hope that it may offer him/her a benign environment, in which they can enhance or become themselves. Educational institutions, more so than other institutions, with their structured models of progression, in the case of universities from first to second to final year, offer a particularly ready object for the attachment of these feelings and expectations. This has been succinctly described by Christopher Bollas (1987) The Shadow of the Unknown Object: Psychoanalysis of the un thought known). He describes how we search unconsciously in each new situation throughout our lives for what he calls " a transformational object - a person or a setting which will recreate the very early experience of the original object - the mother, who before she was felt to be a separate person, was experienced as a process of transforma-

tion, with a capacity to metamorphose the self".

The university or college, therefore, offers the student a setting for the accomplishment of late adolescent psychological tasks. These include: -

1 |

The establishment of a firm sense of personal and sexual identity.

2 |

The attainment of separation and independence from parents, and the establishment of a new mutually respectful relationship with them.

3 |

The capacity to apply one's learning and talents to work or study.

4 |

The ability to establish ongoing friendships with other adults.

5 |

The ability to engage in a loving relationship with another person.

6 |

The capacity to achieve a mutually satisfying sexual relationship with another person.

7 |

The development of a personal moral value system.

8 |

The capacity to take responsibility for others, and to contribute to the social senvironment.

Naturally, success in achieving all these developmental tasks does not happen all at once, and if an individual fails in one of them, it may imply difficulties with another. Sometimes, one or other of these goals is not attained, yet the individual copes quite well. At other times, where success is limited, personality defects may become evident and give rise to symptoms. For example, if the young person fears growing up, being sexually potent, leaving his/her parents, then he/she may self destructurally sabotage one or more of those areas of his or her life which lead to independence. He or she may neglect their appearance, attack their body suicidally, or

by anorexia, or by the abuse of drugs: they may neglect their work, avoid contact with peers, or deny sexual interest in either sex. The university also has requirements to make of the student: being part of an institution, fulfilling course work requirements, taking examinations, and finally leaving. The overlap and interaction of these psychological tasks and the role demanded of the student are potentially very creative. Success and creative study, however, depend on the student's capacity to commit him/herself to the work, to be comfortable with his/her aggressive, competitive, possessive and sexual urges, and to have achieved a workable balance between dependent receptivity and autonomous mastery in the face of new and complex knowledge. Very few students arrive at university with this degree of maturity. For a number of students, therefore, rather than learning being a developmental activity, it becomes an arena of conflicting demands, because intellectual achievement and emotional maturation are thought to be incompatible goals. When the emotional and intellectual forces become too separate, too fused, or too imbalanced, then the student comes unstuck.

This is hardly surprising, when we consider that to enter an alien environment, to be just one of the crowd, would threaten even the most secure of us. For most young people entering university, there is an abrupt change from a tightly structured school curriculum to one where they are responsible for structuring their own hours of study. From having been a biggish fish is a small, known pond, to becoming a very small fish in a fairly large pond; from having been thought of as a teenager, the young person is now assumed to be suddenly adult: having had a family to fall back on, he/she is suddenly left without adults caring about his/her safety. Similarly, the values and behaviour of other students may appear very strange: teaching methods and subjects are very new; some may have idealised the course before they

arrived, coming with wildly unrealistic expectations, and then being disappointed, which may resonate with earlier deprivations and conflicts. Many students feel ashamed to admit any concern about whether they are able to cope, and look around for someone else to blame: a rotten course, boring lecturers, lousy teaching. Some may be ashamed about feeling inadequate, or appearing vulnerable, fearing that it will be held against them (this is particularly an issue in more explicitly vocational courses such as medicine). Some admit to homesickness, feeling that nothing will be the same again.

Thus the young person going to university is undergoing very major life changes, from adolescence to young adulthood, from being a teenager within a family to being very much left to his/her own devices. This loss of an external structure inevitably places a severe test on the stability of his/her internal structure. Even for the most secure and most mature amongst the student body, the change and the losses involved may be painful and difficult, while for others it may be too much. As we know, the way an individual is able to cope with change later on in life has been shown to depend on the help he/she has been given with transitions in infancy and early childhood. Under such circumstances, the anxiety which accompanies change and the strain of staying with the psychic pain of loss, of having to find oneself as an individual, within a new setting while yet retaining the capacity to be open to new experiences and knowledge may be too great for some. Students may break down, drop out, or be easily tempted into the various sensuous escape routes, such as drowning their sorrows in drink, drugging themselves into oblivion, or plunging into a hectic social life to make up for, or side-step the sheer terror of failing the course, academic competition or authority figures. Others may give up their attempt to master social and sexual fears by over diligent studying, complaining that they have too much work to do to join in the social life of the college.

As academic work, including course work and examinations is their major activity, this is the arena where most students will work out their developmental conflicts. It is not always a helpful arena however, in that it is relatively inflexible, and not a place where institutional or personal transferences are easily understood or tolerated. This has become increasingly so in more recent years, as anxiety about basic survival and the anger and depression about deprivation of resources have re-emphasised the need for productive students. On the one hand, therefore, it can be seen that the inevitable interaction between psychological and academic tasks will press the individual student into making necessary developmental advances, by having to confront unresolved emotional problems, which may result in their seeking help from the Counselling Service. Being a student in this sense, is thus an expression of a healthy part of the personality and may help in overcoming normal and neurotic obstacles to achieving the individuals' true potential. For others, being a student is part of a pathological structure - an expression of someone else's wishes, part of a false self system, a defensive solution to a personal problem. It may be therefore critical for the individual's long-term development to understand whether being a student is healthy or pathological, whether the student should struggle with, or relinquish the role, or take time out.

EXAMPLE

Michael, aged 24, came to see me towards the end of his first term because his relationship with his girlfriend had broken down, and he found himself unable to work. It was his first serious sexual relationship and its ending brought to the fore longstanding feelings of depression and hopelessness, which he said he had been feeling since the age of 15 or 16.

Michael was slim, of medium height and build, with short hair and a boyish face - which carried an embarrassed, self-deprecating smile most of the time. He told me that he wasn't sure why he had come to this particular college - he had already held two civil service jobs, and had spent a year at another university, where he had embarked on a degree course in politics. His choice of subject - law - was, he told me, pragmatic - it might enable him to get a reasonable job, but he also wondered if he should have gone elsewhere, to study Sociology. He said he didn't want to join the conventional rat race, and he despised materialism. His ambivalence was to be a constant theme throughout the therapy.

In talking about his background, it transpired that Michael came from an economically very deprived rural part of the British Isles, and a very working class family, which had been equally emotionally depriving. His father was an alcoholic who tended to be silent and uncommunicative, except when he and his mother rowed, which was often. He sporadically worked in the shop which he and Michael's mother jointly rented, but which his mother mostly ran. Michael described her as the mainstay of the family, who worked very hard but talked all the time - leaving, I suspected, little room for him. She had left his father on a number of occasions but she always returned after a few days. He had one sister, aged 21, who had left school at 16 and who worked as a secretary. He said he had a good relationship with her - she is closer to father than he is, and shouts at him more.

Michael described his relationship with his parents like that of a referee - often having to intervene in their verbal, although not physical rows, sometimes in the middle of the night. His father, he said, behaved himself more when he was around.

I asked him how he felt about his parents and the situation at home. He said his relationship with his mother was good - she rang him regularly, and was always concerned about whether he had clean clothes, he reported with a sardonic smile.
He described his relationship with his father as "functional" and said his father didn't talk to anyone. He said he pitied him, because he'd mucked up his life. On one occasion when he was 11, he recalled knowing he had more sense when he was 4 years old than his father had. There were times when he thought it would be better if his father had died. Although he had encouraged his mother to leave, he was now resigned to the fact that she probably wouldn't. He was, I felt, just as angry with her for being the martyr, as he was with his father.

By the end of our initial interview, I felt the rather self-deprecating, contemptuous way in which Michael spoke about himself, his life, his relationship with his parents and his background was concealing a huge amount of long standing anger and vulnerability which had their roots in early childhood. The inappropriate way in which he smiled and laughed when talking about very painful memories indicated his difficulty and fear of falling apart, and of taking himself seriously.

I was concerned about Michael's level of depression, and the fact that he was clearly very lost and confused about himself, about what he was doing and why. I felt he needed a period of time in which to try and understand what had happened in his relationship with his girlfriend which clearly resonated with a much earlier emotional abandonment, and which seemed to have academically paralysed him. He agreed to

see me once weekly for psychotherapy. Gradually, the enormity of the level of emotional deprivation of his childhood became apparent. In one session, he told me how struck he had been by overhearing a friend's telephone conversation with his mother, when he told her the reason he probably hadn't looked too well when she last saw him was because he'd drunk too much the night before. Michael couldn't imagine telling his mother anything so personal about himself, or, I sugggested, so anxiety provoking. He had always felt it was his duty to look after her because of how his father was. In return, his mother had always put his father first, and, in his opinion, didn't make enough demands on him. As a result, he and his sister were often left to fend for themselves. He has vivid memories of eating bowls of Cornflakes sitting in front of the television, with neither parent checking whether they had had a proper meal or not.

His way of defending himself as a child against the hurt of being totally ignored by his father, and by being intermittently taken notice of by his mother, was to retreat, often into books. He found it difficult to make friends, wasn't any good at sport, so rather than playing football with the other lads in the village, spent a great deal of time in the library, where he told me very poignantly, he often tried to find a book which his father would like - but he never succeeded. A sad statement I later came to realise about the mutually thwarted attempts at communication between himself and his father. He recalled one Christmas when his father, drunk as usual, came into his bedroom and tried to make conversation with him, but in response, all Michael felt was acute embarrassment and pity for him. He blamed himself, as the small child omnipotently does, for not being loved by his father.

Although he talked a great deal about not wanting to end up like his father, whom he felt had never taken responsibility for his life or his family, at an unconscious level, he had clearly identified with him. Like his father, he was both work shy and generally impotent. Initially it was disguised as cynicism. He was denigrating, both about himself and the college. Despite achieving a 2.1 (a high degree classification) in what is termed the mid sessional exams in January, he wondered whether it was a good 2.1, and felt he probably wasn't good enough to be anywhere else. Even with a degree, he didn't think he'd be up to much - so why bother to work?

What began to emerge, however, was how much his inability to work, to even attend lectures, and his fear of being potent, were tied up with his unresolved Oedipal fears. This was vividly illustrated by a dream in which he had been driving around his country of origin in a van, which he parked at home. His father had burned it, but he didn't protest directly to his father. His associations to the dream were that his father was envious of him, which is why he burned the car - a symbol of his freedom. He then went on to acknowledge how afraid he is to succeed, to be different to his father, because of the hostility it might incur. It was safer, he felt, to stay as he is - to change was too dangerous. I agreed with his interpretation and suggested, too, that driving around his mother country showed perhaps how he wanted to explore things with his mother. From the way in which he described the family dynamics, it appeared that his choice had always been either to stand up and do battle with his father, or be more accepted by mother in a way father wasn't, that is, by being a good little boy. Essentially, he was terrified of allowing himself to be the kind of man his father wasn't - to be different from him, powerful and assertive, a man who might have excited mother. Contrary to her victim/martyr-like image, he experienced mother as being very powerful. She kept everything together, so, rather than confronting her, he had chosen to support her, and try and please her. Despite the gene-

ral chaos in which he lived, he once said he always went regularly to the laundrette as his mother constantly, anxiously enquired as to whether he had enough clean clothes. He also recalled a special treat - being allowed to stay up with her and watch television if his father was out.

It therefore was not surprising to find that in his relationship with his girlfriend, his unconscious identification with his anxious, narcissistic, passively / aggressive mother was acted out. His girlfriend, like his mother, was dominant and authoritative, and tended to tell him what to do. He felt she was more interested in having sex than in the emotional side of their relationship. Because of his background, where people tended to marry young, the first person they slept with, he felt somewhat committed to her. It was also a reflection of how he had internalised his mother's moral values. She had told his sister that if she allowed her boyfriend to sleep with her, he would take her virginity and go.

In his inability to stand up effectively to his girlfriend, Michael was, by a process of objective identification, getting her to attack him. In my counter-transference, I experienced the same feelings. His fear of dependence on me, his ambivalence about being helped, and fear of commitment, began to be apparent in relation to the transference. During the second term he began to arrive late, and talk about not coming to sessions, with a view to going to see someone privately, as he had begun to talk about leaving college. He had already stopped working, and had stopped coming into college altogether, except to see me. Like his drunken father, he avoided feelings by staying in bed all day. Unfortunately, no one in the Law Faculty seemed to notice. His male tutor was elderly and ill, and Michael felt, didn't even know who he was, let alone ask about his work - just like his father. He experienced the college as, in his words, "an impersonal institution, in which there is no-one who cares about me, no tutor who demands to know where my essay is." He experienced the Law faculty and college just like his family, as chaotic, impersonal, uncaring, and felt alienated from his mostly younger fellow students, as he had done from his schoolmates.

When Michael finally made up his mind to leave, and do another degree in Sociology at another London University College, he expressed his fury that his mother's reaction had been one of indifference, and said, "I would have to commit a crime to get them to take any notice".

