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Exploring the relationship between selfobject needs and parental bonding

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Exploring the Relationship Between Selfobject Needs and Parental Bonding.

Sherry-Lee Smith

A report submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Award of

Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) Honours, Faculty of Computing, Health and

Science, Edith Cowan University.

October 2007

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Thank you

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Running head: SELF PSYCHOLOGY AND PARENTAL BONDING

Self Psychology and Parental Bonding Experiences: A Review.

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Abstract

Self psychology proposes that the individual's early experience is central to adult psychological functioning. The purpose of this paper is to outline the key concepts in self psychology, the empirical evidence supporting it and how it relates to early parenting experiences. The enduring psychological nature of early interactions with an individual's parents, are discussed in relation to adult functioning. Self psychology is based on clinical observations of clients undertaking psychoanalysis. Empirical support for the model is limited. The majority of studies consider the concept of narcissism, and other related self psychological concepts, such as selfobject needs, are inadequate. Although this gap in the literature is beginning to be addressed, further work is required. This paper concludes by arguing for the convergence of self psychology and parental bonding theory by integrating concepts from both disciplines in future research.

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Submitted: August 2007

Self Psychology and Parental Bonding Experiences: A Review.

The study of the "self" is a prominent theme in psychology (Kahn, 1985; Van

Schoor, 1992). In psychoanalytic theory the study of the self has been emphasised by

the school known as Self Psychology. Heinz Kohut was the founder of self

psychology, and this school continues to influence the current practice of

psychoanalysis and psychotherapy (Bacal & Newman, 1990). Kohut's theory (1971,

1977, 1978, 1984; Kohut & Wolf, 1978) of self psychology is one of the principal

psychoanalytic theories. According to this theory, the self is seen as the organising

process which acts to manages the individual's subjective experience (Banai,

Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2005). Kohut refers to objects that serve a psychological

function for an individual as "selfobjects" (Kohut, 1968), whereby the individual

experiences the selfobjects as being part of themselves (Kohut & Wolf). The

developing self requires empathic responses from the selfobjects in their immediate

environment (Kohut, 1977). This role is usually filled by a child's parents or

significant others (Banai, et al., 2005). Early experiences of selfobjects are believed

to provide the foundation from which all future relationships are experienced (Kohut,

1977).

Self psychology emphasises the importance of the interactions that occur

between the parent and the child. Attachment theory is another area of psychology

that emphasises the importance of early interactions between parent and child

(Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). These divergent theories enjoy some theoretical

overlap regarding the enduring influence of early interactions. Early experience

influences the quality of relatedness in adulthood. Attachment theory proposes that

there are distinct patterns of attachment that reflect the manner in which parents

respond to their child (Ainsworth & Bowlby). Attachment behaviour exhibited by

adults, shows similar patterns, which influence interpersonal interactions (Smolewska & Dion, 2005).

Whilst attachment theory has received considerable attention in empirical studies and is an integral part of most accredited psychology programmes in universities, this is not the case with self psychology. This is intriguing considering the prominence of self psychology theory in clinical psychodynamic practice. Perhaps this is due to the positivist model of philosophy employed by psychology as a science. Congruent with the scientist-practitioner model, there has been interest among various psychologists to empirically test psychodynamic theories, such as self psychology.

The purpose of this paper is to review the key concepts of Kohut's self psychology and to link this with early parental bonding experiences. The end result of this will be to suggest areas for further research. It will consider the theory of self psychology, the concept of the self and the three dimensions of the self, as proposed by Kohut. The concept of the selfobject and selfobject needs including the "mirroring function", "idealising function" and the "twinship function" will also be described in detail. The mirroring function refers to the child's need for admiration (Kohut, 1977). The child also needs to admire others, which is expressed through the idealising function (Kohut, 1968). In addition, the twinship function refers to the innate need to feel accepted by others (Kohut, 1984).

The paper will also explain the concepts of a "cohesive self", "archaic" and "mature self". It will be shown that the cohesive self develops along the three dimensions (grandiosity, idealisation and twinship), which eventually function as an integrated whole (Kohut, 1968). In normal development, the archaic self of the child will develop into the mature self of the adult (Kohut, 1984).

The paper will then discuss "hunger and avoidance" of selfobjects, and the concept of "fragmentation". Hunger for selfobjects manifests as a strong desire for the function provided by selfobjects, in contrast to avoidance of selfobjects, where these needs are denied (Banai, et al., 2005). Fragmentation occurs when needed selfobjects fail to perform the functions necessary to maintain a sense of self-cohesion (Kohut, 1977).

The review will then examine the empirical support for Kohut's theory. The importance of early parental bonding experiences will be described from the perspective of attachment theory. Empirical support for this theory will also be discussed. Then the paper will describe the overlapping areas between self psychology and attachment theory, and will further consider converging lines of research. Finally, the limitations of the current research base will be highlighted in order to suggest areas for further exploration. The paper will conclude that although attempts have been made to link early parental bonding experiences with self psychology, further research needs to examine parental bonding experiences and selfobject needs in adulthood.

The Self and Self Psychology

Self psychology developed through the perceived deficiencies of Freudian drive theory, which attempted to explain the conflict between the expression of psychological drives and environmental limitations on behaviour (Kohut, 1977; St Clair, 1986). Kohut (1977) described this theoretical stance as unsatisfactory due to its inability to explain a variety of clinical phenomena (Kahn, 1985). In contrast, self psychology was proposed as a conceptual framework for understanding human psychological development, in which empathic interactions provided the basis of the development of psychological health and maturity (Banai, et al., 2005). Kohut's

theory emerged from the clinical observations he made while conducting

psychotherapy (Kohut, 1966; 1971).

In the self psychological framework the 'self' is the central organising feature

of the personality. It is a psychological system employed to structure an individual's

experience of themselves and their environmental interactions with others (Kohut,

1968; Kohut & Wolf, 1978). A healthy self is maintained by the provision of

adequate 'selfobject' functions. These are provided by the other and include the

functions of mirroring, idealisation and twinship. For this to occur, the developing

self requires empathic responses from significant others (Kohut & Wolf). These

interactions facilitate the development of the self along the three previously

mentioned dimensions – grandiosity, idealisation and twinship (Kohut, 1968, 1977;

Kohut & Wolf). The interactions of these dimensions eventually become integrated

to form the mature, cohesive self.

Tripartite Self

The dimensions of grandiosity, idealisation and twinship are known as the

"tripartite self". Kohut's theory initially explained the self as consisting of two

dimensions, which he called the "bipolar self". The bipolar self was comprised of the

"grandiose self" and the "idealised parent imago" (Kohut, 1968). He later

reformulated his theory into the "tripolar self", consisting of the grandiose self, the

idealised parent imago and a "connectedness or twinship" dimension (Banai, et al.,

2005).

In Kohut's view, the grandiosity axis refers to the child's belief that they are

perfect, whereby all imperfections are experienced as lying outside the self (Siegel,

1996; St Clair, 1986). A healthy sense of narcissism is eventually developed, giving

the child a sense of self-esteem and assertiveness (Banai, et al., 2005; Kohut, 1977).

The idealised parent imago results in perfection residing outside the self in another. Paradoxically, the child experiences the other as part of themselves (St Clair). The perceived omnipotence of the other allows the child to develop ideals, values and goals through admiration of another (Banai, et al.; Kohut). Finally, the connectedness/twinship dimension consists of feelings of belonging, and feelings of acceptance and similarity to others. Communication, relationships and group membership skills are fostered through this dimension (Banai, et al.; Siegel).

Selfobjects and Selfobject Needs

In self psychology the term "selfobject" is used to denote one of two things. Firstly, "selfobject" refers to a separate person who provides one or more of the previously mentioned selfobject functions (mirroring, idealisation and twinship). Secondly, the term selfobject is also employed to refer explicitly to the functions which have previously been described (mirroring, idealisation and twinship). Therefore, both selfobjects and selfobject functions are vital for both psychological survival and more importantly, development (Teicholz, 1999). The provision of adequate selfobject function results in the development of a cohesive self which in turn facilitates both affect and self regulation (Schore, 2003a; 2003b).

Selfobject needs correspond to each of the "tripolar" dimensions of the self; the grandiose self, the idealised parent imago and connectedness/twinship. Individuals require empathic selfobjects as external sources of self-regulation. When these needs cannot be satisfied internally, external sources are sought out through interpersonal relationships (Banai, et al., 2005; Kohut, 1977). Selfobject needs are experienced and met through relations with others. Mirroring needs are complementary to the grandiose self, idealising needs correspond to the idealised

parent imago, and twinship needs are related to the connectedness dimension of the tripartite self (Banai, et al.).

The Mirroring Function

Kohut maintains that for the grandiose self to develop it requires an empathic selfobject to "mirror" it. The mirroring function serves to fill the child's need to be admired and approved of (Kohut, 1977; Kohut & Wolf, 1978). The grandiose exhibitionist aspect of the child attempts to evoke attention from others by displaying their narcissistic need for perfection and power, which in turn sees all imperfection originating outside the self (Kohut, 1968). The mirroring selfobject will respond in an empathic manner by affirming and accepting this aspect of the child's self (Kohut, 1977).

When these needs are met, the child experiences a sense of acceptance. They feel that their unique identity has been affirmed and recognised (Teicholz, 1999). Their progress and accomplishments are celebrated by the selfobject. Through these affirmations of the self, the child develops talents, abilities, and qualities that they can have pride in (Banai, et al., 2005). A healthy sense of self-esteem develops, which later fuels ambitions and goals (Kohut & Wolf, 1978; Teicholz). This satisfies the child's need to be mirrored, however, they also have the need to idealise selfobjects.

The Idealisation Function

According to self psychology, when a selfobject is used for its idealising function, the child is idealising and admiring their qualities. The ideal parent imago is a target for the child's idealisation, being experienced as omnipotent, calm, strong and powerful (Kohut, 1968; Kohut & Wolf, 1978). The child seeks to merge with the selfobject in order to restore a disrupted feeling of bliss (Siegel, 1996). All perfection

and power is externalised in the selfobject, however the child seeks union with the source of this perfection and power by merging with it (Kohut, 1977; Kohut & Wolf). An empathically responsive selfobject understands this need, and will allow this idealisation and merger (Kohut, 1977).

Through identification with a significant other, the child feels linked with them and their idealised qualities (Bacal & Newman, 1990). Feelings of wholeness and being alive arise from the union with a powerful other (Siegel, 1996). Idealisation in this form manifests as an internalisation of ideals and values (Banai, et al., 2005; Kahn, 1985). In addition to the need to idealise and be mirrored by a self object, the child also needs to feel part of a larger group. This need for connectedness with others is provided by the twinship function.

