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An Exploration of Stress and its Perception in Childhood

Margaret Anne Robson

Abstract

This research explores the concept of stress as it is perceived by children and builds a paradigm of this perception. The thesis argues that a cognitive paradigm is useful in understanding the stress process but seems incomplete without an acknowledgement of the role of unconscious cognition and phenomenology. This research extends this model to include these elements.

A review of the literature includes an exploration of the definitions of the concept of stress and an examination and evaluation of the usefulness of the models of stress from which these definitions arise. From an initial literature review, a starting point in terms of an examination of "stressors" was identified and led to a survey in this area. This led, in turn, to five subsequent investigations being undertaken for this thesis, each driven by questions and issues which emerged from the previous one. The methodology used in each study was different and driven by the questions that were under exploration. However, all had a qualitative philosophical base. The samples are described study by study and encompassed children from the age of eleven to adults. Results from this research confirm that triggers of and responses to stress are many and various. The individuals' perception of the stress appears to rest upon factors which include learned responses, social support and personality. Coping strategies are also many and various and likewise appear to rest upon the same mediating factors, as well as the individuals perceived control over the stressors.

Suggestions are also offered for interventions that could be used in schools to help children to cope more successfully with stress. These suggestions look at the psychological environment of schools as well as the individual adolescents and events which may be stressful.

An Exploration of Stress and its Perception in Childhood

Margaret Anne Robson

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4 JUL 1997

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Declaration

I declare that none of the material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other University

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Chapter 1 - Introduction, Description of the Issues and My Journey

1.1 Background

Stress seems to be a nebulous term which is used to convey several concepts. It is used in many cases as a synonym for strain, and may be used to describe emotional and physiological conditions, both generally and specifically, in humans and animals. For most researchers, it encompasses such overlapping experiences as conflict, fear, frustration, anxiety, defence and anger. As Lazarus (1966) argues:

"...stress, as a universal human and animal phenomenon, results in intense and distressing experience and appears to be of tremendous influence in behaviour." (Pge 2)

Stress seems, however, not to be a purely an emotional state. It also appears to produces pathological changes in the body and stress related diseases are now an accepted part of modern life.

Carpenter (1992) describes the meanings that have been ascribed to the term 'stress':

" Most often it carries one of two meanings. First, it is viewed as the complex constellation of reactions one has when demands are perceived as exceeding readily available resources (e.g. Selye, 1982). From this view, then, stress is how one feels and reacts to heavy demands. This response might include physiological, cognitive, affective and behavioural components, and is usually perceived by the individual as noxious. In contrast, some prefer to view stress as the situation of high demands and limited resources (e.g. Cox, 1978). To distinguish between the two views the first might be considered the stress response, and the second the stressful situation, although both are clearly important for understanding stress. Alternatively, it has been proposed that stress is best used as a general term of the total process linking demands to reactions and other outcomes (e.g. Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) " (Pge 2)



It was at this confused departure point that the journey of this thesis began.

If we consider stress to be situational, several authors have examined the stimuli that may cause these changes, but little work has been done in this country in the specific area of child-stress in the school setting. Two of the studies in this thesis took place in school and examined school related stressors. Most studies in this area emphasise the effect of 'life-events' and their cumulative effect upon children (e.g. Johnson, 1982, 1986, Kanner *et al* , 1981, Garmezy, 1983, Forsythe and Compas, 1987, DeLongis *et al*, 1982,), and use measures patterned upon adult ones. The most widely used one for the younger age group is Coddington's "Life Event's Record." (1972), although an English version has been developed by Monaghan *et al* (1978). These studies emphasise the effects of major life events upon children, but it is one of the propositions of this study that school stress affects every child to a greater or lesser extent, and although the factors highlighted in previous studies undeniably cause stress, children also feel stressed by a number of 'lesser' events. Studies conducted in the United States, most notably those of Compas and his associates (1985 a, 1985 b, 1986, 1987, 1988), have investigated the effects of 'lesser' events and have shown that chronic daily stressors in the lives of adolescents are associated with maladjustment.