Although he had come to recognise that he had identified with his work-shy, generally impotent father, whom he was unconsciously terrified of becoming like, he had, nevertheless, as a child, survived by identifying with the aggressor. As his real fear was of being different from his father, it was safer, therefore, and made him feel more powerful, to castrate college, and, in the transference, me, as college had initially, like his parents, failed to set boundaries, and make demands of him. Coming from a dysfunctional family, in coming to college, Michael had unconsciously needed, and hoped to find, Bollas' "transformation object" - parental substitutes, ie, authority figures within the institution to whom he would be important, who would have expectations of him, and who would set the caring, concerned boundaries which were missing in his own background. Instead, he was ignored by the Law Faculty as he had been by his parents. In the transference, he had angrily projected his hopes and potential into me, by, for example, getting me to make suggestions about him seeing the senior tutor, so avoiding the risk of disappointment by doing nothing himself. By deciding yet again to change course, he was identifying with his passively angry mother, who had oscillated between leaving and returning home, but who had never been able to confront her own unsatisfactory situation directly.

Thus in the transference to the institution and to me, Michael had re-experienced, and re-enacted, his earlier unsatisfactory, deprived and uncared for experiences of attachment to his mother. Both his ego and capacity to develop good object relations had consequently been so badly damaged that it was very difficult for Michael to make his way back from the regression of early childhood. Michael's difficulties in allowing me to mother him safely in the transference were in part due to his having passively given in to his anxiety - so he felt helpless to control the failed individual he felt he had become, and was thus unable to protect himself from his own self-hatred. Although it had initially been a sense of relief to be taken seriously by me, Michael's difficulties of taking himself seriously meant he didn't ever quite believe me, and so unconsciously he became increasingly anxious about having given in passively to his depression. Hence by rejecting my offer of ongoing help and by moving on to study yet another course elsewhere, he found a temporary way of restoring the feeling of being in control, and so felt less helpless.

Similarly his unresolved Oedipal difficulties resulted in his spurning the possibility of a relationship with a giving, loving girlfriend, and caused him to stay with the one who was so reminiscent of his mother.

Michael therefore in Erikson's terms, had very little sense of himself. Thus he experienced "identity diffusion", was not able to find a niche in life, and felt very alienated from everything and everyone around him. As a result, according to Winnicott's concept of the false self, he felt extremely depressed, nothing seemed worthwhile, and his examination success was meaningless to him. Instead of facing his hopelessness, however, Michael tried to avoid it, and thereby understanding himself, by yet again changing course, as he had switched from his useless father to his useless mother.

Although she was a student in the same faculty, Claire came from a very different background, and indeed a different country.

Claire referred herself to the counselling service during the first term of the first year. Her presenting problem was that she could not decide whether to change from Law to Modern Languages. She had attained four very good "A" levels, although she felt inadequate because two were at grade B, and not all four at grade A. She was one of four to have won a scholarship from her country of origin to come to college. What soon emerged, however, was the dilemma the two subjects represented, in her very impoverished internal world.

When I suggested during the initial interview that it seemed as though she was not enjoying Law, her surprised response was that she had never thought about enjoying things before, and asked, "should you enjoy your course?" Her way of phrasing the question was typical of how she continued to ask me to tell her what to do, how she constantly checked with me what she should be thinking and feeling. She could not relate to my use of the word 'feelings', and once asked me to give her a list of feelings to find out whether she had ever experienced any.

EXAMPLE

Claire came from a very middle class, strictly religious Roman Catholic family in the Caribbean. She was very attractive looking, petite with dark wavy hair, and looked younger than her 19 years. She was the second child of four, her elder sister of 21 was in her final year, also studying Law; she had a sister 16 months younger than herself, and a brother of 13, whom she described as "mother's favourite". Her father was the principal of a high school, and her mother a teacher. Neither parent made a distinction between home and work. Both had always brought work home and never seemed to ease up and enjoy themselves. Education was the only thing that ever seemed to matter. Claire's sense of her own identity and self worth was inextricably bound up with how good and successful academically she felt she had to be. She did nothing but work, and felt desperately guilty if she ever took an hour off to watch television. As a result, she had shut down her social and sexual fears by over diligent studying, and complained that she had too much work to do to join in the social life at college. She could never act spontaneously, and was constantly torturously monitoring and analysing why she might want to do things. Her parents didn't show affection to one another, and it transpired that four or five years earlier, her mother had told her that her father had been having an affair for several years, which her mother had endured for the sake of the children. Claire said she was not close to either parent. Part of her had identified with her mother, however, who was always working and never went out.

Before coming to see me at the outset of her university course, Claire said she had been feeling very mixed up for two or three years. She said she was no good at socialising, and didn't know what she really liked. There had never been any mutual exploration in the family, and there was no one to whom she could talk to about her feelings. Whenever she had tried to speak to either parent, they always told her what to do. This was to become a

significant feature of the transference, which I had to be careful to resist, as she repeatedly asked for my advice - including constantly asking whether she should come to her next session, always anxiously checking out whether I wanted to see her again, and when she arrived, wanting me to tell her what she should talk about.

Claire was not surprisingly very ambivalent about receiving my help. She was afraid to think for herself because it risked her mother's, and in the transference, my disapproval. She had never had a boyfriend - going out and socialising was thoroughly disapproved of, especially by her mother, whose expectation was that she should always be studying. Since even playing as a child had come to be experienced as an anathema, Claire had grown up out of touch with her sexual feelings. Indeed, to have any strong feelings was experienced as too dangerous and too painful. It was safer to have, as she had, a five year plan, and to live in the future, so that she wouldn't have to think and feel about herself, she could remain in control, endeavouring to believe in the absolute certainty of things around her, and not risk the unknown outcome of trying to change. On one occasion, Claire summarised the enormity of her emotional deprivation by saying "I've never been allowed to live - that's what the whole thing's about".
Indeed the prospect of enjoying herself was so overwhelming that in one session she talked about feeling like killing herself. The anger aroused in her as a result of discovering a prospective boyfriend's interest in her, was in part resonating with anger that no-one close to her had ever shown any real interest in her. There didn't appear to be any good objects in her early life. But there was also a fear that the interest wouldn't last. She had formed an attachment to a boy when she was 13, but had stopped seeing him when a year later she had discovered his interest in another girl.

Her dilemma about the potential boyfriend highlighted the enormity of her

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ambivalence about feeling freer, and allowing herself to have what she wanted. Gradually it became apparent that studying law represented being emotionally imprisoned. Indeed during one session when I suggested to her that her struggle with law felt like a prison sentence, she replied that it was exactly what it had felt like when she had filled in the forms at registration. To feel freer, to think and act for herself, was to risk her mother's disapproval - hence it was safer to stay in prison, emotionally.

Gradually as she began to internalise my care and concern for her, Claire felt more able to test out my tolerance and understanding of her anger by occasionally missing sessions and arriving late. She began unconsciously to get in touch with her anger at her parents and began to rebel by missing tutorials, not handing in her work on time, and at one point was in danger of failing her summer exams, so endangering her scholarship status. Her unconscious early adolescent acting out was accompanied by somatic symptoms, based on the enormity of her underlying anxiety and depression. She saw the college GP on a number of occasions, complaining of pains in her stomach, back, arms and head, and was clearly disappointed when no physical cause for her pains could be found. Had a physical cause been found, it would have given her a legitimate excuse not to continue with law.

It took a long time for Claire to be in touch with her depressed and angry feelings. My counter transference feelings of overwhelming sadness and helplessness balanced by feelings of enormous irritation and exasperation with her, helped me stay in touch with how unloved she felt, and how little she had ever experienced ever being cared for.

At one point in the therapy, her displaced angry and depressed feelings threatened to overwhelm her completely, when she began to have psychotic-like experiences over a period of months. During a couple of sessions, she thought she saw a face at the window, and then began to complain of a 'thing' on her left shoulder, which she said she had been aware of every day for the last six years, and which was evil and scary. She was worried in case I would be angry, because she hadn't been able to talk about it before, but now it felt more solid. Although Claire was resistant to understanding what was happening, and wanted it magically to go away, I came to understand that it represented an externalisation of her internal persecutory fear of her devilish anger, which she was terrified of getting in touch with. She recalled that as a small child, the expression of any angry or strong feelings was considered bad, even evil. As an early adolescent, if she ever argued with her mother about being allowed to go out with friends, for example, mother wouldn't speak to her for three days.

Although Claire didn't manage to break away from studying law, and despite seriously neglecting her work at times, she managed to obtain a very respectable degree. Her dilemma, which she was still deliberating when she left college, was could she allow herself not to return to the Caribbean, but to spend time in Europe or South America, where she could use the languages she was still interested in, and which of course represented vitality, exploration, excitement, enjoyment - all the feelings which she had initially felt were too dangerous to experience, but which in her therapy with me she had allowed herself to begin to explore.

Claire was clearly a very needy young woman, who came from a very emotionally deprived, restricting and repressed background, where the boundaries were rigid rather than safe, and which had resulted in her overdeveloped superego. As a result, she denied herself enjoyment of any kind, and justified her existence by how hard she could work. Not surprisingly, she had shut down emotionally, socially, and sexually, and had not effectively nego-

tiated early adolescent developmental hurdles. In coming to college, the loss of her rigid external family structure placed sever strain on what turned out to be a very fragile, internal structure. Thus she was unable to participate in the social life of the college - to have a boyfriend and experience her first sexual relationship. She didn't even feel free to choose a subject to study, and to choose a future career that interested her. The realistic prospect of having a boyfriend clearly touched on her unresolved Oedipal fantasies, of being disapproved of, and possibly abandoned, by mother, especially as she had always been ignored by father. In her internal world, therefore, she was defenceless against her overpowering and critical mother. Hence it was safer to retreat into not knowing what she felt about her boyfriend, and what she wanted to do.

Her very marked schizoid features, which didn't even allow her to know what feelings were, were typical of the child who withdraws from the trauma of not feeling intimately loved. Claire's mother was typical of the kind of mother who, according to Fairbairn, " is especially prone to provoke such a regression…who fails to convince her child by spontaneous and genuine expressions of affection that she herself loved him/her as a person." So for Claire it was dangerous to love or feel in need of love, lest it should destroy. As Claire's younger sister had been born just 16 months after her, unlike her siblings who had been born several years apart, there had been very little time especially for her. Hence her constant checking that I, unlike mother, would want to see her and have time for her. Similarly, early emotional deprivation contributed to her incessant working. It was not only a way of avoiding feelings but a means of filling up the emptiness inside her. In the same way, after a few months in therapy, she began to spend a lot of money on clothes and jewellery - often items that she didn't need, as compensation for the love and affection she had never received.

CONCLUSION

In the two cases I have presented, although their backgrounds and presenting problems were very different, both students shared a number of developmental difficulties: - they had particular difficulties with the parent of the same sex, they had unresolved feelings of debilitating depression and anger, they experienced difficulties with academic work, they had mothers whom they experienced as very powerful, and fathers who were emotionally weak, and came from families where there was an absence of safe boundaries. But in particular they had unresolved Oedipal complexes. This in turn affected their sexual relationships and their potency generally, causing difficulty with their academic work and highlighting their fears about fully taking responsibility for themselves and their future careers. The lack of positive parental bonding resulted in their not being able to healthily separate from their early attachment figures. They were also lacking, in Erikson's terms, a stable ego identity - a coherent sense of themselves, which gradually develops from early childhood, so that the adolescents who have satisfactorily negotiated this stage have an inner confidence about who they are, and where they are going - something which these two students markedly lacked. Thus the dual task of transition, both into early adulthood and into higher education could not be effectively completed.

Footnote
It is interesting to note the significance that studying law had for each student. Whilst for Claire it represented the internal prison that she had such difficulty breaking out of, for Michael it equaled security - keeping his chaotic inner world in order.

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Separation and Attachment and the Basic Ability of Differentiation & Summarising in Academic Work

Ernst Frank |

ABSTRACT

The present paper examines writing difficulties in the context of a disturbed in ego development. On the path from symbiosis to individuation (M. Mahler), ego develops through separation and attachment. For instance an extensive piece of written work requires the common ability to differentiate & summarize - on the one hand is the analyzing, making something precise, moving up closer to get to the details - and on the other hand at a distance is finding the essential and the main statement, making a well-formed and integrated complete structure.

This is a basic academic ability, which has to been seen in context to the development of a well-formed and differentiated ego/identity and the crucial task of separation and of establishing independence. An ability, in contrast to a saying. To see the wood - because of the trees.

INTRODUCTION

The concern and anxiety of mothers for their children and their letting them go has different intensities in different cultures. The observation of mothers of 10 European countries concerning the separation and attachment behaviour and the education for autonomy of their (even grownup) children (possible students) generated the following ranking list:
(where quality of points indicates level of concern on a scale of 0-100 points)

Italian | 76
Spanish | 70
Austrian | 62
French | 59
English | 56
German | 56
Dutch | 55
Swiss | 50
Danish | 49
Swedish | 40

The Italian "mamma" in community with other southern European mothers is therefore the most concerned mother. At the other end of the ranking list the Swedish and northern European mother is clearly for independence and auto-nomy in the education of their children
(study of the Institute of Social Marketing in Rome, reported in the newspaper La Repubblica, 23.8.1999).

And now to my observations of separation and attachment in context to stu-dents in academic work.

THE PROCESSING OF INFORMATION GETS MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT

Our social, political and economic life is becoming more and more difficult. These structures and dynamics get partialized into smaller and smaller details and differences. On one hand globalisation represents the tendency for wholistic networking, on the other hand nationalizing shows the craving for limited smaller units. Thus for many people the relationship-network becomes more incalculable and less transparent, so that for example politicians or prophets with oversimplified ideologies are welcomed by overstretched people.