The Twinning Function (Twinship)

The final dimension of the tripolar self is the connectedness or "alterego" dimension, which aligns with twinship needs. In Kohut's theory, the twinship need originally formed part of the mirroring function (Kohut, 1971). However, he later suggested that the twinship need constituted an independent dimension (Kohut, 1984; White & Weiner, 1986). The twinship dimension refers to a person's need to experience connectedness with similar others. Kohut proposed that people need to feel a sense of sameness with others, to be accepted by those who are experienced as similar to ourselves (Banai, et al., 2005). People like to share experiences, interests and activities, fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness (Teicholz, 1999). In this manner intimate relationships as well as memberships to larger groups and organisations are formed. Feelings of acceptance and belonging foster the development of social skills, empathy and rules of group functioning (Banai, et al.).

Cohesive Self

Kohut argues that the outcome of normal development is a healthy cohesive self. Eventually the three dimensions of the tripolar self become integrated into the structure of the adult self, functioning as an integrated whole (Kohut, 1968). The functioning of the adult self can range in varying degrees from fragmented to cohesive functioning (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). The adequate functioning of selfobjects, through interpersonal interactions, assists the self to develop the grandiose, idealising and twinship dimensions. Selfobjects that respond to the child in an empathic manner facilitate the development of the self as an inner psychological structure that functions in a cohesive manner (Banai, et al., 2005).

A sense of self cohesion results in a stable sense of self across all three dimensions of the tripartite self. This inner state of stability and security expresses itself as a harmonious set of ideals, values and ambitions, that reflect a stable sense of self-esteem (Banai, et al., 2005; Kohut, 1968). When an adult's self functions in a cohesive manner, it relies primarily on internal sources of self-regulation. This inner source of self-regulation is not seen in those with an archaic sense of self (Banai, et al.), which will be discussed next.

The Archaic and Mature Self

The "archaic self" of the child relies primarily on external sources of self regulation. The existence of these archaic selfobject needs is normal at the early stages of development in infancy and childhood (Bacal & Newman, 1990; Kohut, 1984). At this stage, the selfobject is cognitively indistinguishable from the individual, that is, it is not experienced as separate and independent from the individual (Kohut, 1971, 1984). Rather, the psychological function of the selfobject is experienced as if it originated within the child (Teicholz, 1999).

Selfobjects are however, required throughout life. The need for selfobject experiences is never outgrown, as there is a continuing need for the psychological function provided by selfobjects until the moment of death (Bacal & Newman, 1990; Kohut, 1984). Kohut (1984) argues that the proposition of an individual becoming independent of selfobjects, is a myth. In contrast, the lifelong need for selfobjects occurs at all developmental levels (Kohut, 1977). The self is said to undergo a process of development and maturation throughout the lifespan which is reflected in the changing nature of selfobject relationships (Kohut, 1984). Nevertheless, as a person matures, there is a gradual shift in the intensity and urgency of selfobject needs (Kohut, 1984). According to Kohut, internal resources are never sufficient, however, the need for them becomes less absolute and relentless as the self develops.

A "mature" self continues to require selfobjects for its own sustenance. However, unlike the archaic self, the mature self has a clear awareness of the separateness of others (Kahn, 1985). It becomes more competent in establishing mature relationships that entail reciprocal selfobject exchanges (Teicholz, 1999). Appropriate selfobjects are sought, enabling the self to be sustained from all three dimensions of the tripolar self. The empathic resonance of these types of mature relationships gives the individual a sense of security (Kohut, 1984).

In adolescence, the peer group forms the primary selfobject relationships used to maintain self-esteem and internalise strengths, goals and ideals (Bacal & Newman, 1990; Wolf, Gedo, & Terman, 1972). In adulthood, the selfobject milieu consists of family, friends, work colleagues and the cultural group of the individual (Kohut, 1984). Furthermore, meaningful affiliations become the symbolic equivalents of selfobject relationships (Bacal & Newman). Childhood selfobject relations

unconsciously reverberate, as mature adult relationships reawaken childhood

selfobject experiences (Kohut).

Archaic forms of selfobject relations occur not only in childhood, but also in

adults with psychological illness (Kohut, 1977). Adults who use selfobjects for

archaic purposes beyond childhood, may be experiencing psychological disorders or

enduring periods of heightened stress (Kohut, 1977, 1984). When the childhood self

has been unempathically responded to, archaic needs are unable to be transferred into

self-esteem, solid ambitions and goals (Kohut, 1977). Individuals can become

dependent on aspects of archaic selfobjects, such as the use of drug to 'shore up' a

fragmenting self. In this sense the 'selfobject' function of drug use is used as a

replacement for a defective self structure (Kohut, 1971).

Hunger and Avoidance of Self Object Needs

In adulthood, archaic needs for selfobjects express themselves in one of two

ways. Kohut identified these as "hunger" for selfobjects and "avoidance" of

selfobject needs (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). When selfobjects fail to respond in an

empathic manner, a sense of self-cohesion does not develop (Kohut, 1971). The

psychological structure giving the child the ability to self-sooth and regulate self-

esteem, incompletely develops leaving the adult with archaic selfobject needs in the

form of hunger or avoidance (Kahn, 1985; Kohut, 1971, 1978).

Hunger for selfobjects is expressed as a continuous search for selfobjects to

meet the individual's unmet childhood needs. Individuals who have a hunger for

selfobjects make compulsive attempts to obtain love and support from external

sources (Banai, et al., 2005; Kahn, 1985). Selfobject functions are used for the

purpose of substituting missing segments of psychological structure in an attempt to

maintain a cohesive self (Kohut, 1971). In this manner, an individual who has a

hunger for selfobjects, forms intense attachments to others (Cohler & Galatzer-levy, 1992; Kohut) and may become dependent upon them in order to fill a psychological void within the self. According to Kohut, this may manifest itself as mirror hungry, ideal hungry, merger hunger or alterego personalities (Kohut; Kohut & Wolf, 1978).

The "mirror hungry" personality is in need of admiration (Banai, et al., 2005), because mirroring needs were unmet in childhood, these individuals demand attention and praise, in order to stabilise a sense of self (Kohut & Wolf). The "ideal hungry" personality is forever in search of others to admire for their power, beauty and intelligence. They cling to the selfobject's perceived perfection in an attempt to feel worthwhile (Kohut & Wolf). The "alterego" personality forms relationships with others to confirm their own opinions, values and appearance. Finally, "merger hungry" personalities require selfobjects in an attempt to structure the self because they have difficulties with boundaries between themselves and others. Their need to control their selfobjects arises out of a sense of intolerance of the independence of the selfobject. This, coupled with a sensitivity to separation, leaves the individual demanding the selfobject's continued presence (Kohut & Wolf).

In contrast, denial of selfobject needs is used as a psychological barrier to avoid tension and anxiety provoking selfobject experiences (Banai, et al., 2005). When the environment is experienced as hostile, defensive avoidance is used to protect against unpleasant emotions relating to selfobject relations (Kahn, 1985). The unempathic responses of childhood selfobjects can lead individuals to avoid situations and relationships where they may become the centre of attention. External sources are unable to provide the individual with enjoyment (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). Kohut discusses the "contact-shunning" personality, who is sensitive to rejection and for this reason, avoids social contact and isolates themselves in order to manage the

intensity of their selfobject needs (Kohut & Wolf). Avoidance of selfobject needs

and hunger for selfobjects are the mechanisms an individual uses to cope with the

unempathic responses of their childhood selfobjects.

Fragmentation

As stated previously, empathic selfobjects are required for an individual's

psychological survival and healthy development of the self (Kohut & Wolf, 1978).

When a child experiences continued failure of empathic mirroring and idealisation,

the self can become prone to "fragmentation" (St Clair, 1986). When a secure self

has not been established, fragmentation occurs. This occurs when a part of the self is

isolated from the remainder of the psychological configuration (Kohut, 1977). A

disordered self focuses on its deficiencies, in addition to being overly sensitive to

criticism and failure. This leaves the self feeling plagued by feelings of loneliness,

isolation and experiencing pessimistic thoughts. Therefore, in order to feel

psychologically whole, the fragmented self needs to experience others as part of

itself. Fragmentation occurs in a state of subjective distress, in contrast to

cohesiveness, which is the opposite and desired state (Kohut).

Section Summary

In summary, Kohut's self psychology is a theory that considers the self as the

central organising process. Empathically responsive interactions with significant

others, allow a child to organise information regarding themselves and their

environment. The tripartite self consists of three dimensions; the grandiose self, the

idealised parent imago and the connectedness (twinship) dimension. Selfobjects

serve a function that is experienced intrapsychically by the individual, giving the self

structure and facilitating development. Selfobject needs externally satisfy the self

along the three dimensions of the tripartite self. The mirroring function corresponds

to the grandiose aspect of the self, acting to assist the child to feel admiration and acceptance. The idealised parent imago is satisfied by the idealisation function, enabling the child to experience a state of bliss through merging with the selfobject. Twinship needs are expressed through the connectedness dimension, giving the child a feeling of acceptance and belonging.

These three dimensions of the self integrate, to form a healthy cohesive self. Solid ideals, values and ambitions are reflected in a stable sense of self, whereby the individual relies to a lesser extent on external sources of self-regulation. In the early stages of development, the archaic self is mostly reliant on external sources for psychological functioning. Selfobjects are required throughout an individual's life, however, selfobject needs mature becoming less intense as the self develops. A mature self relies more on internal sources for cohesion, having a clear awareness of the separateness between the self and others. According to self psychology, when psychological illness is present, the self functions in an archaic manner by relying on selfobjects to fill the void in their defective self.

In an archaic manner, selfobjects needs may express themselves as a hunger for, or avoidance of selfobjects. When an individual has a hunger for selfobjects they compulsively search for selfobjects to fill the psychological void, this may manifest as mirror hungry, ideal hungry or a hunger for twinship. Avoidance of selfobjects occurs when a person denies their selfobject needs in order to protect themselves from unpleasant emotions and rejection. Furthermore, fragmentation may occur, whereby selfobjects are needed to maintain a sense of self cohesion. Kohut based his theory of self psychology on clinical observations in his own psychotherapy practice.

Empirical Evidence for Kohut's Theory

There is not a lot of empirical studies that pertain to Kohut's concepts. The majority of empirical work concerning self psychology has focussed on Kohut's theory of narcissism, neglecting the remainder of his theoretical propositions. Whilst a number of measures, such as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Hall, 1979), Narcissistic Personality Disorder scale (NPD; Ashby, Lee, & Duke, 1979, September) and the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI; Millon, 1983) have been developed to measure the concept of narcissism, little research has been conducted which pertains to Kohut's other concepts.

Some attempts have been made to operationalise the concepts of grandiosity and idealisation. Robbins and Patton (1985) employed a sample of college students to construct a scale to measure these concepts. Grandiosity was reflected in a Superiority scale, and idealisation was reflected in a Goal Instability scale. They then used these scales to examine students' career decidedness and pursuit of career plans (Robbins & Patton). Mature grandiosity, as reflected in talents, skills and ambitions, was hypothesised to be needed for career planning. Mature idealisation, as reflected in the presence of a coherent set of values and goals, was suspected to be related to career decidedness. The results showed that both scales were able to predict level of career decidedness, and the Superiority scale was able to predict level of career pursuit. However, these results are only generalisable to a college population regarding career decidedness and pursuit. Although the study provides support for Kohut's theory, further research is needed to investigate the use of these scales with other populations.

The Superiority and Goal Instability scales have also been examined with retirement aged workers, and clinical samples. Smith and Robbins (1988)

investigated whether the Goal Instability scale could be used with retirement aged workers, in addition to whether it could be used to predict adjustment during retirement. They reported general support for using the scale with this population. In addition, personal and social adjustment during this transition phase was predicted by returns on the Goal Instability scale (Smith & Robbins). Furthermore, other evidence also indicates that goal continuity is linked to quality of leisure and life satisfaction amongst retirees (Robbins, Lee, & Wan, 1994).

In relation to clinical samples, these scales have been investigated in regard to abnormalities in the self and interpersonal behaviour. To establish concurrent validity and examine the relationships amoung the Superiority and Goal Instability scales, personality style and clinical syndromes, Robbins (1989) compared these scales to scores on the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI; Millon, 1977). The participants were inpatients and outpatients with various psychological disorders. The results showed that Superiority was highly correlated with the Histrionic, and Narcissistic Scales from the MCMI, which in turn reflected a pattern of social gregariousness, fickle affectivity and exploitiveness. Secondly, the findings indicated that Goal Instability was highly correlated with Schizoid, Schizotypal and Borderline scales, in addition to Dysthymia, Anxiety and Somatoform scales from the MCMI. This suggested that high Goal Instability was related to depressive style, lack of ambition and goals, social withdrawal, directionless and poor self-esteem. Robbins concluded that Goal Instability reflected Kohut and Wolf's (1978) contact shunning personality and Superiority reflected the mirror hungry personality.

In another study, grandiose-exhibitionist and idealising needs were explored in relation to interpersonal behaviour patterns. Robbins and Dupont (1992) compared scores on the Superiority and Goal Instability Scales with scores on the Checklist of

Interpersonal Transactions (CLOIT; Kiesler & Goldston, 1987) among mental health clients in therapy. They used the Control and Affiliation axes from the CLOIT, where submission and hostility are reflected in negative scores, in contrast to dominance and friendliness reflecting positive scores. The results suggested that Superiority was positively related to Control and Affiliation, and Goal Instability was negatively related to Control and Affiliation. Robbins and Dupont concluded that grandiose-exhibitionist needs are expressed as dominant and friendly behaviour, whereas idealising needs are reflected in submissive and hostile behaviour.

The concepts of Goal Instability and Superiority have been investigated in adult populations, retirees and both clinical and non-clinical groups, in addition to research with adolescents. According to self psychology, peer relationships in adolescence serve as selfobjects, along the mirroring, idealising and twinship dimensions (Wolf, et al., 1972). Lapan and Patton (1986) have constructed a scale to measure grandiosity and idealisation as it was perceived to express itself in adolescence. Their scales were called Pseudoautonomy and Peer-Group dependence scales. These measure are similar to Robbins and Patton's (1985) scales of Superiority and Goal Instability (Lapan & Patton). Pseudoautonomy reflected defensive independence and nonconformity, and Peer-Group Dependence reflected defensive reliance on friends and the need for reassurance. It was hypothesised that the scale would be able to differentiate between hospitalised and non-hospitalised adolescents, with those who were hospitalised scoring higher on both scales. The results supported this hypothesis. This suggests that hospitalised adolescents show more defensive independence, nonconformity, defensive reliance on friends, and a higher need for reassurance than non-hospitalised adolescents. Lapan and Patton suggest this reflects a greater vulnerability of the self in hospitalised adolescents.

To investigate Kohut's concept of twinship, Lee and Robbins (1995) developed the Social Connectedness Scale and the Social Assurance Scale. Using these scales with a group of college students, they found that Social Connectedness is positively related to collective self-esteem, and negatively related to social avoidance and distress (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001). Furthermore, Social Connectedness was negatively correlated with sociability, intimacy, submissiveness and assertiveness, in addition to depression, social discomfort and hostility. Lee et al. (2001) suggested that people with low connectedness tend to develop dysfunctional interpersonal behaviours to protect themselves from rejection. This finding is consistent with Kohut's contact-shunning personalities which avoid some social situations (Kohut & Wolf, 1978).

These studies have provided some support for Kohut's concepts of grandiosity, idealisation and twinship. Banai et al. (2005) have elaborated this by examining selfobject needs in relation to hunger and avoidance of selfobject experiences with Israeli university students. Using a factor analysis they developed a measure called the Selfobject Needs Inventory (SONI). The SONI was developed with five scales; Hunger for Mirroring, Hunger for Idealisation, and Hunger for Twinship, as well as Avoidance of Mirroring and Avoidance of Idealisation/Twinship. They could not distinguish between avoidance of idealisation and twinship, therefore it was accepted as a single scale.

The SONI was reported to have good psychometrics properties (Banai, et al., 2005). Test-retest reliability was explored and found to have high internal consistency and stability over a two month period (Cronbach's α ranging from .84 to .87 across the scales). There were no significant gender differences on any of the five scales. To establish concurrent validity, scores on the SONI were compared with the

Superiority ($\alpha = .75$) and Goal Instability scales ($\alpha = .74$; Robbins & Patton, 1985)

and the Social Connectedness scale ($\alpha = .78$; Lee & Robbins, 1995). As predicted,

the results suggested that the SONI displays sound concurrent and discriminant

validity. Banai et al. then explored a range of theoretical propositions with

established scales.

SONI scores were compared with attachment style, fear of intimacy and

rejection sensitivity (Banai, et al., 2005). The results revealed that the stronger a

person's hunger for selfobjects, the higher their attachment anxiety and rejection

sensitivity. The more they reported avoidance of selfobject needs, the higher was

their attachment anxiety and fear of intimacy. As predicted, no relationship was

found between selfobject needs and social desirability or social orientation.

However, there was an inverse relationship between social desirability and avoidance

of idealisation/twinship needs. Banai et al. concluded that selfobject avoidance is

used as a defensive strategy to protect people from frustration and the social rejection

that follows frustration of selfobject needs, similar to Kohut's contact shunning

personality (Kohut & Wolf, 1978).

In regard to mental health, the results of Banai et al. (2005) generally

supported Kohut's theory. There was a significant relationship between selfobject

needs and narcissistic personality, supporting Kohut's (1971) notion that narcissism

is related to selfobject need and selfobject avoidance. Hunger for mirroring and

twinship was associated with low self-esteem and well-being, as well as high scores

on depression and anxiety. Avoidance of twinship/idealisation was also associated

with low self-esteem and well-being, as well as depression and anxiety, however it

was also related to high scores on hostility. Furthermore, high scores on hostility

were related to avoidance of mirroring. This supports Kohut's theory regarding the relationship between selfobject needs and emotional maladjustment.

Section Summary

The empirical studies that have been conducted show support for Kohut's theory of self psychology. The concepts of grandiosity and idealisation have been operationalised by Robbins and Patton (1985) in the Superiority and Goal Instability scales. These scales have been used to predict level of career decidedness in college students, adjustment in retirement, as well as psychopathology and interpersonal behaviour in clinical populations. Lapan and Patton (1986) developed the Pseudoautonomy and Peer-group Dependency scales to measure grandiosity and idealisation in adolescents. The Social Connectedness and Social Assurance scale was developed by Lee and Robbins (1995) to measure Kohut's twinship function. Research using this scale, suggests that people low in connectedness tend to develop dysfunctional interpersonal relationships. Selfobject needs have been operationalised by Banai et al., (2005) in the SONI. The SONI has been used to demonstrate associations between hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs and attachment patterns, narcissistic personality, self-esteem, well-being, depression, anxiety and hostility.

Early Parental Bonding Experiences

Self psychology emphasises the importance of quality early experiences in the relationship between parent and infant. An important, related empirical theory that equally emphasises the importance of the quality of parent-infant relatedness is attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Attachment theory is a large and diverse theory that has resulted in a variety of theoretical developments. One of the important developments is the theory of parental bonding. This section will briefly

explicate the principles of attachment theory and then discuss parental bonding theory.

Attachment theory has received much theoretical and empirical support. Attachment refers to an affectional bond that a person has with another specific person (Ainsworth, 1969). Both, attachment theory and self psychology assert that early interactions with others are formative in self development (Eagle, 1996). Studies have found that infants and adults form one of four attachment patterns. When infants are left in an unfamiliar or 'strange' situation these patterns of behaviour are observed; "Securely attached", "insecurely attached and avoidant", "insecurely attached and ambivalent," in addition to "insecure and disorganised attachment" (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Securely attached children display little distress unless the mother leaves and then actively greet the mother on return (Ainsworth & Bowlby; Stayton & Ainsworth, 1973) and in adulthood, do not attempt to avoid intimacy or have a fear of being abandoned (Smolewska & Dion, 2005). Insecure and anxious patterns of behaviour in childhood are marked by preoccupation with the parent, being upset when the parent leaves, but remaining uncomforted on their return and ambivalently fluctuating between desiring to be picked up and put down (Stayton & Ainsworth), Furthermore, in adulthood preoccupation with others, showing jealousy and fear of rejection is characteristic of this pattern (Smolewska & Dion). Lastly, the insecure-avoidant pattern of behaviour in childhood is characterised by failing to cry on separation from the parent and actively ignoring and avoiding the parent on return (Main, 1996). In adulthood, it is reflected in an avoidance of intimacy and showing excessive self-reliance (Smolewska & Dion). Insecure and disorganised attachment is marked by seeking

proximity to the parent in a disorganised way. For example, role-inverting where the child is punitive or caregiving towards the parent (Main).

It appears that "maternal responsiveness" sets the stage for later attachment behaviour. Mothers who are sensitive and emotionally available tend to have babies with secure attachment (Stayton & Ainsworth, 1973). In contrast, mothers who are rejecting tend to have children who are avoidantly organised. Furthermore, mothers who are inconsistent and unpredictable tend to have ambivalently attached children (Eagle, 1996).

Insecure attachments are often evident in individuals with personality disorders who are undergoing psychotherapy (Eagle, 1996). With a history of difficult relationships, these people are said to fear close relationships, however, they also have a strong desire for intimate relationships. This contradiction leaves them defensively avoidant of their attachment needs. This is consistent with Kohut's contact-shunning personality (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). In contrast, individuals with insecure attachment have been said to become preoccupied with their attachment needs (Eagle). They form intense attachments with others, often experiencing severe anxiety at the possibility of separation from their attachment objects. This is similar to Kohut's concept of selfobject hunger (Kohut & Wolf), that was discussed earlier.