We are calling our time "the age of information". Within the next 10 years the same amount of knowledge was produced and registered as within the 2500 years before. And within the next 5 years we will again have doubled this amount of new knowledge. Every 4 years for example the knowledge in the medical field is doubled. On the other hand the half-life of actual knowledge decreases rapidly. The enormous amount of more and more differentiated information could bring us more knowledge. But often enough the aim is of being informed instead of being able to understand. Written material loses its place over to pictures.

WATZLAWICK says about communication and information that there are two different languages- one is objective, defining, cerebral, logical, analytical. The other is the language of images, metaphors, symbols, pars pro toto. This means that on one hand the way of building logical step by step - might cause us not to see the wood from the trees. And on the other hand a global-holistic understanding of total units - which does not see the trees because of the wood. WATZLAWICK even states that it needs a genius to integrate these two antagonistic views.

Scientists flood themselves with scientific papers. But it becomes more and more impossible to view this enormous amount of data as a whole. There is too much information and too little real knowledge.

Facing the overwhelming data the previous attempts to get a macro and micro order-system start to fail. This over information - obtained through the revolution of the information-technology - produces stress and reduces more and more the capacity of understanding and the capacity of memory. The ability to call upon stored memory suffers, the ability to analyse and synthesize becomes paralysed. And all these finally can end in confusion, aggression, resignation, exhaustion or depression. Desperately and (subconsciously) longingly a theory is searched for which can integrate the information into a meaningful whole. This is true for every science and of course for every area of life.

Therefore:
The overwhelming amount of mass information, a society and ways of living which are more and more differentiated, the task, to process all this, to integrate it into the inner world and then to be able to transform it again to the outside world is increasingly experienced as too much.

Unity in diversity: differentiation & summmarizing in the context of separation and attachment

So we are looking for the ability to filter out what is essential and important to us. That is the situation prospective students are in, in deciding what to study. In order to do so they have to know what they want. They need to know themselves and to have self-confidence. They must decide themselves what is important and what is unimportant.

Here we see what is basic for the deciding person: being informed as much as possible and being in touch with what is personally important he/she has to get to the inner knowing what is worth diving more into this or that.

Nowhere else in academic work is the need for structure more evident than in writing an extensive paper such as a thesis,

or presentations in seminars.

How do we get this basic ability - the ability to structure, that means to analyse and also to summarize the enormous amount of possible information?
On the one hand - how do we learn to analyse, to differentiate, to separate, to put something into portions, to discriminate, to split up, to select, to make something more precise, to get into details and to deepen, to gather and look for information like pieces of a puzzle?

And - on the other hand - how do we learn to summarize, to build a synthesis, to find the red thread, to find a survey, to know what's what, to compress, to find the essential and the focus, to make a clear statement, to emphasize, not to oversimplify, to get a clear figure in contrast to the background or however else you could call these equal important abilities (in writing a scientific work)?
I want to call this interdependent, reciprocal, related and very complex process "differentiation & summarizing". I mean it is both, a cognitive and an emotional process.

We learn to read, to write and to calculate, but the ability of orientation seems to incorporate such a complex and central process that obviously it cannot be learned as an isolated skill.

Some people have no difficulties with details, but it is impossible for them to get a general view. They specialize, but lose the overall view. Others just stay on the surface, looking at the world as if they stand on top of a church tower, unable to dive from that distance into real life. That can lead to serious restrictions. It is often due to fear. A fear which most likely stems from previous experiences in one's life history with contact to and engagement with the social environment which was felt dangerous.

I want to make clear that differentiation &

summarizing is connected to separation and attachment and that it is a very essential and primary step towards the ability to good relationships to oneself and to others, a premises to manage the tasks of a student.

The development from child to adult can mostly be characterized as a process of differentiation. The permanent balance change from the bigger picture to differentiation is at the same time a change from coming close and stepping back. Like a painter, who gets close to his picture to paint a bit and than steps back to see the whole picture.

Students come to the Psychological Counselling Service and tell about continuous difficulties in accomplishing extended written papers. And as we know, they are in an isolated and lonely situation during writing and it is hard for them to come. They tell about their problem as if it were a relationship problem with a difficult partner. These writing difficulties seem at first easy to be solved through technical advices about writing, but in deeper conversation they turn out to be a disturbed process of ego-development, ego-achievement and social maturity.
In this context and following my intention I want to say, that students should not be helped superficially only to function, they should be helped in a deeper way to develop their personalities. For me it is not a question of perfectionism, it is a question of the differentiated, dialectic and complex reality. Too quickly and undifferentiated psychological training-work without knowing the inner background can later on cause inexplicable symptoms, which then become more difficult to handle.

What is the connection between writing difficulties of scientific papers and personality development? How far are writing difficulties a symptom of a weak ego cause?
It is my experience that the same skills are required to develop one's personality as to

do a piece of written work from the first thought to a mature well-structured whole. In talking to the students I often see the connection between their general life strategies and the strategies they use to approach their preparation for an exam or their written diploma. In simple words: lack of ego structure leads to a lack of structure in scientific work. (Of course we must not forget that differences in ability have to be taken into account.)

THE DEVELOPMENT FROM SEPARATION AND ATTACHMENT

Our feeling of identity and ego are connected with our maturity and developmental processes, where the opposing tendencies of decentralisation of the subject on one hand and the striving of the psyche for integration on the other hand have to find their place. To change oneself also means to create an individual out of all transformations who is more or less a connected/coherent totality. We feel our identity through experiences in crises where we are forced to reassure ourselves. Identity-work for the ego means creating a balance between outer expectations, role-conformity and an inner reality, identifications and descendants of subconscious fantasies and desires. Just as adolescents have to gain their meaning of life and their identity through an immense abundance of compatible or incompatible possibilities the writer of a thesis have to choose also from an immense abundance of formation possibilities in order to create a consistent, coherent, integrated and understandable work. At the same time they are supposed to prove that they are capable of working autonomously and to show what is expected from scientific texts: structure and clarity. In this process it is the ability of self-reflection that plays the central role as psychic organisational principle. To write a thesis is similar to a lonesome inner dialogue and monologue (many students report, that the best time to have the best

ideas seems to be the time before they fall asleep). A more or less complex and specific communication within the inner world and at the same time in relationship to the outer world is needed. This communication is important for success.

On the way from symbiosis to individuation the ego is formed through separation and attachment. At the same time the development from symbiosis to individuation is a path of increasing differentiated awareness as well as summarizing understanding and self-congruence. The separation of the physical bodies becomes a model and condition for togetherness and the perception of each other. Closeness and distance, mutually depending upon each other in a relationship play a constitutional role, so that well functioning, intact and respected personal boundaries can develop. Thus self-esteem can be built up and the ability to cope for instance with the openness and limitations of the world, the freedom and dependency and also power and helplessness. Separation is only possible through the relationship between mother and child, and only relationship enables separation. Together with the fact of being separated from others the child knows, that - although there is conformity and understanding - much has to be shared if the child wants to be understood. The wish to communicate and the interest

of the social environment is the motivation for sharing thoughts and feelings.

There can be damage in this process if for example parents feel threatened through the separation of their children or - alternatively - cannot stand closeness. If, at the same time the separation between inner world and outside reality does not succeed the non-achievable outside, reality is often replaced through a fantasized inner world. Or if the outer world is too dominant the psychic inner world cannot be developed and will be covered and suffocated. As a consequence reality and fantasy might become confused, as well as image and fact, plan (thinking) and realization (writing). The consequence is the difficulty to bring thoughts from the inner world on to paper in the outer world. The person does not dare to follow his/her path, he/she stands still, walks in circles, detours to the right or left, patters on the same spot. That is how students describe their avoiding behaviour during writing.

THE ART OF WRITING: TO SEE THE WOOD FROM THE TREES

The students with considerable writing problems often use the subjunctive ("I would") or the dualism "either - or", "all or nothing". They are not capable to differentiate to make the essential opening step from the dyad to the triad, which originally means the step from mother-child-symbiosis to mother-father-child-relationship. It shows especially in psychotherapies with students with working disturbances that they have a more or less weakened, poorly separated achievement-ego with narcistic problems. Also it showed in the psychanalytic-therapeutic relationship that their dilemma between separation and attachment was transferenced, that they behaved at the same time clinging as well as repelling. They got stuck like in a no man's land between two nations. And at the same time they were unable to get some order into their ruptured feelings.

The clearer (a) the relationship is in regard to separation and attachment in the I - Thou, the clearer (b) the differentiation between personal inner and outer world is achieved and can be brought to dialogue, and (c) the clearer the differentiation between past, present and future as developmental time can be made, the earlier it will be that the thoughts which are first running wild can find their way into a flow of comprehensive, sorted, understandable information. The single differentiated parts should lead to a whole, where the result should be more than the sum of the parts. Since the process of writing is slower than the process of thinking and since science is the slowest method to come up with knowledge it is additionally harder for impatient students to oscillate between the parts and the whole.

In talking to students they come up with either difficulties starting a theme, following it through and /or finishing it.
For example finishing a chapter of a thesis seems to be a goodbye and letting go of a person and demands the difficult task to limit a theme and let go of the still open questions and thoughts. It takes the willingness to be content with what you have done even if it is not perfect and what you had intended. And also it needs the ability to direct your attention to the next aim.

Scientific writing is part of an extremely complex relationship to the world, which consists at the same time of motivational, intellectual, social and technical condi-

tions. And also logical, semantic, grammatical, motorical and communicational skillls have to come together in order to find the flow of writing, which is aimed to produce a coherent meaning, without the support of the sound of the voice, the gestures and facial expressions.

This complexity is the reason why students easily feel overstressed. Many students do not have any problems in the first part of their studies, they are hard-working, obedient and successful in learning, but the problems start when they begin with their thesis. They have more tasks to accomplish at a time than they are capable to do. They can therefore become long-term-students or may never finish their study. Fears of writing something wrong or silly and thus to become the centre of attention or fears of not being able to express themselves clearly or being judged negatively through

others or even to prove their inability to study at all can finally build up to a paralyzing panic. All these social fears lead to a negative discrimination from others.

Written scientific texts are the result of many work-intensive procedures with several phases of corrections and rewritings as well as phases of criticism. And depending on how criticism, mistakes and corrections from the social environment were experienced in previous life history - whether it was more negative or positive - the writer might react with fearful withdrawal or welcome it. While writing an extensive paper the writer needs a coherent ego with intact boundaries and intact feeling of self-esteem in order to be sure he stays the same even if there is criticism and alteration.

COSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THERAPY

From what I have said so far it seems to be clear that psychological counselling or therapy for students with heavy writing inhibitions need to emphasize on the level of the ego-maturity of the students and their relationship-structures, with attention to separation and attachment.

The chosen method of psychotherapy should allow to work through past relationships and their influence on the developing ego-structure, but also to suppport finding a clear therapy-focus which includes the conflict dynamics as well as the solution to it.

At the end I would like to quote Hermann HESSE. He describes in one of his publications how his writing works: while searching for one single word, choosing out of three options, at the same time trying to keep in mind and hold the whole sentence which is just under construction, and while you are finally fabricating the sentence, following through the chosen construction and tightening the screws of the frame you try somehow miraculously still to have the sound and the proportions of the whole chapter, even the whole book in your consciousness - this is an exciting task which is amazingly difficult and only occasionally successful

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Attachment and Separation

in Individual and Group Psychotherapy

Stig Poulsen |

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the issue of separation and attachment in both individual and group psychtherapy. The paper begins by discussing object relations theory and attachment theory in particluar. The therapeutic alliance and the nature of the clients experience in psychotherapy are discussed in some detail in order to demonstrate the significance of attachment processes.

The author then goes on to address group psychotherapy. He outlines the various models of group development and notes the fact that changes occur in the importance of different therapeutic factors in the course of the groups lifespan. Finally, the results are presented of interviews carried out with individual members of two groups, for students with procrastination problems and thesis anxiety. These results confirm the original hypothesis of the importance of separation and attachment issues for students working in groups but add some further complexity to the issue which the author attempts to resolve.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper my aim is to discuss the process of psychotherapy in general and of group psychotherapy in particular, trying to show how the themes of attachment and separation are central to the psychotherapeutic process. This is a relatively straightforward task as long as you keep to theory, since there seems to be a general theoretical consensus around these issues. I will, however, after a presentation of theoretical viewpoints, try to spoil the peace by introducing data from an interview study with group therapy clients which I have recently conducted. It is not that the clients point of view is incompatible with the theoretical understandings. However, the clients statements do add a certain complexity to the issues which I will try to resolve through the last part of my presentation.

INDIVIDUAL THERAPY

Even though the title of my paper is," Attachment and separation in group psychotherapy" , the paper devotes a significant segment to elaborating on how these phenomena can be traced in the therapeutic process of individual psychotherapy. A common theme in the psychoanalytic conceptualization of therapeutic process is that development within psychotherapy reflects childhood development. In a relatively broad sense this means that behavior and transference phenomena assumed to be characteristic for specific developmental phases, for instance oedipal rivalry or oral greed, will be reactivated in therapy. Accordingly, a central aim in psychoanalytic therapy is to try to work through these phase-specific conflicts and ultimately to dissolve the clients fixations to certain stages of development.

THE BRITISH OBJEKT RELATIONS THEORISTS

A more specific understanding of the connections between therapeutic and infantile development can be found in the works of object relations theorists like Winnicott and Balint. These analysts introduced an understanding of the way in which the psychoanalytic - and psychotherapeutic - setting resemble the early relationship between the mother/caretaker and the infant. As we know, they worked with clients whose problems rather than relating to instinctual conflicts revolved around a feeling of need, a lack, which by Balint (1968) has been termed the basic fault. In Winnicotts opinion such a basic fault will typically lead to the development of what he called a false self (1965). Balints and Winnicotts basic technical postulate was, that through a good enough adaptation to the client, he or she would eventually regress to a state of mind resembling that of the infants in relation to its mother. To Winnicott the caretakers central task is to present the world to the infant as if it were the infants own creation, that is in a way which allows the infant to keep up the illusion of omnipotent control. To Winnicott (1971), it is more than anything else aggression that ensures that the infant realizes that there is a world beyond the subjective realm. This is so, because the child is eventually forced to realize that its aggressive attakks on the object (mother, breast) do not actually destroy the object.

In the psychotherapeutic situation, Balint and Winnicott felt that the therapists ability to hold the client like a good enough mother could eventually make it possible for the client to embark on what Balint termed a new beginning where the client could deal more flexibly with closeness as well as separateness in relation to other persons.

The reason why I have dwelt some on Balints and Winnicotts ideas is of course that the themes of attachment and separation are central to these, albeit in somewhat different terms. Psychotherapeutic development is understood as a process where the clients attachment to the therapist and to the facilitating environment enables the client to relive former traumatic experiences. During this process the client separates herself by criticizing and attacking the therapist for her inevitable failures. However, the experience that the therapist do not retaliate or withdraw makes it possible for the client to ultimately accept that attachment to and trust in the object can exist side by side with the impulse to distance oneself from the object and to explore the world on ones own.

SEPARATION - INDIVIDUATION

In the literature on the therapeutic process one encounters several attempts to express viewpoints that are rather similar to this basic understanding, but in a terminology based on theoretical approaches in which the concepts of attachment and separation are elevated to a central status. One might in this connection mention the interesting work of Sidney Blatt and Rebecca Behrends (1987) who try to apply Margaret Mahlers understanding of the separation-individuation process to the therapeutic relationship. I find these ideas relevant, even though I recognize that Mahlers concept of a primary symbiotic developmental phase has been strongly criticised. However, my aim is not to discuss the specifics of childhood development, but rather to reflect on the dynamics of attachment and separation processes. And to my mind Mahlers theory is basically a theory of the interplay between attachment and separation.

Blatt and Behrends stress the importance of internalization. They see internalization as the central mechanism by which the child consolidates the ability to be separate from the mother. Blatt and Behrends understand - much in line with Winnicott - a good-enough mother-child relationship to be the essential foundation for childhood development. At the same time they stress that given this good enough relationship, the mothers failures to gratify the child serve as a stimulation for development. This is because the child, when faced with what Blatt and Behrends call experienced incompatibilities in relation to the caretakers, will try to preserve the gratifying experience by internalization. More specifically this means that the child will seek support from internal images of former gratifying relations with the caretaker, using this support to tolerate frustrations and separateness in the actual encounter.

To Blatt and Behrends this description af childhood development is easily transferred to the relationship between the client and the therapist. As in childhood deve-lopment the therapeutic relation must be based on the clients experience of the relationship as being basically gratifying, reminiscent of the mothers holding of the child. If this experience of the therapeutic relationship as gratifying is consolidated in the client the inevitable frustrations inherent in the therapeutic relationship may lead to internalization of the therapist and her functions. This enables the client to endure these frustrations and to explore the inner world as well as the therapeutic relationship. Of course such a consolidation will not take place in an instant. Rather it must be understood as a process, the course of which will to a large degree depend on the quality of the clients internal objects derived from earlier relationships

ATTACHMENT THEORY

If we move on to the group of clinicians who explicitly base their ideas on Bowlbys attachment theory, one might draw attention to Jeremy Holmes work on the clinical implications of attachment theory. Holmes points out, that attachment theory is of central relevance to the understanding of psychotherapy. His basic line of thought has been summarized by himself in the following statement which is basically a quote, although expanded a bit by me in order to make it more intelligible. Holmes says (1997, p. 240):

Attachment theory is based around the poles of attachment and separation. The goals of psychotherapy can be summarized as those of intimacy and autonomy. Secure attachment [in psychotherapy as well as in childhood development] provides a foundation for both intimacy and autonomy (...) [The therapists] Acceptance of separation or protest enables the inevitable separations and losses inherent in development [and in psychotherapy] to be negotiated.

As well as being inspired by Bowlby, these views are obviously similar to Winnicotts understanding of the therapeutic process, an inspiration which is also acknowledged by Holmes. One of the interesting aspects of Holmes work is the way he describes different paths of the therapeutic process depending on the clients attachment styles. He thus emphasizes that while clients with clinging, ambivalent attachment patterns need to be enabled to distance themselves from the therapist, for clients with avoidant attachment styles the challenge is to dare to be dependent on and intimate with the therapist.

THE THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

I will now continue by saying something about the therapeutic alliance. This is because, that even though the views I have mentioned so far all derive from a more clinical point of view, results from psychotherapy research also point in the same directions. It is well known that one of the more robust findings from the empirical investigations of psychotherapy is, that a strong therapeutic alliance seem to be of central importance to a good therapeutic outcome. The therapeutic alliance may be a somewhat fuzzy concept covering a broad variety of relational phenomena. However, some conceptual order has been established by Edward Bordins suggestion (1979) that the alliance comprises of three dimensions, namely the development of bonds, assignment of tasks, and agreement on therapeutic goals. Since it is obvious that the bonding aspect of the alliance is very similar to the the attachment concept, alliance research also seem to lend empirical credibility to the claim that the emotional bond between therapist and client is of basic importance to the therapeutic process. Furthermore alliance research seemingly support the assumption that the building of attachment is the central task in the early phases of therapy. It has actually been shown that in high-outcome therapies the ratings of the alliance often peak early in therapy declining somewhat hereafter. This finding suggest that a strong early bond between client and therapist may serve as a therapeutic lifeline, which may allow the client to distance himself from the therapist with the more or less unconscious knowledge that the therapist will be ultimately reliable and sympathetic to him.

Lester Luborsky on the basis of these research findings speak of two types of alliance in individual psychotherapy. In the beginning of therapy, the alliance will typically be what Luborsky calls a type 1-alliance (OH) which is: based on the patients experiencing the therapist as supportive and helpful with himself as a recipient

(1976, p. 94). In other words the early alliance is characterized by a somewhat dependent relation from the client to the therapist. However, in later phases of therapy a type 2-alliance will develop. This is defined as a sense of working together in a joint struggle (...) [and] of shared responsibility for working out treatment goals (ibid.).

A recent line in alliance research is research in ruptures in the alliance (eg. Safran & Muran, 1996). Admittedly, this research is not very well developed and the results must be said to be preliminary. However, these preliminary findings seemingly support the assumption, that problems in the relation between therapist and client (for instance misunderstandings, frame work errors etc.) may ultimately be of positive importance to the client, provided that the therapist is able to acknowledge actual mistakes on her part, to facilitate the clients expression of his dissatisfaction with the therapist, and to react to such criticism in a non-retaliatory way. Thus it is not only the importance of attachment but also the importance of separation that seem to receive empirical support. It must be noted that the idea of alliance ruptures as potential growth experiences is very similar to both Winnnicotts and Blatt & Behrends ideas about the importance of the therapists failures and of the inevitable frustrations inherent in the psychotherapeutic relationship.

CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Leaving the litterature on the alliance, I will now direct your attention to yet another area of research casting light on the themes of attachment and separation in the psychotherapeutic process. I am thinking of the studies on clients experience of psychotherapy. A general finding in these studies is, that in the early stages of therapy the relationship to the therapist in itself seem to be of the utmost importance. John McLeod (1990) in his review of interview studies with psychotherapy clients in individual therapy emphasizes, that when asked about their experiences of the first sessions, clients typically talk about their feelings about the therapist and their reactions to her, rather than about what the actual content of the sessions were. Not surprisingly many therapists will tend to focus on the problems presented by the client rather than the relationship. What seems to be of importance to the client is to feel valued and understood by the therapist, to get the impression that the therapist knows what she is doing, and to get an understanding of the formal arrangements of the therapy as well a feeling of how the therapy will actually be conducted.

In a similar vein, Howe (1993) in his book on clients experience of psychotherapy claims that the basic wish from the client at the onset of therapy is to be accepted by the therapist. Howe does explicitly make the connection between the empirical studies of client experience and Bowlbys concept of the secure base from which the child can explore the world. He emphasizes that clients often tell about incidents from the initial therapeutic hours, where they have shamefully disclosed secrets about them selves or have shown strong emotions, often being in tears. To the clients it is vital that the therapist is able to react to these emotional outbursts in a way, which show that the therapist is not overwhelmed by the clients and do not shrink away from them but is able to be compassionate and understanding. Furthermore Howe stresses that clients generally find it important - at least in the beginning of the therapy - that the therapist seems warm and emotionally accessible and also that the therapists office is a nice place to be.

These findings seem to fit well with the assumption that the establishment of an emotional bond between client and therapist is of central importance in the initial phases of therapy. There is not, however, the same amount of evidence that the clients feel that episodes or periods of non-attachment or separation are of positive importance. Actually, this is hardly surprising since the immediate experience of frustration in therapy will be one of irritation, of not feeling understood etc. However, the aforementioned investigations of alliance ruptures indicate that incompatibilities between client and therapist may contribute positively to the therapeutic process, given that these failures of adaptation occur within a context of attachment and that the therapist is able to deal satisfactorily with the clients reactions to the alliance rupture. The research of David Rennie (1990) points in the same direction. Rennie emphasizes that clients often point to the therapists interpretations as interruptions of the clients track of thoughts, and as such as potential sources of irritation and frustration. However, to Rennie these interruptions are unavoidable and necessary even though they may be frustrating to the client. It is however essential that the clients experience the therapeutic relationship as basically satisfactory and that the therapist is ready to metacommunicate about the status of the therapeutic relationship and about the impacts of her interventions.

SUMMARY, INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

Let me pause here to summarize what I have said about individual psychotherapy. There seem to be a widespread agreement about the central importance of the establishment of an emotional bond between the client and the therapist. Such a bond, which may be seen as a central element of the therapeutic alliance, is probably a precondition for the clients ability to tolerate separation, both the kind of separation which may be understood as the clients exploration of the therapeutic space in the presence of the therapist and the separations cased by imcompatibility and / or conflict between the client and the therapist. Given the establishment of such a secure base, failures in the therapists adaptation to the clients needs may actually facilitate development and the internalization of the therapist as a good object.

MODELS OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

If we turn now to the therapeutic process in group psychotherapy we can find here a good deal of the same characteristics found in theories about development in individual therapy. Some psychoanalyticallly inspired group therapists like for instance Stephen Saravay (1978) have even tried to draw a parallel between group development and individual development, claiming that development in groups passes through stages closely mirroring Freuds and Abrahams stages of psychosexual development. Even though such models may actually have some relevance they seem rather speculative to me and are not of direct relevance to the theme of this conference.

More interesting in this context are the models that postulate that the members of a beginning therapy group will initially go through a phase of dependency and / or attachment where acceptance and guidance from the leader or the other group members is of vital importance.

In the model of group development suggested by MacKenzie (1997), he claims that the clients emphasis in the initial phase of therapy will be on the affectionate bond between group members. MacKenzie see the central task of the beginning group as the development of engagement and of a seminal group cohesion most often based on an exhilerating feeling that the other group members have had experiences and problems similar to ones own. Given that the group succesfully passes through this initial phase of engagement, MacKenzies model predict that a phase of differentiation will ensue. In this stage the members will tend to manifest their individuality in a way which may mean distancing oneself from other members and / or from the group leader. If this phase is succesfully worked through the members will end up being more tolerant of the differences in the group and have a feeling that the group is capable of tolerating and solving conflicts. This phase is followed by a phase characterized by interactional work where the members explore the interpersonal relations within the group thereby working on their own interpersonal problems.

It is evident, that the themes of attachment and separation are prominent in this model of group development, which is basically representative for many other conceptualizations of group process. According to the model group development presupposes attachment to the group leader and to the other group members (what might be termed group cohesion) as well as separation, that is a tolerance for conflict and for expressions of individuality.

THERAPEUTIC FACTORS THROUGH THE GROUP THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

Another strategy for conceptualizing the therapeutic process in groups is to look at the way the relative importance of different therapeutic factors change in the course of the groups process (see eg. Crouch et al., 1994). There seem to a rather broad agreement of the typical development in time-limited therapy groups. Apparently clients in the initial stages of therapy will stress the importance of socalled supportive factors. These are for instance universality, that is the relief in finding that other people have problems similar to ones own, and the instillation of hope. As the group process develops socalled work factors like interpersonal learning and achievement of insight will be seen as more important while the aforementioned supportive factors will decrease in importance. However, other supportive factors, first and foremost group cohesion (or the feeling of togetherness and team spirit in the group) and acceptance from other group members, are rated as equally important throughout the course of therapy.