Parental Bonding Instrument

In order to understand how perceived parenting experiences would endure into adulthood, Parker, Tupling, and Brown (1979) developed the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI). The instrument employs two scales, "parental care" and "parental overprotectiveness". The care dimension relates to affection, emotional warmth, empathy and closeness. The overprotectiveness dimension refers to control, protection, intrusion, excessive contact, infantilisation and prevention of independent

behaviour. These dimensions are reflected in orthogonal scales (care and overprotectiveness) that range from low to high. It is used to assess an adult's perceptions of their childhood bonding experiences. Parker et al. suggest that this instrument will enable the study of "optimal" and "distorted" parental bonding.

The PBI has been found to have good psychometric properties. Studies have reported internal consistency (alpha coefficients between .87 and .94), test-retest reliability (over a 20 year period; coefficients between .59 and .83), validity, concurrent validity, and predictive validity (Parker, 1989; Wilhelm, Niven, Parker, & Hadzi-Pavlovic, 2005). Moreover, measures of the PBI have been shown to positively correlate with perceived parenting experiences and actual parenting experiences (Parker; coefficients of between .70 and .71).

The PBI has lead to an increased understanding of the relationship between parental bonding in childhood and later mental health. Studies show that low "paternal care" is the strongest predictor of anxiety and depression in adolescents and low "maternal care" the strongest predictor of adolescent delinquency (Pedersen, 1994). This was supported in a study by Patton et al. who found that low parental care (maternal and paternal) appears to be associated with depression in adolescents (Patton, Coffey, Posterino, Carlin, & Wolfe, 2001). Research also indicates that "maternal rejection" appears to be related to every personality disorder and "paternal rejection" to avoidant personality disorder. In addition, "maternal overprotection" is associated with dependent personality disorder. Borderline personality shows strong association with both maternal and paternal rejection (Russ, Heim, & Westen, 2003).

In the United States, a national comorbidity study of non-institutionalised civilians (N = 5877), was conducted using the PBI. Lack of parental care was shown to be associated with a variety of mental disorders, including mood disorders, anxiety

disorders, addictive disorders and antisocial personality disorder (Enns, Cox, & Clara, 2002). The results indicated that mothering experiences were more strongly associated with psychopathology than were fathering experiences. Interestingly, paternal overprotection and authoritarianism appeared to reduce the risk of externalising disorders, such as substance use and antisocial personality disorder. However, maternal overprotection and "authoritarianism" appeared to increase the risk of these disorders. These results indicate that early parenting experiences have a complex relationship with adult psychopathology.

Section Summary

Attachment theory holds that early interactions with significant others have lasting implications for attachment patterns throughout the lifecycle. Research has identified several patterns of attachment, including secure, insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent and insecure-disorganised (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). These patterns are thought to reflect maternal responsiveness and sensitivity. The Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) measures perceived parental bonding, yielding the two dimensions of parental care and overprotectiveness (Parker, et al., 1979). The PBI has been used to investigate the relationship between early parental bonding and psychopathology. Low parental care has been associated with mood disorders, such as depression, anxiety, dysthymia, as well as, alcohol dependence, drug abuse, and drug dependence (Enns, et al., 2002; Patton, et al., 2001; Pedersen, 1994). Furthermore, parental rejection has been implicated with personality disorders (Russ, et al., 2003). The next section will discuss how early parenting experiences might be related to selfobject needs in adulthood.

Early Parental Bonding Experiences and Selfobject Needs

Theoretically, selfobject needs in adulthood appear inextricably linked to early parenting experiences. From Kohut's view, a child's experience of selfobjects, shape the self, leaving enduring characteristics, which can be observed in adulthood (Kohut, 1971). A parallel can be seen in attachment theory, which proposes that early bonding experiences with parents leave lasting signatures on the attachment behaviours in adulthood (Eagle, 1996).

Pistole (1995) has made theoretical links between attachment and narcissism, proposing that insecurely attached individuals are more vulnerable to developing pathological narcissism than their securely attached counterparts. Unlike the securely attached individual, who has a clear awareness of the separateness of others, the narcissistic individual perceives the other as part of the self, in this sense they are using an archaic form of selfobject (Pistole). Preoccupied insecure attachment is characterised by idealising the partner and sensitivity to separation, which is theoretically similar to Kohut's notion of the hunger for idealising selfobjects (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). In contrast, avoidant insecure attachment shows a characteristic avoidance of closeness and intimacy, by distancing oneself from others, as in the contact shunning personality described by Kohut (Kohut & Wolf). Empirical evidence appears to support these claims.

Parenting styles have been demonstrated to be related to narcissism among college students. "Permissive" parenting styles appear to be associated with immature grandiosity and "authoritarian styles" with immature idealisation (Watson, Little, & Biderman, 1992). Avoidant and anxious attachment in adults has been shown to be related to "covert narcissism" (Smolewska & Dion, 2005), whereby social ties are dismissed and exhibitionism is used as a defence (or selfobject need

avoidance) against early parental failure (Kohut, 1971). These findings are supported by a study linking attachment anxiety to covert narcissism in a non-clinical sample (Otway & Vignoles, 2006). Although the previous studies are consistent with theoretical propositions, they have not directly measured hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs. Rather, they have been inferred as a manifestation of narcissism.

To address this limitation, Banai et al. (2005) conducted a study to test the direct link of selfobject needs with attachment style in a group of university students. Hunger for all selfobjects (mirroring, idealisation and twinship), was associated with attachment anxiety and rejection sensitivity. Individuals with anxious attachment appeared to have an archaic hunger towards selfobjects, relying on them to satisfy unmet attachment needs. Furthermore, their results suggest that attachment avoidance and fear of intimacy is related to avoidance of selfobject need. By avoiding selfobject needs, an emotional distance from others is maintained, further suggesting this strategy may be used defensively. Banai et al. concluded that many of the concepts in self psychology and attachment theory overlap. Therefore, by providing empirical evidence they have contributed to integrating the two theories, and adding to the empirical base.

Limitations in Research and Current Knowledge

Research in this area has begun to provide empirical evidence supporting some of Kohut's concepts. Although Kohut's theories are based primarily on clinical observations, little controlled experimentation has been conducted to support this. The majority of research has concentrated on the concept of narcissism, and only recently have attempts been made to operationalise other concepts, such as grandiosity, idealisation and twinship.

Robbins and Patton (1985) have developed the Superiority and Goal

Instability scales to measure grandiosity and idealisation. These scales have been

used to investigate career decidedness among college students in addition to

retirement adjustment in aged workers (Robbins & Patton; Smith & Robbins, 1988).

However, individuals undergoing other stressful life transactions have been ignored.

Psychopathology and interpersonal behaviour patterns have been investigated with

clinical samples (Robbins, 1989; Robbins & Dupont, 1992). Nevertheless, research

has not tested Kohut's theory in the area of interpersonal behaviour patterns in a non-

clinical sample.

The Pseudoautonomy and Peer-group Dependence scales, reflecting

grandiosity and idealisation, (Lapan & Patton, 1986), have been used to differentiate

between hospitalised and non-hospitalised adolescents. However, studies have failed

to investigate Kohut's other concepts with this cohort or looked at how adolescents

may change throughout the course of their adolescence or in their transition into

adulthood.

The Social Connectedness and Social Assurance scales, developed by Lee

and Robbins (1995) to examine the twinship function have not been optimally

utilised. Lee et al. (2001) have used this measure to make links between twinship and

collective self-esteem, social avoidance, depression and hostility. However, there is

little research available to support or extend these findings.

Hunger and avoidance of selfobjects can be explored using the SONI, which

was developed by Banai et al. (2005). They have used this measure to examine

associations between selfobject needs, and attachment, narcissism, self-esteem, well-

being, depression, anxiety and hostility. Nevertheless, the SONI has not been used

outside of Israel, where it was developed and administered in Hebrew, making it culturally limited and in need of cross-cultural validation.

Attempts have also been made to link parental bonding experiences and self psychology. Investigations have been undertaken to explore the role of parenting and a child's later development of narcissism (Otway & Vignoles, 2006; Smolewska & Dion, 2005; Watson, et al, 1992). Furthermore, hunger and avoidance of selfobjects have examined parenting patterns (Banai, et al., 2005). Although this is a promising line of inquiry, researchers have yet to link early parental bonding experiences with later selfobject needs.

Recommended Areas for Further Study

To address these gaps in the existing body of literature, several recommendations are offered. Future studies should focus on concepts in Kohut's theory other than narcissism. It is suggested that empirical investigations examine Kohut's theory in the areas of grandiosity, idealisation and twinship, in addition to hunger and avoidance of selfobjects.

Recently, researchers have focused on these areas, but this is still a limited endeavour and the diversity of samples that have been employed, has been restricted. To gain a greater understanding of these concepts, it is recommended that different cohorts be utilised to increase the generalisability of their results. Specifically, it is recommended that the relationship between grandiosity and idealisation, in regard to interpersonal behaviour be investigated in non-clinical samples and the general adult population. Furthermore, it would be useful to explore the twinship function in those with personality disorders. This would enhance psychology's understanding of selfobject needs in this cohort by extending on studies that have examined grandiosity and idealisation.

In regard to the study of adolescents, the concepts of grandiosity and idealisation, as measured using the Pseudoautonomy and Peer-group Dependence scales, could be extended. It would be interesting to investigate the changes in grandiosity and idealisation over the course of adolescence or as adolescents transition into adulthood. Longitudinal studies may be of benefit to explore developmental changes. In addition, it would be useful to explore the twinship function in this cohort.

Currently, the SONI has only been administered in Hebrew with an Israeli sample (Banai et al., 2005). Therefore, it also needs to be normed with other groups. Firstly, it is important to use the English version of the scale with participants outside of Israel. Secondly, selfobject needs and their relationship to psychopathology may yield valuable results. Furthermore, it may be useful to investigate links between adult selfobject needs and childhood parental bonding experiences. This may offer researchers insight into whether early childhood bonding experiences are related to the way adults interact with significant others.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed Kohut's theory of self psychology and the empirical evidence surrounding it. Kohut based his theory on clinical observations he made with clients undergoing psychotherapy. Empirical evidence supported Kohut's concepts, but they focused primarily on narcissism, neglecting other important areas. Attempts have been made to investigate the concepts of grandiosity, idealisation and twinship, in addition to hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs.

The importance of understanding the impact of early experiences with parents on the development of the child has been demonstrated throughout the paper. Early experiences of parenting and bonding leave enduring imprints on the adult psyche

and later psychological well-being. It is therefore imperative that psychology continues these investigations, specifically adult selfobject needs and early bonding experiences, giving further understanding to the complex nature of the consequences of these early interactions.

By addressing the gaps and limitations in the body of knowledge in this area, psychologists will gain an enhanced understanding through the integration of self psychology and attachment theory. This can be used to enhance existing programs or develop new interventions targeting parenting techniques, which shall permeate society beyond the area of psychology. Furthermore, it may influence the treatment of those individuals who are having enduring problems, which stem from their early childhood interactions with parents and significant others.