On the basis of these findings it seems reasonable to conclude that most group members in the early stages of the group seem to be most concerned with the quality of the emotional climate of the group, favoring the experience of acceptance from the other members and the cohesive atmosphere over more conflictual and confronting interchanges. This is in accordance with MacKenzies model of group development and also in accordance with the general assumption that interpersonal attachment is a prerequisite for the ability to tolerate separation.

In the later stages of the groups life group cohesion will probably change in character. Early group cohesion tend to have a somewhat dependent, regressive flavor, often based on the assumption that all group members are very similar and agree on all relevant issues. Later on the attachment between group members may develop into a feeling of belonging to the group while at the same time acknowledging the individual differences between group members.

THE INTERVIEW STUDY

What I would like to do now is to discuss these assumptions about group development in the light of an interview study I have conducted with the members of two groups for students with procrastination problems and thesis anxiety. The group format was described by Trine Fredtoft and Mette Bauer in the workshop wednesday, so I will limit my description of the group format somewhat. Basically, what is important to say is that the groups ran over 15 sessions and that the therapy was conducted according to group-analytic principles, meaning that the therapists were relatively passive, allowing the group process to unfold with a minimum of directions to the group members, but still focusing the group process by directing

their interventions to the common focus of the group. The group members were all women aged between 22 and 32 years of age. None of them suffered from any serious psychopathology although several had symptoms typical of depressive and anxiety disorders. I interviewed the 11 clients who remained in the groups using a semi-structured interview strategy. The aim of the interviews were to enable the clients to speak about their experience in therapy as freely as possible while at the same time eventually getting answers to more specific questions. These questions concerned for instance their feelings about benefits from the therapy, important episodes during the course of therapy, their experience of the therapists and

other group members etc. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed in accordance with the strategy for qualitative analysis called Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I will not go into a more detailed description of proceedings of the qualitative analysis. Instead I will go on to present the results of this analysis in the form of a model of the process (fig. 1) of the groups, which is intended to mirror the clients experience of this process.

I will restrict myself to giving a somewhat limited explanation of the model, focusing on the aspects most relevant to this presentation. The basic category of the model is a phenomenenon I have called de-privatization, a term which has a somewhat homemade flavour in Danish as well as in English, but which I nonetheless feel captures the essence of the clients stories rather well. The term is intended to cover a process whereby the client becomes progressibly more able to acknowledge that what she has hitherto considered private and have tried to hide from others, can actually be shared with other people without fatal consequenses.

According to the model the de-privatization process will be grounded on the experience of recognition in relation to the other members and the stories they have to tell. Thus it is a phenomenon very much similar to the therapeutic factor called universality. If the client recognizes feelings, thoughts or problems in the stories told by the other members, she will acknowledge that her personal problems, which she has experienced as unique and embarrasing, correspond to similar problems in other persons. This sets the de-privatization process in motion, eventually making it easier for client to open up in the group, that is to share previously hidden aspects of herself with the group.

On the other hand, if the client does not recognize her own emotions in the other clients the de-privatization process is hindered. However, one of the interesting findings from the interviews with the clients were that many clients have made a strong decision to open up in the group, no matter what. That is that their pre-formed attitude towards the group helps them to put the de-privatization process back on track. Thus even clients who feel somewhat alone in the group may plunge into the group process more or less driven by their will alone.

The importance of recognition is modified by the experience of the emotional presence in the group. As can be seen, this concept can be divided into three dimensions, namely group climate, the therapists presence, and active presence from other group members. In the first group sessions the most important aspect will be the experience of the therapists presence, first of all the feeling that the therapists are responsible and emotionally accessible. If the client feels that the quality of the therapists emotional presence is adequate, and there is a sufficient amount of recognition the de-privatization process will be on its way. However, if the therapists emotional presence is evaluated negatively, the de-privatization process may be stuck. What seems to happen in this case is that the clients will repeatedly challenge the therapists, testing their stability, warmth and competance in the more or less unconscious hope that it will eventually be safe to open up in the group.

This status may however be overcome, if the client experiences active presence from other group members (or maybe just one other group member). Such an experience may to a certain degreee compensate for the dissatisfaction with the therapists. This does not mean that the dissatisfaction disappears, but it becomes less important to the clients, enabling them to open up. At the same time the active presence from other group members is of central importance after a client has opened up and disclosed private material. If these disclosures are met with attention and respect it will

be easier for the client to open up in the future. If, however, the disclosure is met with silence, indifference, or lack of understanding the client will of course feel more reluctant about opening up in the future.

A third important category is interpersonal learning. This category includes the achievement of new experiences with and understandings of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, and of ones own role in these. The interplay between interpersonal learning and the two other main categories, de-privatization and emotional presence is complex. Obviously, many clients will experience the other group members as more open and at the same time more emotionally present, than perhaps any other persons they have encoun-tered in their lifetime. Such a social experience may be very helpful, since it may help the client to change her preconceptions about how other people experience the world and relate to one another. At the same time, as the group process unfolds many clients will begin to experiment with new ways of relating. This may to a large degree be seen as a result of the de-privatization process by which the client come to acknowledge that a much wider degree of behaviours will be met with recognition by others. Furthermore the quality of the emotional presence in the group influences the process of interpersonal learning, since a basic attitude of acceptance and interest will typically be a prerequisite for the client to experiment with new patterns of relating.

1 | THE PROCESS MODEL
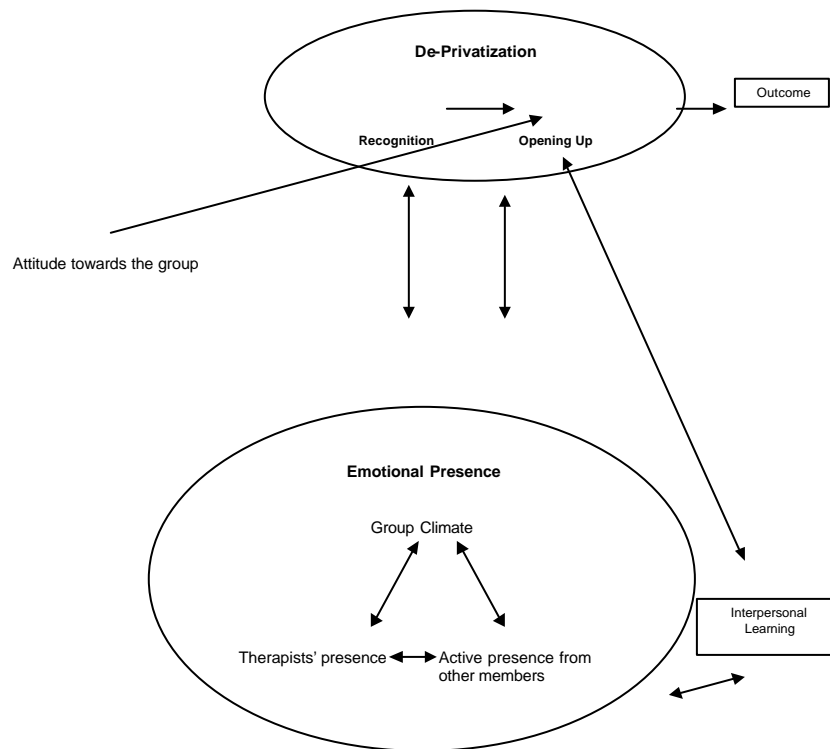
CHALLENGES TO THE DIFFERENT PROCESS MODELS

This basic model is based on the clients own statements about their experiences in the groups. Following the grounded theory method, is has been attempted to develop the nucleus of the model without using theoretical presuppositions, thus attempting to let the model mirror the clients own view of the therapy process. However, while the phenomena contained in the main categories of de-privatization and emotional presence can be found everywhere in the clients statements, the process of interpersonal learning although acknowledged by several of the clients seemed to play a less central role to most. This is of special interest in the context of this presentation since it seems safe to say that the categories of de-privatization and emotional presence pertain to attachment experiences, to feelings around the experiences of safety in the presence of others and the deepening of contact with these. On the other hand, while the category of interpersonal learning definitely contains relationship experiences, these experiences have a more mature flavour so to speak. They seem to belong to an interpersonal realm, where separateness and interpersonal differences are not experienced as threatening.

The fact that at least one of these groups were decidedly successful, receiving praise from the clients in the interviews as well as producing marked change on the quantitative outcome measures may thus seem as a theoretical challenge. It is evident that it does not fit in very well with MacKenzies model of group development, which insists that a differentiation phase, characterized by a certain amount of conflict, is a precondition for real therapeutic change. It is hard to find evidence of such a phase in the most succesful of the two groups. Thus, while confirming the general picture outlined throughout this presentation, that attachment seem to be of vital importance to therapeutic progress, this interview study might raise doubts about the importance of separation and individuation phenomena in group therapy.

However, when one looks closer at the interviews one discovers that separation apparently does play a significant role in the relations between therapists and the group members, although in markedly different ways in the two groups. One of the characteristics of the group analytic approach is that the therapists give a minimum of guidance to the clients as to how to use the group and behave in the sessions. Typically the therapists will be silent for long periods, leaving it to the group members to find ways of dealing with the group. In both groups the clients state that they felt that this behavior from the therapists was very surprising and - at least initially - somewhat annoying. However, in one of the groups the clients after termination of therapy uniformly give a positive evaluation of this approach. Several of them describe how it felt good to gradually feel that they themselves took responsibility for the therapy. Like one of the clients said:

" In the beginning, it made you irritated, the way they didnt say anything. But I actually think they did the right thing, because if they'd sat there and given us all the answers, well then we'd never have thought about anything."

Apparently the members of this group feel, that the therapists have delegated responsibility onto the clients. On the other hand the clients in the other group seem to think that their therapists avoided responsibility. Like one of the clients stated about the therapists:

And their presence seemed to be so ambivalent, because they were there, but at the same time they refused to take any kind of responsibility, because it was our responsibility. And I felt that this was a total misunderstanding. I mean, of course we had to take responsibility ourselves, but that didnt mean, that they didn't have a responsibility as well. So I think that because the messages they gave were so obscure, one finds it enormously difficult to feel confi-

dence in them. There were several problems in relation to therapists in this group, problems which did not occur in relation to the therapists in the other group. First of all a couple of clients had never talked to the therapists themselves before the first group session, being assessed by other employees at the student counseling centre. During therapy the therapists were experienced by the clients as rather formal and stiff, maintaining the therapeutic frame in a somewhat obsessive way, avoiding small talk with the clients in the minutes before the group started and always ending the group exactly at the sound of the bells from the town hall clock.

The clients in the dissatisfied group emphasize that the actual therapeutic work done by the therapists were impecccable, and most of them actually felt they had received some help from the therapists. Still, they seem to feel that this experience is somewhat devalued by the irritation they felt with the therapists.

It seems resonable to conclude that the main difference between the two groups lie in the quality of the emotional bond between the therapists and the individual clients. In one of the groups the clients apparently felt that the therapists could be trusted, perhaps because they had actually been through an elaborate assessment procedure, all of them having met with the two therapists in the group at least once. This feeling of trust in the therapists made it possible for them to tolerate the actual anxiety provoking separation from the silent therapists in the first sessions, knowing that the therapists ultimately took responsibility and were ready to intervene if things went astray. Gradually the separation from the therapists forced the group members into a process that might resemble the internalization of the therapeutic function that Blatt & Behrends talk about. At any rate they themselves created and conducted their own therapy with the therapists in a more unobtrusive role. Thus

a most important separation process actually did occur in this group, albeit in the relation to the therapists rather than in the relationships between group members.

In the other group the members did not feel certain that the therapists could be trusted - in fact they didnt experience the therapists as very caring at all. This seem to be the basic problem - not the therapists passive attitude in itself. This is stated most succintly by one of the clients from this group who say:

" I think that what is important is that you can feel a little human care and a little ordinary courtesy (...). If we had trusted them more, it might be that we wouldnt have paid so much attention to the fact that they didn't participate so actively."

What eventually happened in this group was that the group members seemed to make attachments with the other group members trying get some of the emotional closeness they felt lacking in the relationship to the therapists. Some of the group members seemed to feel highly ambivalent about the therapists, at the same time using the insights the therapists could provide while dismissing them because of their lack of emotional availability.

In an analogy which may perhaps be pushing the situation a bit to extremes one could be reminded of Harlows famous baby monkeys growing up with a milk-giving wire a mother and a terry cloth amother. Just like the baby monkeys that only used the wire mothers for feeding, the rest of the time clinging to the terry cloth mother, the clients of this group apparently tried to use the therapists for interpretation and other interventions while the rest of the time trying to get their emotional nourishment from the other group members.

CONCLUSION

With this last remark I hope to have made a full circle back to the starting point, that is the importance of attachment and separation in the psychotherapeutic process. I have tried to show how the processes of attachment and separation are central to the psychotherapeutic process in individual as well as group psychotherapy and how the building of an emotional bond within the therapy seems to be a prerequisite to therapeutic change. Giving examples from my study of clients experience of group psychotherapy, I have tried to demonstrate how the separation processes in question may be conceived not only in the form of manifest conflict within the group, but also as the clients tacit elaboration of the fact that the therapists are relatively passive, delegating responsibility for the therapy to the clients. Finally I have pointed to the fact that the interplay between attachment and separation in groups becomes very complex due to the simple fact that there are more people in the room. Thus the clients may at different times attach themselves to the therapist, to the group as a whole or to individual group members, at the same time distancing themselves from other constellations of participants. The understanding of this interplay thus becomes a central task for the group therapist.

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IN ORDER TO COMPLETE YOU HAVE TO SEPARATE

Mette Bauer and Trine Fredtoft |

ABSTRACT

Students with thesis and essay anxiety often fear separation from parents and from university, which makes it difficult for them to attach themselves to a world outside the family and institutional boundaries. Helping them take the step to complete their thesis will enable them to a more grown up identity. Participating in a short term psychodynamic group may facilitate this process.

In this paper the authors set out their experiences with short term psychodynamic groups for university students with procrastination and thesis anxiety, including the group-members evaluation of the previous two groups.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper the authors describe psycho -dynamic short- term group therapy with students who are in difficulty with their writing and studying. Firstly the group members and their dilemmas are described. Next some of the principles in the therapeutic process and are outlined and, finally the results are described.

THE GROUP-MEMBERS

At our student counselling centre, we often see students with procrastination and essay anxiety. We have found that for some of the students these symptoms represent a specific psycho- dynamic problem. The problems are especially present when they are going to write their final essay: their thesis. Their huge expectations combined with the anxiety of producing and the anxiety of separating from university may produce a significant mental block.

The profile of this kind of client consists of:
fear of separation
perfectionism
fear of responsibility.
hatred towards the object

These students tend to fear separation from their family and university. They seem to feel trapped in the expectations and delegations from their family without been aware of it. They are often perfectionists and feel they have to do everything perfect in order to be loved and in order to love themselves. Because of their expectations they withdraw from being responsible for something that they consider not good enough. At the unconscious level they usually hate the object upon whom they feel so dependant.
It is our experience, that they often are the eldest children in their family of origin and that most of them are women.

TWO TYPICAL GROUP-MEMBERS

Lilly is 30 years old. She is married to a man, who has finished his studies and has a job. Lilly has been working on her thesis for 4 years. She has attended different courses for students with essay-anxiety. She has been in individual therapy, but she has not moved towards a productive and creative way of writing. For Lilly, writing is a hard, heavy, slow and very painful exercise. She easily regresses to depressive moods.

She is the only child of her parents. Her father is a retiring type of person and her mother an over-concerned nurse. She has often been told by her parents to see the positive aspects of life and be more active. The more they try to push her the more she sinks into passivity and sadness. Behind the sadness is an unconscious anger especially towards her mother. It appears that the mother has envied Lilly.

Sara is 25 years old. She is also married. She has been studying different degree courses but leaves them when she becomes blocked at her exams or in a writing process. When she enters our therapy group she has for some years been studying communication in a new more progressive university, where the students work together in groups. But that has not prevented Sara from getting stuck in the writing process and becoming very panicked.
Sara is the eldest daughter of two teachers. Her father is a very ambitious person, who has high hopes for Sara. Every time Sara is going to write an essay, she returns to her father and he will help her and conduct her through the writing process. She constantly needs his acceptance to be able to trust her own performance. At the same time her father tells Sara how to plan her career; he sees as a researcher at the university. Sara describes her relations with her parents as good and caring when she enters the group.

For both Lilly and Sara, performing academic work is always a heavy burden.

They imagine that they have to present something totally perfect in order to be accepted. But these perfectionist projections make them feel very inferior and unqualified and that leads to depressive moods and passivity. They say they want to finish their studies, but they fear separation from the university and they will tend to project their perfectionist expectations to the adult life outside university and this may be an excuse to continue to stay stuck.

Nick Barwick(1995) has analysed essay anxiety. He sees, as we do, essay anxiety as a defence against fear of loss. They fear to loose the object upon whom they feel so dependant. At the same time they secretly hate the object because of this dependency.

Barwick distinguish between three forms of essay anxiety:

The non - starter is not able to start at all. He is totally blocked. He will say: My brain cannot form a simple sentence. I feel I do not know anything at all. He is only capable of starting if he has a constant external pressure on him.
The non- completer has ideas, feels motivated, but is not able to complete. The feeling of incompetence is followed by depression. Behind lies the fantasy: " to complete is to lose."

The non- exhibitor has no difficulty in taking in. She takes in everything and replicates everything that the teacher has said. She needs an external sanction of everything she produces in order to feel it is all right, i.e, an externalised superego.

Lilly is a typical non - completer. Sara has a bit more of the non -exhibitioner in her. But both of them fear the loss of the object.

The dependency on the object is reproduced in the relation to the text. They are bound to the mother-text and fear separa-

tion from it because it requires independence and courage. In that way to write an essay is to enter into the process of individuation(Barwick,1995). But this individuation process requires recognition of the anger towards the object. Winnicott says:

If, in the fantasy of early growth, there is contained death, then at adolescence there is contained murder .... In the unconscious fantasy growing up is inherently an aggressive act.

SOME TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF OUR TIME LIMITED GROUP WORK

The group consists of six to eight clients and meets for 15 sessions, one hour and a half once each week. The group is facilitated by two therapists, if possible of opposite gender. We do a follow up individual interview four months after the group has ended.

It is important to the whole setting that the clients share common traits on several parameters as group homogeneity is the key. In our groups the members are about the same age and therefore facing the transitional difficulties typical of young adulthood. They are about 26-28 years old, they are all students and they are all stuck in their final thesis.

The members of the group must be able to identify themselves and their complaints with a focal theme, initially formulated by the therapists. The specific wording of this theme has to cover central dimensions of the student's problems. We are dealing in the group with for example: procrastination, fear of graduating, extreme involvement in the needs and demands of the family instead of involvement in their own grown -up life, tendencies to switch between depressive and omnipotent fantasies about study performing, difficulties with dependence, and search for autonomy and extreme perfectionist inner demands that totally paralyse the student.

If we look at the group setting, then, thorough assessment is very important to avoid high attrition rates. Otherwise the result will be particular to dropping out. We assess if the clients have the necessary ego-strength to tolerate the anxiety that will arise during the therapeutic process. We are concerned about the ability to engage and disengage in interpersonal relations without collapsing. The ability for self-reflection and to form relations to others are equally important. This means that we exclude clients with severe personality disorders, and clients with any kind of psychotic breakdown as well as clients suffering from severe depression, because they will not be able to establish relations within a short-term frame. Severely narcissistic clients are equally excluded, due to their difficulties in sharing the therapists and accepting the time limit. Also, clients with various kinds of addictions and severe character-pathology are excluded.

In our experience, the homogeneity of the client group combined with the time limits and the sharing of a focal theme contributes to rapid development of group coherency and group identity formation (cf. Goldberg et al. 1983).

The inclusion criteria, the common focus, and the time limit allow for what we call a modified group analytical approach. Working within a modified group analytic framework means that we have to have realistic goals when selecting the focal theme. Grand ambitions of curing and working through all-important themes with the clients must of course be given up. Paradoxically, this might contribute a feeling of hope and relief to the therapists, as well as to the clients. We have to accept that we do not offer any cure or comprehensive solution. What we do offer is a safe room for broadened understanding and exploration of the conflicts connecting the inner world of the clients with their outside world.

The focus and the time limit make it necessary for the therapists to be more active and less regressively provoking than usual when conducting a traditional analytic group approach. The group sets off knowing that within four months the group will end. This allows for speeding up the process of revealing therapeutic material and at the same time delivers some kind of security, as the group members do not need to fear becoming swallowed up by the therapists or the group, knowing all along, that the group will eventually end. This is especially important when the material concerns separation, individuation, and dependency, because these themes will provoke anxieties. At the same time, it is important that the clients have the necessary time to get in contact with feelings of dependency. This is made possible by the fact that the clients share vital personality traits and behavioural patterns, with regard to the reactions towards attachment and separation.

In a way you could say that the therapeutic technique exploits the fact that the clients being young adults, are in a state of rebellion with time limits. The setting of well-defined time limits will provoke them and enable them to confront their unconscious and infantile notion of time as endless, combined with fantasies of omnipotence and unlimited gratification. It is our experience that especially students with problems of dependency and procrastination tend to be trapped in their notion of time.

Let us go back to the setting: While we listen with an evenly hovering, but selective attention, a lot of the focusing work is done by the group itself. When trusting the group and allowing freedom of speech, we usually find, that whatever seemingly peripheral material comes up, it will consciously or unconsciously be connected to or referring to the main focus. This means that we encourage a free floating discussion, giving space to pauses and listening to what happens in the group. In this respect we work in accordance with the principles of group-analytic therapy developed by S.H. Foulkes (1964).

The focus is kept within the framework of here and now. This does not mean that the clients are only allowed to talk about here and now events or problems. On the contrary, we experience a diverse flow of information and perspectives, often related to experiences from the past or from the client's relationships outside the group. However, the therapists see it as their task to link the material related to matters from the past or the world outside to themes and emotions that are presently active in the group. When this relation is established, the therapists try to direct the client's attention to the connections between what is happening in the here-and-now of the group and the client's ways of relating in the external world - and to the connections with significant aspects of the client's life history, that have been told during the group sessions. In this way we can underline how certain emotional responses in the group may correspond to other responses and ways of reacting in their lives outside the group and in their way of studying.

An example:
In a group Louise was talking about her isolation, and how she felt she had only her mother to turn to - no other friends. The mother was a lonely widow and was extremely idealised by her daughter. To the group the mother seemed incredibly demanding and interfering with her daughters studying in any thinkable way.

The group asked Louise why she thought she could not make other social contacts, a question that astonished her a lot. Then some of the group-members began to tell Louise, that they saw her as a very sociable person. Even before they had finished talking, she interrupted them. This happened several times, and the therapists pointed out this situation, asking what was happening. Louise did not have any idea that she was interrupting and denied it at first. Nevertheless the group insisted that they had all experienced this and what more was, that she was interrupting a positive feedback even before hearing it. Then she said: Now I know, I am always too scared that the estimations or reactions on me will be negative or unbearable, so I always try to stop or control them in time. This was linked to her academic performances and uncreative way of studying, as well as to her interpersonal relations outside the group and her feelings of isolation. When the therapists asked her: Who is deserting who or who is sacking who? Louise answered quickly: The guys are sacking me, and I am sacking the rest. She now began to see her isolation, her dependence on her mother, and her habits of studying in a new way as a result of her perpetual efforts to control or avoid expected negative criticism. The notion: "Who is sacking who?" stayed as a metaphor in the group and was humorously offered to other members in similar situations.

Following S.H. Foulkes (1964) we understand group therapy as therapy of the group, in the group, and by the group, where therapy by the group means the group member's active confrontation,

commenting and even peer interpretations of the material in the group.

An example:
The group was talking about feelings of loneliness and unbearable helplessness while trying to study and write. Then the group began to express anger and frustration towards the time-limit and towards the un-nurturing therapists: We haven't got much time, why don't we get some proper advice about what to do and where to begin? We thought you were the experts, why do you hold it all back?

This was succeeded by quite a long pause released by Anna talking eagerly about the delicate knitting work of a group member's sweater. The rest of the group silently followed this, until the therapists confronted the group with the pause and the shift of attention and encouraged the group to examine what was happening. In doing so, Anna interrupted the group again. The therapists now suggested that the group examine whether they might have unconsciously chosen this special member to release tension, since it was a role she often took or played in the group. Anna actually seemed to be eating up as much group time as she could, thereby interfering with moments filled with unpleasant feelings, but also disturbing moments in the group, where other members were working intensively with serious feelings. This group consisted of very anti-aggressive women, who - partly in denial of sibling rivalry - did not comment on Anna's interruptions at all. They seemed to prefer to have a naughty member, onto whom they could project unwanted naughty feelings.

From this point on, we have different options regarding the focus of our attention. We could choose to concentrate on Anna and her fear of not being heard, thereby doing therapy in the group, with one member in the foreground and the group as background. Alternatively, we could go on working on the unconscious mechanisms of the group as a whole, trying to

show how the group chooses one member to release tensions, a member who acts as a container of all the abandoned feelings of the other group members. This is what Foulkes would call therapy of the group, seeing the group as figure and the individual members as background, as a whole.

In the beginning of group therapy, the interpretations to the group-as-a-whole often are met with astonishment, curiosity, and sometimes denial. Later on the group gets familiar with these interpretations and meets them with relief that is followed by spontaneous exploration by the group.

An example:
One member of the group was talking about very critical teachers, another about people, who just could not be honest, a third about an ever gossiping girlfriend and so on. The therapists asked whether the group in fact might be talking about the group itself, and how much criticism it could contain. This remark made it possible to express openly the latent fantasies active in the group: How much of my vulnerability and imperfection can be expressed, without the threat of going to pieces, to feel destroyed and not being able to rejoin the parts before the group is ending.

THE OUTCOME OF THE THERAPY

If you want to evaluate the outcome of a therapy and you think in terms of results - you may be focused on something quantifiable, something you can define very sharply, for instance completing a thesis, getting rid of depressive moods etc. But in this way you only see a few aspects of the outcome and your evaluation becomes an either-or. Some of our group members do not complete their thesis while in the group- but they may have initiated the process. It is better to consider, what is learned in the group. To our experience what is usually learned in the groups are the following:

another relation to shame and guilt
an identification of the feeling of anger towards the object on whom they feel dependent
an alliance with the adult parts of the student is promoted
a modification of the relation to success
better self-management
that the therapists can cope with the group ending is not perfect and
that this is good enough.