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Running head: SELFOBJECT NEEDS AND PARENTAL BONDING

Exploring the Relationship Between Selfobject Needs and Parental Bonding.

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Edith Cowan University.

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"I declare that this written assignment is my own work and does not include:

(i) material from published sources used without proper acknowledgement; or

(ii) material copied from the work of other students."

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Abstract

Self psychology is a psychoanalytic theory proposing that other people in an individual's environment provide a psychological function to help them maintain a healthy sense of self. The present study examined the relationship between an individual's childhood bonding experiences with their mother and how they related to others in adulthood. It employed a correlation and regression approach to investigate early parental bonding experiences and later selfobject needs. The Parental Bonding Instrument and the Selfobject Needs Inventory were administered to 264 undergraduate university students at Edith Cowan University. The results indicated that early parental bonding experiences were associated with later selfobject needs. Level of maternal care experienced in childhood was associated with avoidance of idealisation and twinship experiences in adulthood. This study has provided much needed empirical support for the theory of self psychology and given psychologists a greater understanding of the enduring nature of an individual's early parental bonding experiences.

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Exploring the Relationship Between Selfobject Needs and Parental Bonding.

The study of the "self" is a prominent theme in psychology (E. Kahn, 1985; Van Schoor, 1992). In psychoanalytic theory, the study of the self has been emphasised by the school known as *Self Psychology*. Heinz Kohut was the founder of self psychology, and this school continues to influence the practice of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy (Bacal & Newman, 1990). According to Kohut's theory, the self is a central organising process, which manages the individual's subjective experience (Banai, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2005; Kohut, 1971; 1977; 1984). In psychoanalytic theory a person is referred to as an "object", and unless otherwise specified when this term is employed it is used to refer to persons other than the subject. Kohut refers to objects that serve a psychological function for an individual as "selfobjects", more correctly, objects serve selfobject functions (Kohut, 1968). The individual experiences the selfobject as being part of themselves by providing an intrapsychic function (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). The developing self requires empathic responses from the selfobjects (Kohut, 1977), and this role is usually filled by a child's parents or significant others (Banai, et al., 2005). According to Kohut, early selfobject experiences provide the foundation from which all future relationships are developed (Kohut, 1977).

Self psychology emphasises the importance of the early interactions that occur between the parent and the child. These interactions form the basis of the development of self. Attachment theory is another area of psychology that emphasises the importance of these early interactions (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). These co-related theories enjoy some theoretical overlap regarding the enduring influence of interactions between parent and child, as they influence the quality of relatedness in adulthood. Attachment theory also proposes that there are distinct

patterns of attachment that reflect the manner in which a parent responds to their child (Ainsworth & Bowlby). Attachment behaviour exhibited by adults, shows similar patterns, which influence interpersonal interactions (Smolewska & Dion, 2005). In this manner, both theories emphasise a developmental perspective. In contrast to self psychology, attachment theory enjoys substantial empirical support. Therefore, to understand the theoretical overlap of these theories, it is necessary to employ an empirical investigation of this overlap. The next section will discuss self psychology.

Self Psychology and Selfobject Needs

Self psychology developed as a result of the perceived deficiencies of Freudian drive theory. Freudian drive theory attempted to explain the conflict between the expression of psychological drives and the environmental limitations on behaviour (Kohut, 1977; St Clair, 1986). Kohut (1977) described this theoretical stance as unsatisfactory due to its inability to explain and effectively treat a variety of clinical phenomenon (E. Kahn, 1985). This perceived deficiency lead Kohut to develop the theory of self psychology. Self psychology understood that empathic interactions provide the basis for developing psychological health and maturity (Banai, et al., 2005). Kohut's theory emerged from the clinical observations he made while conducting psychoanalysis (Kohut, 1966; 1971).

In the self psychological framework, a healthy self (also known as a "cohesive self"), is maintained by the provision of adequate and empathic selfobject functions (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). These interactions facilitate the development of the self along three dimensions, which Kohut calls the "tripartite self" (Kohut, 1984). The interactions of these dimensions eventually become integrated to form the

mature, cohesive self which functions as an integrated whole (Kohut, 1968; Kohut & Wolf).

The tripartite self consists of the dimensions of "grandiosity", "idealisation" and "twinship" (Kohut, 1984). In Kohut's view, the grandiosity ("mirroring") axis refers to the child's belief of themselves as perfect, whereby all imperfections are experienced as lying outside the self (Siegel, 1996; St Clair, 1986). The "idealised parent imago" (idealisation) results in perfection residing outside the self in another (Kohut, 1977). Paradoxically, the child experiences the other as part of themselves (St Clair). Finally, the connectedness/twinship dimension consists of feelings of belonging, and feelings of acceptance and similarity to others (Banai, et al., 2005).

In self psychology the term *selfobject* is used to denote one of two things. Firstly, *selfobject* refers to a separate *person* who provides one or more of the previously mentioned selfobject functions (mirroring, idealisation and twinship). Secondly, the term *selfobject* is also employed to refer explicitly to the *functions* provide *by* the other, that have previously been described (mirroring, idealisation and twinship). Therefore, both selfobjects and selfobject functions are vital for psychological survival and more importantly, development (Teicholz, 1999). The provision of adequate selfobject function results in the development of a cohesive self, which in turn facilitates both self and affect regulation (Schore, 2003a, 2003b).

Individuals require empathic selfobjects as external sources of self-regulation. When these needs cannot be wholly satisfied internally, external sources are sought out through interpersonal relationships (Banai, et al., 2005; Kohut, 1977). "Selfobject needs" are experienced and met through relations with others. Selfobject functions are needed by each of the three dimensions of the "tripolar" self (mirroring, ideal parent imago and twinship) (Kohut, 1984).

The mirroring function serves to fill the child's need to be admired and approved of (Kohut, 1977; Kohut & Wolf, 1978). The child attempts to evoke attention from others by displaying their narcissistic need for perfection and power, which in turn sees all imperfection originating outside the self (Kohut, 1968). The mirroring selfobject will respond in an empathic manner by affirming and accepting this aspect of the child's self (Kohut, 1977).

When a selfobject is employed for its idealising function, the child is idealising and admiring their qualities. The idealised parent imago is a target for the child's idealisation, (Kohut, 1968; Kohut & Wolf, 1978), and the child seeks to merge with the selfobject (Siegel, 1996). All perfection and power is externalised in the selfobject, however the child seeks union with the source of this perfection and power by merging with it (Kohut, 1977; Kohut & Wolf, 1978). An empathically responsive selfobject understands this need, and will allow this idealisation and merger (Kohut, 1977).

Twinship refers to a person's need to experience connectedness with similar or like others. Kohut proposed that people need to feel a sense of sameness with others, and to be accepted by those that are experienced as similar to ourselves (Banai, et al., 2005). People like to share experiences, interests and activities, which fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness (Teicholz, 1999).

Unlike the "archaic self" of the child, which relies primarily on external sources of self regulation, the "mature" self relies on selfobjects in a less intense and urgent sense (Kohut, 1971; 1984). The archaic self experiences the selfobject as cognitively indistinguishable from themselves. In contrast, the mature self continues to need selfobjects for its own sustenance, however there is a clear awareness of the separateness of others (E. Kahn, 1985). In this sense, selfobjects are required

throughout the lifespan, nevertheless, the nature of the selfobject relationship changes as the self develops and matures (Kohut, 1984).

Archaic forms of selfobject relations occur not only in childhood, but also in adults with psychological illness (Kohut, 1977). Adults who use selfobjects for archaic purposes beyond childhood, may be experiencing psychological disorders or enduring periods of heightened stress (Kohut, 1977; 1984). In adulthood, these archaic needs express themselves in one of two ways. Kohut identified these as "hunger" for selfobjects or "avoidance" of selfobject needs (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). When selfobjects fail to respond in an empathic manner, a sense of self-cohesion does not develop (Kohut, 1971). The psychological structure giving the child the ability to self-sooth and regulate self-esteem, incompletely develops leaving the adult with archaic selfobject needs in the form of hunger or avoidance (Kohut, 1971).

Hunger for selfobjects is expressed as a continuous search for selfobjects to meet the individual's unmet childhood needs. Individuals who have a hunger for selfobjects make compulsive attempts to obtain love and support from external sources (Banai, et al., 2005; E. Kahn, 1985). Selfobject functions are used for the purpose of substituting missing segments of psychological structure in an attempt to maintain a cohesive self (Kohut, 1971). In this manner, an individual who has a hunger for selfobjects, forms intense attachments to others and may become dependent upon them in order to fill a psychological void within the self (Cohler & Galatzer-levy, 1992; Kohut).

In contrast, denial of selfobject needs is used as a psychological barrier to avoid tension and anxiety provoking selfobject experiences (Banai, et al., 2005). When the environment is experienced as hostile, defensive avoidance is used to protect against unpleasant emotions relating to selfobject relations (E. Kahn, 1985).

The unempathic responses of childhood selfobjects can lead individuals to avoid situations and relationships where they may become the centre of attention. External sources are unable to provide the individual with enjoyment (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). Avoidance of selfobject needs and hunger for selfobjects are the mechanisms an individual uses to cope with the unempathic responses of their childhood selfobjects (Kohut & Wolf, 1978).

There is limited empirical support for self psychological principles. The available empirical work concerning self psychology has focussed on Kohut's theory of narcissism, and neglected the remainder of his theoretical propositions. Robbins and Patton (1985) operationalised the concepts of grandiosity and idealisation in their Superiority and Goal Instability scales. These scales have been used to examine career decidedness and pursuit of career plans in college students, retirement adjustment (Smith & Robbins, 1988), retirees quality of leisure and life satisfaction (Robbins, Lee, & Wan, 1994), personality style and clinical syndromes (Robbins, 1989), and interpersonal behaviour patterns (Robbins & Dupont, 1992).

Grandiosity and idealisation have also been investigated with adolescents, utilising the Psuedoautonomy and Peer-Group Dependence scales (Lapan & Patton, 1986). The study showed that these scales could be used to differentiate between hospitalised and non-hospitalised adolescents. To investigate Kohut's concept of twinship, Lee and Robbins (1995) developed the Social Connectedness scale and the Social Assurance scale. These scales were used to investigate social avoidance, sociability and social discomfort (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001).

These studies have provided some support for Kohut's concepts of grandiosity, idealisation and twinship. Banai et al. (2005) have elaborated this by examining selfobject needs in relation to hunger and avoidance of selfobject

experiences with Israeli university students. Using a factor analysis they developed a measure called the Selfobject Needs Inventory (SONI). The SONI was developed with five scales; Hunger for Mirroring, Hunger for Idealisation, and Hunger for Twinship, as well as Avoidance of Mirroring and Avoidance of Idealisation/Twinship. They could not distinguish between avoidance of idealisation and twinship, therefore it was accepted as a single scale.