We believe, that separation from real or imagined parents is a key to their independence towards writing. They have to separate from their mother or father as well as from the mother-text to be creative and independent.

Sometimes separation from mother anticipates separation from the text and from university and sometime the opposite will happen: they start to write and this makes them feel so independent that they are able to separate from the childish mother-child relation.

Lilly was so passive, yet so angry with any kind of request from persons around her, that we imagined that she would resist completing her thesis because she did not want to give us that gift. But at the last session she declared: I have made a deadline and told the university that I will deliver the thesis in a month.

Seeing her 5 months later we saw a self - reliant slim young woman (she had some excess weight during the therapy) She had got a very good grade for the thesis and had a job.

During therapy she identified her anger towards her mother. She realised that her passive resistance was a way of telling her parents that she did not want to fulfill their expectations.

Sara found out that her father was not God, but an ordinary clever person, who might be mistaken or old fashioned in his understanding of communication. She fulfilled (as a student-job) a small study for a firm while in the group. And she managed to tell the employers that their expectations were unrealistic and fulfilled the investigation on a realistic, not too ambitious level and was satisfied with herself nevertheless.

We conduct an interview with each of the group members four months after the termination of the group. Coming to the interview they bring along their answers to an evaluation questionnaire. From these two sorts of evaluations (from the last two groups) we conclude:

Most students say that the group has been helpful - more on a general perso-
nal level than specifically concerning their study-problems.
That they considered the therapists too passive at the beginning. But gradu-
ally they accepted this and many found out that in this way they were forced
to find out the things themselves.

At the beginning they often feel that they do not get enough attention from
the therapists and that it feels very offending to have to share the attention
with the other group-members - often experienced as their siblings. But
during the therapy they learn to share with the others and accept help from
them. One puts it like this:

I learned to be in a group, that there was room for me. They understood what

I said and listened. They kept their seat. And I learned to ask for help.

Most students would recommend a friend with similar problems to participate
in such a group.

Some - especially those whose problems went in the direction of a narcissistic
personality disorder- did not profit from the group. One of these said:

I did not profit from the group. I could not separate myself from the others. I
would not recommend such a group for a friend. I did not have a sense of
community with the others.

It seems that although we had a focus on procrastination and essay anxiety
their outcome was felt to be more on a general than on a specific level. Maybe
the focus of the group helped them to be motivated to enter the group and
was a more acceptable way for them to identify their problems. Many of them
did complete their thesis while in the group or shortly afterwards, but they felt
the personal changes to be a more valuable result.

Flegenheimer (1989) and Mackenzie (1996) conclude that attending a short-
time therapy group may confront you with very important and existential
challenges:

the recognition that you are not immortal and omnipotent
the wish of intimacy and closeness
the art to support loss and separation without loosing to much self-esteem

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University Life and the Delay of Adulthood

Ann Clara |

ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses University life in the context of it being a moratorium on development, facilitating the delay of development into adulthood. For many students, their registration at the university marks the beginning of their first prolonged separation from home. Learning to be alone, to turn this condition to profitable use and to enjoy it, is of major importance for students in order to be able to function autonomously as regards their studies.

Obviously this is a very demanding task: homesickness, loneliness, depressive moods and lack of self confidence are frequent complaints among freshers, consulting in the University Mental Health Centre of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

At the other end, those who finish their studies have to try and find a place in the professional world and in society in general. Some tend to postpone this last step, for example by engaging in post-graduate studies or becoming members of the academic staff. An academic career may be an elegant solution of those who do not want to grow up completely and wish to stay in the protective environment of the university.

INTRODUCTION

The University Mental Health Centre of the VUB (UDGGZ-VUB) is one of the 7 Flemish mental health centres in Brussels, acknowledged and financed by the Ministry of the Flemish Community.

It is a small centre with a staff consisting of two psychologists, a psychiatrist, a social worker and a secretary. The centre offers counselling, psychotherapeutic and psychiatric treatment and mental health prevention activities. It is situated near the campus of the VUB or Free University of Brussels, a Dutch speaking university with some 8.000 students. Due to its position near the university, which acts as its organising institution, the centre is attended by university and other students. Almost two-thirds of the total patient population in the UDGGZ is made up of students and secondary school pupils. Nearly all patients under 25 are students or pupils.

The main age category of the patient population of the University Mental Health Centre is that of older adolescents and young adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

The student population attending for counselling forms a rather homogeneous group, as regards age and initial complaints. When working with studying adolescents, one is often confronted with particular situations, such as the problems concerning study orientation or study methods or test anxiety at examinations. Anxiety is the single most frequent complaint for which our mental health centre is attended by students. Many problems experienced by students have to do with their particular social status and the stress connected with the delayed transition from adolescence into adulthood. It is important to take the specificity of this population into account during therapeutic intervention.
Looking back on my experience of 13 years as a psychiatrist and psychotherapist for students, 1 consider the following subgroups of students to be particularly vulnerable to the stress, connected with issues of separation and attachment

1 |

First year students (freshers) are over-represented in our patient population, compared to the student population as a whole.The sudden transition from secondary school to university, from home to a hall of residence on campus, from a sometimes very protective environment to a new one heightens the psychological vulnerability in freshers. The result is often that latent problems become manifest or new problems arise. Loneliness, depressive moods, lack of selfconfidence in general and test anxiety more specifically, are frequent complaints among freshers (1).Test anxiety is not a groundless fear, as only about half the first year students at Belgian universities go up to the second year.

2 |

Last year postgraduate students are also well represented in our patient population. For most Belgian students, university life ends after 4 (most graduate studies), 5 (clinical psychology, dentistry, law, engineering) or 7 years (medicine), sometimes with voluntary or involuntary prolongations.Those who have finished their studies have to take leave of a familiar environment and to try and find a place in the professional world and in society in general. Some students do not manage to take this last step to adulthood or tend to postpone it as long as possible, for example by engaging in postgraduate studies. They can't get enough of university life.In my view the same rule applies to some members of the academic staff : an academic career is an elegant solution for those who do not want to group completely. These eternal adolescents and eternal students feel, at home in the protective environment of the university.

3 |

The number of foreign students in the patient population of the UDGGZ has risen during the last few years and their percentage is slightly higher than the proportion of foreign students at our university, especially for Psychiatric consultations. Foreign students are a very heterogeneous group, as regards their cultural, their religious and ethnic background, language and academic knowledge, age, financial, familial and administrative status. In general, they run a higher risk of developing mental health problems than Belgian students. One of the risk factors most foreign students have in common is that they are separated from family and friends and often live in rather isolated conditions.

THE STUDENT AS AN ADOLESCENT

From a sociological point of view adolescence is the time of transition from a dependent position within the family toward a more autonomous position in society.

The end of adolescence is usually marked by the fact that the young person starts working and living with a partner. Sigmund Freud considered "Love and work" to be typical for adults and generally this still applies today.

In the contemporary western world, adolescence goes on ever longer by an extension in both directions: it begins earlier and ends later. From a historical point of view there is a tendency for the physical changes related to puberty to start at a younger age, so that physical and sexual maturity are attained earlier. On the other hand, from a sociological point of view, one reaches an independent position much later, mainly due to longer compulsory school attendance and longer schooling. Students in higher education are in a position of delayed transition into adulthood, more so than their working peers. Students are, among other things, dependent on their parents financially. Thus they can still be considered to be adolescents.

The role expectation of students includes that they should function autonomously as regards the organisation of their daily life and studies, that they should engage into age-adequate friendships and sexual relationships and that they should take socio-political stands, but they are usually not expected to be completely independent on a financial level (3). Nevertheless, the registration at the university marks an important transition in a student's life. Their stay at the university is for many students the first prolonged separation from home; by leaving their parental home and adapting to the demands of academic life, students are faced with a drastic reshuffle of their daily routine and object relationships.

Loneliness is an inevitable part of this separation from parents and family. Adolescent loneliness is rarely simply due to lack of opportunity for company: halls of residence can be lonely places for a young person still emotionally tied to the family. The capacity to tolerate loneliness leads on to the ability to form close relationships on the one hand, and to experience and make use of solitude on the other. Especially for students, learning to be alone is of major importance in order to be able to function properly as regards their studies. Obviously this is a very demanding task for many of them; homesickness and feelings of loneliness are frequent complaints among freshers.

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPLAINTS AND SYMPTOMS AMONG STUDENTS

Students' psychological problems often have to do with complications of the process of leaving home. Leaving home can be seen as a major family event in which both parents and adolescents "lose" one another (4). A family crisis may brew up just as the young person is leaving: one parent may for example fall, ill or threaten separation. Unfortunately, it is seldom possible to engage the student's family in the treatment. This is partly due to the reticence of the student - as part of his developmental stage - who might consider family therapy as a prohibition on separation from his parents. 18 to 20 year olds like to believe in the myth of the individual as a unit functioning autonomously. There is probably no other period in life, in which it is so difficult to acknowledge the ties with and the influence of the family of origin, as precisely at the transition of adolescence into adulthood, eg,

Case 1 |
A 21 year old female student who lived with her parents, answered my question about the situation at home as follows: "I am not often at home; in fact, I usually stay in my room."
On the other hand there is also a simpler explanation for the fact that we usually work with individuals rather than families: it is that students sometimes study and live far from home. All the same, as a system-oriented therapist, I do take the family context into account and work with "here and now" as well as with "over there," with a systemic approach in individual therapy.

Adolescent difficulties or even breakdown can often be seen in terms of defence against loneliness. This can happen through denial: loneliness is avoided by denial of feelings. Here the young person appears independent, she does not feel the need for others and leads an apparently normal but in fact isolated life (5).

Another way to avoid the pain of separation is by clinging to family and/or peers in such a way that separation and the feeling of loneliness are never really experienced. Here the young person continues to behave as though she were still in the early phases of adolescence. Within the family they are happy and bright, but they' become anxious when issues of separation arise, for example when involved in peer activities, especially with the opposite sex. This is not an uncommon pattern in anorexia nervosa, where the battle for independence is fought out over food.
A similar pattern is to be found in the young person who clings compulsively to peers and is terrified of solitude. Parents may be shunned as the young person becomes dependent on a peer-group or partner.
When these defences against loneliness break down, the student may experience feelings of anxiety and depression and seek psychotherapeutic help.

Case 2 |
Dirk, a very bright 19 year old male science student, has skipped a year in secondary school and studies without any difficulties, but has no friends. He never felt the need for a social life, until he suddenly fell in love for the first time. He became very anxious at the idea of being dependent on someone and of thinking of her all the time. This was his motive to come for a consultation.

Case 3 |
Ellen, a 22 years old female student in art history, suffers from bulimia and drinks excessively, but has always been a rather good student. Now in her final year, she seems unable to finish her thesis. She is afraid to tell this to her parents, because she thinks, they see her as "the perfect daughter," unable to make a mistake. She clings to her boyfriend, panicking whenever he leaves the house. When the relationship finally broke up, she came to see us. However, as soon as she had a new boyfriend, with whom she had an equally symbiotic relationship, she stopped attending the mental health centre.

THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST

Winnicott describes the ability to be alone as one of the most important signs of maturity in emotional development (6). His central insight is that the childhood origins of this capacity are based on a paradox - a child learns to enjoy solitude through the experience of "being alone in the presence of the mother." Small children normally have periods in which they play quietly, absorbed in their own world of fantasy. This, according to Winnicott, can only happen when the mother is able to adopt a particular role, watchful but non-intrusive, rather like a guardian angel. Winnicott sees the mother as "lending" her "ego functions" to the child, thus acting as a temporary "auxiliary ego". When things go well the child internalises this process and will be able to enjoy and make use of solitude in adult life (5).

Jeremy Holmes emphasizes that as an analyst, Winnicott's main interest was in the relevance of these ideas to therapy. He saw a similar need for non-intrusive holding by therapists. The task of the therapist is then to provide a setting in which loneliness can be experienced and not avoided; to hold the patient (metaphorically) in such a way that he can be alone-in-the-presence-of -another. If this process goes well, the patient will gradually begin to use the therapy as a setting for self-exploration or "play" in which the therapist is a non-intrusive collaborator (5).

When comparing the consulting behaviour of the student patient group with that of the non-students, it strikes me that students are much more casual about keeping their appointments. Sometimes without notice they do not show up, stay away for some time and then suddenly emerge again, expecting you to be ready to receive them. They continue the process where they stopped it as if there had been no interruption. When students do not keep their appointments, they often have beautiful excuses afterwards, as for example:

Case 4 |
John (23):
"I overslept."
(appointment at 3 PM)

Case 5 |
Hilde (18):
"I was in the pub chatting with a friend and I completely forgot our appointment, but if you have time to see me now, that would suit me."

This attitude probably has to do with the fact that students are less subjected to the many routines and duties, that are typical for the life of a working adult, but it is also linked with their separation-individuation process. I frequently have the feeling that I am used as a transitional object, which can be discarded and temporarily forgotten and then picked up again. Students on the verge of terminating their separation-individuation process have many points in common with toddlers, making their first steps in this process and experimenting with being alone in the presence of mother.

CONCLUSION

Students can still be considered to be adolescents in the leaving home phase.
Loneliness is an inevitable consequence of the process of separation from the family.
The capacity to be alone is not only an important sign of maturity in emotional development, but is essential for students in order to function autonomously as regards their studies.
Student breakdown often is associated with a failure to separate from the parents, i.e, an avoidance of loneliness; or with a failure to move on from loneliness and form new intimate attachments. In both cases there is incapacity to be alone.
Students at the point of ending their separation-individuation process can in some ways be compared to toddlers, when making use of the therapist as a transitional object.
Part of the therapist's role is to provide a setting in which the young person can be held and so experience loneliness, rather than avoid it.

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Developmental Differences Between Students Seeking and not Seeking Psychological Counselling*

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ABSTRACT

The psychological separation from parents, the development of the capacity for love interaction and self-esteem consolidation are some of the developmental tasks of young people. This study examines the differences shown in the capacity to resolve these developmental tasks between students seeking and not seeking psychological counselling. Two scales evaluating important dimensions of autonomy construction and of capacity to establish love relationships, constructed by the author, together with the Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem scale, and a parental separation inventory (PSI; Hoffman, 1984), were applied to a sample of 315 university students not having sought counselling, and to a sample of 40 students having sought counselling. The results show the existence of significant differences in all those variables. The implications for counselling with university students are discussed.

* This paper examines more thoroughly some of the ideas exposed in my communication "Assessment and treatment of university students with separation/attachment difficulties", made to the FEDORA Conference 1999.

INTRODUCTION

The transition between adolescence and adulthood requires that young people progressively separate from their family of origin and establish the necessary conditions for the construction of their own family. The capacity to develop intimate relationships outside their present family is one of these conditions. From the psychological point of view, the development of autonomy and the setting up of loving relationships are the two most significant challenges young people face at the end of their adolescence.

IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The issues related to this life phase have been conceptualized in several psychodynamic theories. For example, according to Blos (1979), adolescence corresponds to a second separation-individuation process. A first separation process occurs in childhood (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1980), which goes from a symbiotic relationship stage between the infant and his/her mother, until a stage in which the child acquires independence relative to the mother's physical presence, because he/she has now internalized her. A separation process also occurs, corresponding to a de--idealization of the infantile image of his/her parents, to a greater independence and self-
-differentiation from the actual parents, and to a relinquishing of infantile fantasies and expectations about oneself. An individuation process also occurs because, concurrently with separation, a process of assertion occurs of who the newly separated person is. The quest for individuality, which translates into character formation at the end of adolescence, implies the development of autonomy, without which

it is impossible for the adolescent to redefine himself/herself, and comprises the acquisition of a personal values system and the prospecting of a personal future. According to Blos, sexual identity consolidation, and the capacity to establish love relationships not restricted to duplicating or substituting for the parental relationship, depend on the quality of resolution of the separation-individuation process.

These developmental processes are also implicit in the approach of Erikson. For Erikson, identity consolidation and intimacy construction are the two great challenges at the end of adolescence and beginning of adulthood (Erikson, 1959, 1972). In addition, according to Erikson, psychosocial identity consolidation is essential for intimacy construction, and thus for establishing satisfactory love relationships. Indeed, when having an incomplete or weak identity, a deep involvement with the other can be felt as interpersonal fusion, giving rise to identity loss and leading the young person to isolate himself/herself. Accordingly, a real involvement with other people is simultaneously

the result and proof of the young adult's harmonious personality development. Erikson doesn't explicitly mention the development of autonomy as an adolescent's task, but this development is needed for identity development. As a matter of fact, without autonomy development, then role experimentation, initiative taking, and the assuming of responsibilities - all necessary for identity consolidation - would be impossible. Psychological separation from parents is also implicit in Erikson's approach, given that the integration of the various identity components is both a negation process and affirmation one. That is to say, to be able to consolidate his/her identity the young person has to relinquish his/her parents as all protective and powerful objects.

In the frame of reference of Kohut's Self Psychology (Kohut, 1987), the individual with an autonomous self has internalized a personal values system which prevents him/her becoming too dependent on others, and at the same time allowing him/her to establish satisfactory intimate relationships with them. According to Kohut, the construction of an autonomous self and self-esteem consolidation are the most important tasks at the beginning of adulthood. For Kohut (1987), self-esteem consolidation requires that the young person put aside his/her fantasies of infantile grandiosity and project his/her future life on the basis of the realistic evaluation of his/her capacities and talents.

At the end of adolescence, the resolution of the developmental tasks mentioned above is made easier by the cognitive and social-cognitive development. As a matter of fact, autonomy construction is dependent upon the ability of abstract thinking about1 a range of hypotheses, of projecting possible futures (Inhelder & Piaget, 1976; Piaget & Inhelder, 1979). Added to this, parental tutorship emancipation rests on the increased capacity to establish egalitarian relationships with others, in particular with parents (Selman, 1991) and, in its psychological separation dimension, it is fostered by the growth of both the capacity for self-reflection (Shain & Farber, 1989) and for realistic appreciation of others (Bloom, 1980, 1987). In its turn, the self-esteem consolidation process is made easier by the cognitive development because the young person can evaluate himself/herself in a more differentiated, complex, and integrated way (Harter, 1983, 1985).

Nevertheless, with the personality reorganization occurring at the end of adolescence, some previous developmental vulnerabilities may come into view. These vulnerabilities could have escaped unnoticed till then because the adolescent lived in a more assuring environment, be it because of greater parental protection, or because of less demanding social pressures.

Yet, the end of adolescence is also a favorable age for psychological adjustments, due both to the adolescent's higher cognitive development and to the new social opportunities opened to him/her (Blos, 1979; Bowlby, 1988; Erikson, 1968; Sullivan, 1953). And even more so if the psychosocial moratorium at the end of adolescence occurs in the context of an institutionalized moratorium, as is the case with university students (Erikson, 1972).

The present study aims at examining difficulties in the resolution of young adult's developmental tasks presented by students seeking psychological counselling. Our hypothesis is that these difficulties are greater for these students than for students not seeking psychological counselling.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedure

Students not seeking counselling. The participants were 315 university students, never having sought psychological counselling, from a university college in Lisbon, with ages between 18 and 25 and mean age of 21.83 years (SD = 2.20)

The instruments were applied in a single session, in different classrooms. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. The students were told that the research aimed at getting a better knowledge of some young people's personality characteristics. Participation was on a voluntary basis. Participants were allowed 35-40 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Students seeking counselling. The same instruments as outlined above were applied to students seeking help in our counselling service, during the academic year 1998/1999, before their counselling began. Subsequently, and for the purpose of this study, we only retained the data from nonpsychotic students and from those whose problems where not exclusively in the realm of vocational or academic issues. With these restrictions the sample was reduced to 40 students with ages between 19 and 24, and a mean age of 21.50 years. (SD = 1.32).

Variables and Instruments

Several dimensions of autonomy and of the capacity to establish loving relationships, were identified in the course of previous studies (Dias, 1996; Dias & Fontaine, 1994, 1997, 1998). These dimensions were evaluated through a questionnaire specifically elaborated for this purpose, applied to a sample of 530 university students from various university colleges in Lisbon. A number of factors emerged from a factor analysis of the collected data, allowing several scales to be constructed. These previous studies have shown that the capacity for projecting the self into the future is a good indicator of autonomy, and that the sexual self-esteem is a good indicator of the initial capacity to establish loving relationships. Although the capacity to project the self into the future is only one aspect of autonomy construction, it can be considered a good indicator of this process given the importance of young people being able, at the beginning of adulthood, to construct a plan for their future lives (Blos, Kohut, Piaget). This scale has also the advantage of not mistaking autonomy for detachment, as occurs with some other autonomy scales. Sexual self-esteem seems to be a good indicator of the initial capacity to establish loving relationships, because it evaluates a fundamental precondition for such a relationship, namely the conviction that one is worthy of love as a sexual partner (McKnight, 1994; Simpson, Gangestad & Lerma, 1990).

Projecting the self into the future. This scale comprises 10 self-report items (e.g., "I'm postponing decisions all the time" ; "I have well-defined plans for the future" ; "generally, what I want to be seems unattainable"). Subjects responded to each item by situating themselves on a 6-point rating Likert-scale (totally agree, agree, agree more than disagree, disagree more than agree, disagree, totally disagree). This scale has a good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .86 in the present investigation) and several elements supporting its construction validity were gathered in the course of a preliminary study. For example, it was found that the individuals who have good academic results have significantly higher levels on this scale than those who have bad academic results. The variable "academic results " was used to support the construct validity of the instrument because other studies have found a positive association, among students, between the capacity to have a future perspective and academic success (Lens & Decruyenaere, 1991).

Sexual Self-Esteem. This scale comprises 11 self-report questions (e.g., "sometimes I think no man (woman) will be interested in me" , "I feel I am desired by some men (women)" ; "I feel as attractive as the majority of my colleagues"). Students

rated each item on a 6-point rating Likert-scale (from totally agree to totally disagree) according to how closely it applied to them. This scale has good internal consistency (Cronbach's coefficient alpha = .89 in the present investigation) and showed a good construct validity in a preliminary study. For example, it was found that young people who never dated have significantly lower levels on this scale than those who have already done so; and that higher levels of sexual self-esteem are associated with a greater facility to relate to the opposite sex, as evaluated by the Self Description Questionnaire (Marsh, 1984).

Global Self-Esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). This scale, which appreciates the phenomenological experience of general self-worth, was used to assess self-esteem. This 10-item self-report instrument (e.g., "on the whole, I am satisfied with my self"; "I certainly feel useless at times"; "I feel that I have a number of good qualities") has a good construct validity confirmed in several cultures (Harter, 1983; Rosenberg, 1965, 1979, 1985). The adjustment of the student to the statements was assessed on a 4-point scale (totally agree, agree, disagree, totally disagree). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha value for Global Self-Esteem obtained was .86.

Conflictual Independence. This measure is part of the larger Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI; Hoffman, 1984), an instrument used to assess separation from parents in the vast majority of empirical research on the separation-individuation process. This self-report questionnaire has four scales corresponding to four dimensions of separation (functional independence, emotional independence, conflictual independence and attitudinal independence) and was previously adapted to the portuguese population (Almeida, Dias & Fontaine, 1996). Among its several scales, Conflictual Independence Scale is the one that seems to best capture the quality of the separation-individuation process resolution. As a matter of fact, this scale

assesses the young person's capacity for not feeling too much culpability, anxiety, responsibility, resentment, when facing the conflicts that sometimes occur in the course of the normative process of acquiring greater independence from parents. Thus, this scale captures the acceptance of separation and how much the young person is at peace with his parents. Accordingly, a number of previous studies pointed out the existence of positive associations between several measures of adjustment and well being of university students and their Conflictual Independence (Hoffman, 1984; Hoffman & Weiss, 1987; Kenny & Donaldson, 1992; Lapsley, Rice & Shadid 1989; Lopez, 1991; Lopez, Campbel & Watkins, 1986, 1989; Rice, 1992; Rice, Cole & Lapsley, 1990), thus favoring the scale construction validity. In its portuguese version, the scale is composed of 11 statements addressing father and 11 identical statements addressing mother (e.g., "I blame my mother (father) for many of the problems I have"; "I feel like I am constantly at war with my mother (father)"; "sometimes my mother (father) is a burden on me"). Respondents rate their level of agreement with each item, using a 4-point scale ranging from totally agree to totally disagree. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for Conflictual Independence addressing Father and Mother were .87 and .88 respectively.

General Information. Demographic data has been collected, including perception of academic results and whether psychological counselling had ever been sought.

RESULTS

The differences between students seeking and not seeking counselling for each variable were analyzed with the T-student test. The results, means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1. According to our hypothesis, we can conclude that on the whole the students seeking counselling show lower levels in all the developmental variables studied in this research than the group of students who had not asked for counselling. And that all differences are statistically significant.

TABLE 1

Variable	Students seeking counselling (N=40)		Students from a general student population (N=315)		T-Test Difference
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	
Conflictual independence (mother)	27.43	(6.87)	30.93	(5.24)	Signif. p <.001
Conflictual independence (father)	29.46	(6.61)	31.19	(5.47)	Signif. p <.05
Projecting the self into the future	33.57	(8.76)	41.24	(9.19)	Signif. p <.001
Sexual self-esteem	40.13	(10.61)	47.98	(8.06)	Signif. p <.001
Global self-esteem	25.42	(5.52)	32.48	(4.22)	Signif. p <.001

DISCUSSION

The differences found between students seeking and not seeking counselling with respect to the levels of psychological separation from parents (in its dimension of conflictual independence), capacity to project into the future, sexual self-esteem, and global self-esteem, support our hypothesis that the students seeking counseling have greater difficulties in the resolution of young adults' developmental tasks than those students not seeking counselling. Our clinical experience also suggests that a great deal of complaints and issues brought to counselling by young people can be understood in the light of a psychodynamic developmental paradigm.

These results have implications for clinical practice with university students. Certain students may have more difficulties with developmental issues due to a more vulnerable personality and a life history with more distressing events. These difficulties may be increased, or only become apparent, when entering university, because of its higher study stress and increased autonomy expectations. However, there is now an ideal opportunity to overcome developmental arrests, and other previously unresolved issues from the past. Since the young person is already in a phase of natural self reorganization, his cognitive development allows a greater capacity for self-reflexion, and the university instituonalized moratorium makes easier his exploration of options.

Consequently, we consider an adequate approach to students' counselling to focus the work in the "here and now" difficulties in the resolution of developmental tasks proper to their age, and establishing possible links and continuity with their past history. This approach may make it easier for time limited interventions, which are an important issue for university counselling services.

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