In a series of experiments Banai et al. (2005) explored a range of theoretical propositions using the SONI. They investigated the relationship between selfobject needs and attachment, fear of intimacy and rejection sensitivity. This will be discussed in detail in a later section. They also examined Narcissistic Personality, self-esteem, emotional maladjustment, self-cohesiveness, self-differentiation and learned helplessness. This series of studies have given psychologists a greater understanding of the role of selfobject needs in psychological functioning and generally support Kohut's theory.

Early Parental Bonding Experiences

Self psychology emphasises the importance of sensitive and attuned relatedness in the relationship between parent and infant. An important, and related empirically-based theory that equally emphasises the importance of the quality of parent-infant relatedness is attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Attachment theory is a large and diverse theory that has resulted in a variety of theoretical developments. One of the important developments is the theory of parental bonding (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979).

The early bonding experience between parent and child, is considered to have an enduring impact on the child's relationships into adulthood (Smolewska & Dion, 2005; Stayton & Ainsworth, 1973). In order to understand how perceived parenting

experiences would endure into adulthood, Parker, et al. (1979) developed the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI). The instrument employs two scales, "Parental Care" and "Parental Overprotection". The care dimension relates to affection, emotional warmth, empathy and closeness. The overprotection dimension refers to control, overprotection, intrusion, excessive contact, infantilisation and prevention of independent behaviour. These dimensions are represented by orthogonal scales (Care and Overprotection) that range from low to high. It is used to assess an adult's perceptions of their childhood bonding experiences. Parker et al. suggest that this instrument will enable the study of "optimal" and "distorted" parental bonding. This is achieved by using the scores on both dimensions to allocate the individual into one of four parenting quadrants dependent on whether they experienced high or low care and overprotection; Affectionate Constraint, Optimal Parenting, Affectionless Control and Neglectful Parenting.

The PBI has been employed in numerous studies and has lead to an increased understanding of the relationship between parental bonding in childhood and later mental health. Poor levels of parental care have been linked with anxiety (Enns, Cox, & Clara, 2002; Pedersen, 1994), adolescent delinquency (Pedersen), depression and other mood disorders (Enns, et al.; Patton, Coffey, Posterino, Carlin, & Wolfe, 2001; Pedersen), personality disorders (Enns, et al.; Russ, Heim, & Westen, 2003) and addictive disorders (Enns, et al.). Parental overprotection has also been implicated in psychological illness. Maternal overprotection appears to increase the risk of externalising disorders, in contrast to paternal overprotection which seems to reduce the risk of these disorders (Enns, et al.).

Early Parental Bonding Experiences and Selfobject Needs

Theoretically, selfobject needs in adulthood are inextricably linked to an individual's early parenting experiences. From Kohut's view, a child's experience of selfobjects, shapes the self, and leaves enduring characteristics which can be observed in adulthood (Kohut, 1971). A parallel can be seen in attachment theory, and more specifically parental bonding theory, which proposes that early bonding experiences with parents leaves lasting signatures on the attachment behaviours in adulthood (Eagle, 1996).

Pistole (1995) has theoretically linked attachment and the theory of narcissism, proposing that insecurely attached individuals are more vulnerable to developing a pathological form of narcissism than their securely attached counterparts. Unlike the securely attached individual, who has a clear awareness of the separateness of others, the narcissistic individual perceives the other as part of the self, in this sense they are experiencing an archaic form of selfobject relatedness (Pistole). Empirical evidence appears to support these claims (Otway & Vignoles, 2006; Smolewska & Dion, 2005; Watson, Little, & Biderman, 1992). Although the previous studies are consistent with these theoretical propositions, they have not directly measured hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs. Rather, they have been inferred as a manifestation of narcissism.

To address this limitation, Banai et al. (2005) conducted a study to test the direct link of selfobject needs with attachment style in a group of university students. The results revealed that the stronger a person's hunger for selfobjects, the higher was their "attachment anxiety" and "rejection sensitivity". Individuals with anxious attachments appeared to have an archaic hunger for selfobjects, relying on them to satisfy unmet attachment needs. Furthermore, the results suggest that "attachment

avoidance" and "fear of intimacy" is related to avoidance of selfobject needs. The more they reported avoidance of selfobjects needs the higher was their attachment avoidance and fear of intimacy. By avoiding selfobject needs, an emotional distance from others is maintained, suggesting this strategy may be used defensively. Banai et al. concluded that many of the concepts in self psychology and attachment theory overlap. Therefore, the provision of empirical evidence has contributed to integrating the two theories, and adding to the empirical base.

Research in this area has provided empirical evidence supporting some of Kohut's concepts. Although Kohut's theories are based primarily on clinical observations (1971), little controlled experimentation has been conducted. The available research has concentrated on the concept of narcissism, and only recently have attempts been made to operationalise other concepts, such as grandiosity, idealisation and twinship, in addition to hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs (with the SONI). Nevertheless, the SONI (Banai, et al., 2005) has not been used outside of Israel, where it was developed and administered in Hebrew. Therefore it is culturally limited and in need of cross-cultural validation. Furthermore, although parenting patterns have been linked to hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs, researchers have yet to link early parental bonding experiences with later selfobject needs.

To address these limitations, the present study aims to employ an English-language-version of the SONI (Banai, et al., 2005) with an Australian sample, and explore the relationship between early parental bonding experiences, and hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs in adulthood. This research aims to answer the following questions: (a) to what extent are hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs in adulthood related to perceptions of early parental bonding experiences? (b) are

hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs predictive of early parental bonding experiences? (c) how are hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs related to the style of parental bonding an individual experiences? Based on these theoretical propositions, it is hypothesised that selfobject needs in adulthood will be significantly associated with early parental bonding experiences. Furthermore, it is expected that selfobject needs will be predictive of parental bonding experiences.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 264 undergraduate students (53 males and 211 females) from the Computing, Health and Sciences Faculty, at the Joondalup campus of Edith Cowan University. The age of the participants ranged from 17 to 57 years ($M = 26.82$, $SD = 9.41$). Participation was voluntary and no tangible rewards were offered to participants. Participants completed the GHQ-12 (Goldberg, 1972) as part of the study. Initially, participants with GHQ scores of greater than 20 were to be removed from the study to ensure that the sample of participants was normative, in contrast to a sub-clinical population. However, only 24 participants yielded a GHQ score over 20 which is expected of a normal population sample (Korten & Henderson, 2000). Therefore these participants were included in the study.

Design

The study employed a correlational within subjects design and utilised a regression approach to assess the predictability of the PBI dimensions (Parker, et al., 1979) from the SONI dimensions (Banai, et al., 2005). Two multiple regressions were conducted with the dimensions of Care and Overprotection as criteria and Hunger for Mirroring, Idealisation and Twinship Selfobjects and Avoidance of Mirroring and Idealisation/Twinship as predictors. Bivariate correlations were

conducted to assess the relationships between the PBI dimensions and SONI

dimensions within the Affectionate Constraint, Optimal Parenting, Affectionless

Control and Neglectful Parenting quadrants.

Measures

The Selfobjects Needs Inventory (SONI; Banai, et al., 2005) was used to

measure hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs. The SONI is a self-report

questionnaire, consisting of 38 items on a 7-point scale ranging from (1) *not at all*, to

(7) *very much*, where participants are asked whether that statement is self-

descriptive. For example, 'I feel better when I and someone close to me share similar

feelings to other people' (Hunger for Twinship). Hunger for selfobjects is tapped

through 21 items and the remaining 17 items tap avoidance of selfobjects. (See

appendix A).

The SONI has demonstrated reliability and validity in past studies (Banai, et

al.). According to Banai et al., the SONI has high internal consistency and stability

over a two month period (Cronbach's αs ranging from .84 to .87 across the scales).

Furthermore, they reported the SONI has concurrent validity when compared with

the Superiority ($\alpha = .75$) and Goal Instability ($\alpha = .74$) scales (Robbins & Patton,

1985) and the Social Connectedness scale ($\alpha = .78$) (Lee & Robbins, 1995).

The Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI; Parker, 1979) was used to measure

early experiences of parental bonding. The PBI is a self-report measure of

retrospective perceptions regarding the participants' experiences of their parents up

until the age of 16 years (Parker, 1979). Previous studies have reported the reliability

and validity of the PBI. Internal consistency (alpha coefficients between 0.87 and

0.94), test-retest reliability over a 20 year period (coefficients between 0.59 and

0.83), current validity and predictive validity have been reported (Mackinnon,

Henderson, Scott, & Duncan-Jones, 1989, Parker, 1989; Wilhelm, Niven, Parker, &

Hadzi-Pavlovic, 2005). (See appendix B)

The PBI consists of two questionnaires with twenty five items, where

responses are made on a four point scale, rated from (0) *very like* to (3) *very unlike*.

For example, my mother 'Enjoyed talking things over with me'. The PBI consists of

two questionnaires, one rating the perceptions of mother and the other of father. The

items yield scores on two dimensions, reflecting Care and Control/Over-

Protectiveness. It was anticipated that participants were more likely to have one

enduring mother figure in their childhood, in contrast to the likelihood that a

significant proportion of respondents would have experiences of multiple father

figures. Therefore, for the purpose of this study only the mother questionnaire was

employed. In addition, some participants may have belonged to a single-parent

family, where they did not have the experience of bonding with a father figure. By

employing only the mother form, this controlled for the case of empty cells.

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12, Goldberg, 1972) is a 12 item

self-report questionnaire used to assess psychiatric *caseness*. Participants are asked to

compare their usual state of health with their present state of health in the preceding

weeks. Each item is rated on a four point scale to detect minor psychiatric cases. For

example, 'have you recently "felt that you are playing a useful part of things"'. The

GHQ-12 is reported to be a reliable and valid measure for assessing psychiatric

symptoms (sub-clinical states) when utilized in normal population samples (Hardy,

Shapiro, Haynes, & Rick 1999; Pevalin, 2000). (See appendix C)

Procedure

After gaining ethics approval for the research by the Faculty of Computing,

Health and Sciences, Edith Cowan University, participants were recruited through

various methods including visiting lectures where the participants filled out the

questionnaires, visiting tutorials and handing out questionnaires to be picked up at a

later time, through the participant register at the School of Psychology, and emails to

students completing units through the Faculty of Computing, Health and Sciences.

Participation in the research was voluntary, and after reading a letter

regarding the research, and obtaining consent, participants were asked to fill in the

three questionnaires, the SONI, the PBI and the GHQ. Completion of the

questionnaires took approximately 15 minutes. Of the 278 questionnaires that were

returned 14 were discarded because they were incomplete. This left 264 usable

questionnaires for the data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analysed with SPSS Version 14. To examine the

relationship between participants' early parenting experiences (scores on the PBI;

Care and Overprotection) and selfobject needs (scores on the SONI; Need for

Mirroring, Need for Idealisation, Need for Twinship, Avoidance of Mirroring,

Avoidance of Idealisation/Twinship), bivariate correlations (Tabachnick & Fidell,

2001) were conducted.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted between the two dimensions of

the PBI and the five dimensions of the SONI. Scores on the SONI were employed as

predictor variables and PBI scores were criterion variables. This allowed exploration

of early parenting experiences as predictors of adult selfobject needs.

Participant scores on the PBI were separated into one of four parenting

quadrants; Affectionate Constraint, Optimal Parenting, Affectionless Control and

Neglectful Parenting. Scores of greater than 27 on the Care dimension are considered

high and scores greater than 13.5 on the Overprotection dimension, are considered

high. Affectionate constraint reflects high care and high overprotection. Optimal

Parenting reflects high care and low over protection. Affectionless Control reflects

low care and high overprotection. Neglectful Parenting reflects low care and low

overprotection. After participants were allocated into one of these four quadrants,

correlations between PBI dimensions and SONI scores were conducted within each

quadrant.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Prior to the analysis, the data were examined for accuracy, missing values

and normality. In the case of missing values, data were replaced by the series mean, a

conservative method recommended by (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Using

Mahalanobis distance with p < .001, one case was identified as a multivariate outlier

and deleted. Five univariate outliers were detected and as it was assumed that

participants' responses reflected real processes in the populations sampled and

because the magnitude of responses were constraint by the measures' scales,

univariate outliers were not adjusted.

To answer hypothesis (a), bivariate correlations between the PBI dimensions

(Care and Overprotection) and the SONI dimensions (Need for Mirroring, Need for

Idealisation, Need for Twinship, Avoidance of Mirroring, and Avoidance of

Idealisation/Twinship) were conducted. Overprotection was significantly correlated

with Avoidance of Idealisation/Twinship (r = .15). Care was significantly correlated

with Hunger for Twinship (r = .18). No other correlations achieved significance.

Correlation coefficients are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlations between the dimensions of the PBI and the SONI

PBI / SONI	Hunger for Mirroring	Hunger for Idealisation	Hunger for Twinship	Avoidance of Mirroring	Avoidance of Idealisation/ Twinship
Overprotection	-.03	.02	-.01	.06	.15(*)
Care	.02	.00	.18(**)	.04	.00

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

To answer question (b), multiple regressions were conducted to assess the predictability of the PBI scales of Care and Overprotection from the SONI dimensions. Scores on the SONI scales were the predictor variables. Hunger for Twinship alone accounted for 17.8 % of the variance for Care, $F(1, 262) = 8.56$, $p = .00$. Avoidance of Idealisation/Twinship alone accounted for 15 % of the variance of Overprotection, $F(1, 262) = 6.02$, $p = .02$.

To answer question (c), bivariate correlations were conducted between the dimensions of the PBI and the SONI scales for each quadrant of parental bonding; Affectionate Constraint, Optimal Parenting, Affectionless Control and Neglectful Parenting. The Affectionate Constraint and the Optimal Parenting quadrants yielded no significant correlations. For the Affectionless Control quadrant (high overprotection and low care), Care was significantly correlated with Avoidance of Idealisation/Twinship, ($r = .28$). For the Neglectful Parenting quadrant (low care and low overprotection), Overprotection was significantly correlated with Avoidance of Idealisation/Twinship, ($r = .42$). Correlation coefficients are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlations between PBI dimensions and SONI dimensions for parental bonding quadrants

Quadrant	SONI/PBI	Care	Overprotection
Affectionate Constraint (High Care and High Overprotection)	Hunger for Mirroring	.03	.08
	Hunger for Idealisation	.02	-.07
	Hunger for Twinship	.08	.07
	Avoidance of Mirroring	.00	-.09
	Avoidance of Idealisation / Twinship	-.02	-.12
Optimal Parenting (High Care and Low Overprotection)	Hunger for Mirroring	-.05	-.05
	Hunger for Idealisation	-.04	.08
	Hunger for Twinship	-.02	.03
	Avoidance of Mirroring	-.04	.08
	Avoidance of Idealisation / Twinship	.00	.03
Affectionless Control (Low Care and High Overprotection)	Hunger for Mirroring	.17	.02
	Hunger for Idealisation	-.05	.17
	Hunger for Twinship	.15	.08
	Avoidance of Mirroring	.16	.18
	Avoidance of Idealisation / Twinship	.28(*)	.07
Neglectful Parenting (Low Care and Low Overprotection)	Hunger for Mirroring	-.06	.06
	Hunger for Idealisation	-.10	-.23
	Hunger for Twinship	.01	.00
	Avoidance of Mirroring	-.16	-.21
	Avoidance of Idealisation / Twinship	.07	.42(**)

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Discussion

The current study explored the relationship between hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs and early experiences of parental bonding. The hypothesis that predicted that selfobject needs in adulthood are associated with parental bonding experiences was supported by the results.

The results indicate that early parental bonding experiences are related to hunger for twinship, and avoidance of idealisation and twinship in adulthood. This is evident by the significant relationship between overprotection and avoidance of idealisation/twinship, and the significant relationship between care and hunger for twinship. In contrast to the hypothesis, hunger for mirroring, hunger for idealisation

and avoidance of mirroring were not related to early parental bonding experiences. Furthermore, hunger for twinship alone was a significant predictor of maternal care and avoidance of idealisation/twinship alone was a significant predictor of maternal overprotection.

This is not consistent with previous research using the SONI (Banai, et al., 2005). The results of past studies revealed that hunger for selfobjects needs (mirroring, idealisation and twinship) were associated with attachment anxiety and rejection sensitivity. Avoidance of selfobject needs (mirroring and idealisation/twinship) were associated with attachment avoidance and fear of intimacy. Research using the PBI (Parker, et al., 1979) and the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985) has shown that these two measures yield comparable attachment information (Manassis, Owens, Adams, West, & Sheldon-Keller, 1999; van IJzendoorn, Kranenburg, Zwart-Woudstra, van Busschbach, & Lambermon, 1991). Although Banai, et al. used different measures (for example the AAI) to the current study, the similarity between the constructs (AAI and PBI) would have suggested that hunger and avoidance of all selfobjects needs would be related to care and overprotection on the PBI (Parker, et al., 1979). However this was not the case.

Selfobject Needs and Self Development

Kohut's (1984) theory clearly states that selfobject relations are needed throughout the lifespan, however as the self matures they are needed in less intensity. Beyond childhood, Kohut (1978; 1984) states that during the period of adolescence, which is marked by changing social expectations, the self also undergoes transformation. In this context, peer relationships are vital as they serve an "alter-ego" or a twinship function. The adolescent's self relies on the function provided by

the peer group for self cohesion. Kohut explains that the nuclear self undergoes reformation due to new internal or external factors.

This notion of repeated self-reformation during the transitions of adulthood may help explain the results of the current study. In Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, the stage of "young adulthood" is reflected in a crisis between "intimacy and isolation" (S. Kahn, Zimmerman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Getzels, 1985). It is a time when the individual is usually establishing an independent lifestyle, moving into a career, establishing partnerships and an identity is being consolidated (Krauss Whitbourne & Tesch, 1985). Intimacy involves making commitments to affiliations, partnerships and friendships (Erikson, 1963). Similarly, the twinship function involves the need to be accepted by others who are experienced as similar. The average age of the current sample places the majority of participants in Erikson's stage of young adulthood. It is therefore understandable that the twinship need is predominant in this sample. Although Kohut does not state explicitly that the period of young adulthood is a period of transition for the self reactivating strong twinship needs, however, consideration of other theories allows for a more comprehensive understanding.

This may also account for the lack of relationship between mirroring and idealisation needs and the PBI dimensions (Parker, et al., 1979). Hunger for mirroring and idealisation, and avoidance of mirroring may not be as developmentally important at the stage of young adulthood. Kohut (Kohut & Wolf, 1978) argues that adolescence is a time when strong selfobject needs are reactivated by the fear of *self-disintegration*. Considering Erikson's crisis of "identity versus role confusion" during adolescence (Erikson, 1963), it is understandable that the selfobject needs of mirroring, idealisation, and twinship are important for the

developing self. However, by young adulthood, most individuals have overcome the identity crisis and have moved on to deal with the developmental crisis of intimacy. Therefore, issues surrounding twinship are still prominent, however, the need for mirroring and idealisation has begun to wain.

When considering developmental issues, the discrepancy between the current results and those of Banai, et al. (2005) become clearer. The average age of the current sample was 27-years-old, which is approximately 10 years after the beginning of the young adulthood stage (Erikson, 1963). In contrast, the median age in Banai, et al.'s sample is 22, approximately four-to-five years after the beginning of young adulthood. Developmentally, the participants from the current sample have had twice the time and opportunities to navigate through this stage and are now squarely focused on the intimacy crisis (Erikson). Whereas, those in Banai, et al.'s sample, are in the beginning phase of this stage, which involves moving past residual issues from the previous stage. This would explain the differences in selfobject needs between the two studies. This proposition is consistent with results from a study of psychosocial development. Young adults who were further along this stage of development, in regard to age, were more mature in the identity and intimacy measures than their younger counterparts (Krauss Whitbourne & Tesch, 1985).

Patterns of Parental Bonding

When correlations were run within the parenting quadrants, an interesting pattern emerged. The quadrants that reflected high levels of care (Affectionate Constraint and Optimal Parenting) yielded no significant relationships between hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs. However, the quadrants that reflected low levels of care (Affectionless Control and Neglectful Parenting) yielded a significant relationship with avoidance of idealisation and twinship.

Kohut (1984) explains the concepts of a mature or cohesive self as the result of experiencing empathic selfobjects in childhood. The mature self has a less intensive hunger and avoidance for selfobjects. This proposition has been supported by the current study. The Care dimension of the PBI (Parker, et al., 1979) reflects the extent an individual experiences affection, emotional warmth, empathy and closeness with a parent. Individuals that experienced high levels of care, as reflected in the Affectionate Constraint and Optimal Parenting quadrants, did not show archaic hunger or avoidance of selfobjects. As the SONI (Banai, et al., 2005) is sensitive to deficiencies in selfobject functioning, the correlation of almost zero between the SONI dimensions and care, reflects the mature functioning of a cohesive self. This supports Kohut's proposition that empathic selfobjects are needed for the development of a cohesive self.

Individuals experiencing low levels of care (such as those in the Affectionless Control and Neglectful Parenting quadrants), did not experience their mother as empathic. This is reflected in their archaic avoidance of selfobject needs. Further supporting Kohut's (1977; 1978; 1984) assertion regarding the need for empathic selfobjects.

Low Parental Care

To reiterate, according to Erikson (1963) the developmental task during the period of young adulthood reflects the crisis of intimacy versus isolation. Individuals who experienced a lack of maternal care in childhood, rely on an archaic selfobject need for twinship during this period. Furthermore, the pattern of parenting experienced during childhood is associated with how the young adult deals with this crisis. For those who reported experiencing neglectful parenting , the more overprotection they experienced, the more avoidant they were of idealisation and

twinship. For those who experienced affectionless control, the more care they experienced the more avoidant of idealisation and twinship they were. These results suggest that in an otherwise healthy sample of adults, individuals who experienced low levels of maternal care had more difficulty with the developmental task of intimacy.

The results of this study indicate that low levels of maternal care are related to avoidance of idealisation and twinship in adulthood. This is consistent with Kohut's concept of empathic failure. These individuals have developed a defensive and protective psychological barrier against experiencing further empathic failure of selfobjects. Kohut (Kohut & Wolf, 1978) describes the "contact-shunning personality" who avoids social contact and become socially isolated in order to protect themselves. They have constricted social relationships to maintain emotional distance from others (Banai, et al., 2005). Because they avoid closeness and intimacy, they have problems forming and maintaining close relationships (Banai, et al.; Pistole, 1995). This would explain why they avoid the selfobject needs of idealisation and twinship.

These findings are consistent with those of previous studies. In Banai, et al.'s (2005) study, individuals who had avoidance of idealisation and twinship showed patterns of attachment that indicated attachment anxiety and fear of intimacy. In another study, Watson, Little and Biderman (1992) found that "parental authoritarianism" (low care and high control) was associated with deficiencies in the idealisation process, comparable to the archaic avoidance of idealisation shown in the present study.

According to self psychology, the selfobjects' failure to provide an empathic response to idealisation in the form of low parental care, leaves the individual prone

to loss of self cohesion. This leads the person to develop compensatory strategies to prevent the loss of self-cohesion. This may manifest itself as a tendency to seek affect and self-regulation from external sources (Kohut, 1971). Often in the form of drugs, food, sexual excitement or aggressive attacks, as a way to "shore" up their psychological structure (E. Kahn, 1985; Kohut). These activities provide the soothing function, that the failed childhood selfobject could not, as an attempt to deal with feelings of depression and inner emptiness (E. Kahn).

Parallels can be seen in studies of adults and adolescents with mental illness. Lack of maternal care has been shown to be associated with various forms of psychopathology such as mood disorders (anxiety, depression, dysthymia, post traumatic stress disorder; Enns, et al., 2002; Patton, et al., 2001; Pedersen, 1994), panic disorder, agoraphobia, social phobia, simple phobias, alcohol abuse and dependence, drug abuse and dependence, antisocial personality disorder (Enns, et al.), and borderline personality disorder (Russ, et al., 2003). Selfobject hunger and avoidance has not yet been explored with individuals with mental illness, however, one would suspect that if low maternal care is reflected in archaic selfobject needs in healthy young adults as in the present study, then these patterns of selfobject avoidance would be seen in these populations also.

When considering the results from the current study and those from past studies, it is evident that low parental care or lack of empathy in childhood, leaves enduring influences on the adult. This is consistent with Kohut's propositions regarding the impact of unempathic responses from selfobjects in childhood.

Limitations

Several limitations need to be considered when interpreting the findings from this study. Firstly, there are sampling issues. These findings are only generalisable to

undergraduate university students who are relatively psychologically healthy (Korten & Henderson, 2000). Future studies should investigate selfobject needs with the general-population samples and also clinical samples. In addition, the current study employed only the mother-version of the PBI, therefore the generalisability is limited to maternal bonding experiences. The composition of the current sample was predominantly female, approximately 80 percent. However, Banai, et al. (2005) also used a predominantly female sample, approximately 60 percent. Future studies should endeavour to employ samples with higher numbers of male participants.

Further limitations are related to the use of the PBI. The PBI has been criticised for its retrospective nature, as a measure of perceived parenting and the use of a self-report technique (Mackinnon, Henderson, Scott, & Duncan-Jones, 1989; Reese, Kieffer, & Briggs, 2002). Firstly, the issue regarding the retrospective nature of the instrument has been addressed. Studies show high correlations between siblings and test-retest stability over 20-years periods, suggesting that mood state or trait characteristics do not influence participant responses (Parker, 1989; Wilhelm, Niven, Parker, & Hadzi-Pavlovic, 2005). Secondly, the high correlations between siblings, and between a child's and a mother's accounts of past parenting behaviour, minimises the chances of discrepancies between perceived parenting and actual parenting (Parker; Gittleman, Klein, Smider, & Essex, 1998). Furthermore, Parker argues that experiences are given meaning through our own self-determination; experiences are not experienced objectively, only ever subjectively. Finally, self-report measures are criticised for being influenced by response biases, such as social desirability. However, studies indicate that this is not supported (Parker).

It should also be noted that this study provides only partial support for Kohut's theory. There remain other areas of self psychology that deserve empirical

attention. This should be addressed in the future, such as the fragmentation of the self.

In sum, future studies should employ general population samples, clinical samples, the father version of the PBI, and samples with higher numbers of male participants when investigating hunger and avoidance of selfobjects needs and parental bonding experiences. Furthermore, studies should examine other areas of Kohut's theory.

Conclusion

The current study has made an important contribution to the current empirical base in psychology. Firstly, and most importantly, it has provided empirical support for Kohut's theory of self psychology and the wider area of psychodynamic thought. Psychoanalytic theory has been criticised as being *scientifically dead* both theoretically and therapeutically (Kihlstrom, 1999). This general mode of thought in the psychological community has seen psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic thought move from mainstream psychology to a marginalised vantage point (Bornstein, 2005). The psychoanalytic community has called for a concerted effort in providing an empirical basis for theory and practice (Bornstein; Kernberg, 2006). The present study answers this call and has contributed to re-establishing the link between psychoanalytic thought and main stream academia.

In addition to this, it has also examined the association between hunger and avoidance of selfobject needs and early childhood experiences as called for by Banai, et al. (2005). In addition to Banai, et al.'s study, it has contributed to integrating self psychology and attachment theory. Furthermore, it was the first study conducted using the SONI outside of Israel, utilising an English-language version of the instrument.

This has several practical implications. These include; the use of this knowledge to enhance existing programs and developing new interventions that target parenting techniques. It also provides an empirical foundation for psychologists treating individuals who have enduring problems that stem from their early childhood interaction with their parents or significant others. Furthermore, it provides a stepping stone for future research in the area of psychodynamics.

This study has made a valuable and unique contribution to the empirical study of self psychology, and psychology as a discipline. Researchers are urged to seriously consider investigating psychoanalytic concepts to revive psychodynamic theory, stimulate its evolution and increase its credibility in contemporary psychology.

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Selfobject Needs Inventory (English Version)

1. I feel hurt when my achievements are not sufficiently admired.
2. It's important for me to be around other people who are in the same situation as me.
3. When I have a problem, it's difficult to accept advice even from experienced people.
4. Associating with successful people allows me to feel successful as well.
5. I don't need other people's praise.
6. I would just not be involved with people who suffer from problems similar to mine.
7. I'm disappointed when my work is not appreciated.
8. I seek out people who share my values, opinions, and activities.
9. I find it difficult to accept guidance even from people I respect.
10. I identify with famous people.
11. I don't function well in situations where I receive too little attention.
12. I feel good knowing that I'm part of a group of people who share a particular lifestyle
13. I feel bad about myself after having to be helped by others with more experience.
14. It's important for me to feel that a close friend and I are "in the same boat."
15. When I'm doing something, I don't need acknowledgment from others.
16. It bothers me to be in close relationships with people who are similar to me.
17. I am attracted to successful people.
18. I have no need to boast about my achievements.
19. I feel better about myself when I am in the company of experts.
20. I would rather not be friends with people who are too similar to me.
21. I feel better when I and someone close to me share similar feelings to other people.
22. It's important for me to be part of a group who share similar opinions.
23. I don't really care what others think about me.
24. I know that I'm successful, so I have no need for others' feedback.
25. I'm bored by people who think and feel too much like me.
26. It's important for me to be around people who can serve as my role models.
27. I feel stronger when I have people around who are dealing with similar problems.
28. It's difficult for me to belong to a group of people who are too much like me.
29. In order to feel successful, I need reassurance and approval from others.
30. When I'm worried or distressed, getting advice from experts doesn't help much.
31. I try to be around people I admire.
32. I gain self-confidence from having friends whose beliefs are similar to mine.
33. I need a lot of support from others.
34. I find it difficult to be proud of the groups I belong to.
35. Most of the time I feel like I'm not getting enough recognition from my superiors.
36. It's important for me to belong to high-status, "glamorous" social groups.
37. I don't need support and encouragement from others.
38. I would rather not belong to a group of people whose lifestyle is similar to mine.

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MOTHER FORM

This questionnaire lists various attitudes and behaviours of parents. As you remember your MOTHER in your first 16 years would you place a tick in the most appropriate box next to each question.

	Very like	Moderately like	Moderately unlike	Very unlike
1. Spoke to me in a warm and friendly voice	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Did not help me as much as I needed	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Let me do those things I liked doing	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Seemed emotionally cold to me	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Appeared to understand my problems and worries	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Was affectionate to me	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Liked me to make my own decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Did not want me to grow up	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Tried to control everything I did	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Invaded my privacy	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Enjoyed talking things over with me	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Frequently smiled at me	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Tended to baby me	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Did not seem to understand what I needed or wanted	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Let me decide things for myself	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Made me feel I wasn't wanted	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Could make me feel better when I was upset	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Did not talk with me very much	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Tried to make me feel dependent on her/him	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Felt I could not look after myself unless she/he was around	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Gave me as much freedom as I wanted	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Let me go out as often as I wanted	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Was overprotective of me	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Did not praise me	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Let me dress in any way I pleased	☐	☐	☐	☐

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http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/research/tools/index.cfm#PBI

We want to know how your health has been in general over the last few weeks. Please read the questions below and each of the four possible answers. Circle the response that best applies to you. Thank you for answering all the questions.

Have you recently:

1.   been able to concentrate on what you're doing?

better than usual   same as usual   less than usual   much less than usual
      (0)   (1)   (2)   (3)

2.   lost much sleep over worry?

Not at all   no more than usual   rather more than usual   much more than usual

3.   felt that you are playing a useful part in things?

more so than usual   same as usual   less so than usual   much less than usual

4.   felt capable of making decisions about things?

more so than usual   same as usual   less than usual   much less than usual

5.   felt constantly under strain?

Not at all   no more than usual   rather more than usual   much more than usual

6.   felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?

Not at all   no more than usual   rather more than usual   much more than usual

7.   been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities?

more so than usual   same as usual   less so than usual   much less than usual

8.   been able to face up to your problems?

more so than usual   same as usual   less than usual   much less than usual

9.   been feeling unhappy or depressed?

not at all   no more than usual   rather more than usual   much more than usual

General Health Questionnaire

http://www.workhealth.org/UCLA%20OHP%20class%202004/GHQ%20and%20sc

oring.pd