Attempting to conceptualise situations which are likely to be stressful to a child is not simple. Caplan (1970) defines a crisis as a person's struggle with a current life stress and in the case of children, it may be related to a situation that challenges them beyond their current capacity. Mandler and Watson (1966), suggest that individuals lay out a plan of behaviour and that stress is aroused when unanticipated interruptions of such a sequence of behaviour occurs. Freud (1949) argues that there are four main sources of stress; frustration, conflict, threat and physiological growth processes, while other authors postulate that conflict is the major source of stress. Erikson's (1950) eight development crises of people, may be seen as examples of situations with high potential for stress. Each of these stages state what psychologically important development must take place for 'normal' development to occur, and the consequences if it does not. An example of this can be seen in the school child. Erikson suggested tasks for each developmental stage and the task suggested that affects children in school is one that is measured upon an industry, inferiority continuum. The degree of completion of this task may affect the child's sense of identity.

Perhaps the most helpful categories in the delineation of potentially stressful situations are those produced by Klein and Lindemann (1961) They identify three categories of potentially stressful situations. First, there are situations that involve loss or threatened loss of a significant relationship. Second, there is the introduction of one or more individuals to one's social orbit and finally, there are transitions in social status and role relationships as a consequence of maturation, achievement or a new social role. Selye (1956) extends this list by including the individuals stress reaction as an additional source of stress in a cyclic process. The importance of stress and stress reactions in psychological theory is well documented and this thesis will examine the process by which events come to be perceived as stressful, rather than concentrating upon the more common stressful situations and events, stressors, perceived by the children in the study.

If we consider stress to be a response, then it may be seen to have both positive and negative effects upon individuals. Studies have shown that by inducing stress, levels of performance can rise. It can act as a catalyst and produce an improvement in both the quality of the individuals life and increased performance. This effect is called by Schultz and Heuchert (1983) 'eustress' and the figures below show the Yerkes- Dodson law (1908) and its medical extension.

This 'law' resulted from experiments which measured the performance of mice at different levels of anxiety and the second table interprets this phenomenon in medical terms. Thus it can be seen that stress may be positive in its effects, and is also an unavoidable part of life. As Selye (1974) argues:

"Stress is not something to be avoided. Indeed, by definition it cannot be , since during every moment of our lives some demand for life-maintaining energy exists. Complete freedom from stress is death." (Pge 32)

**Effect of Anxiety on
Performance: Yerkes-Dodson Law**
Source: A. Melhuish, Executive Health, 1978.

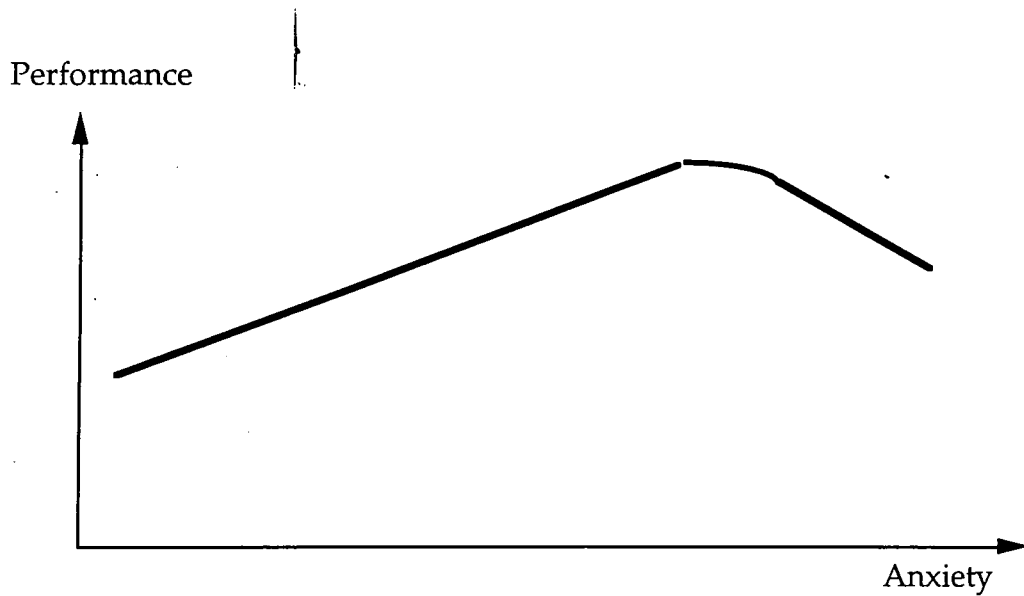


Figure 1.1

Medical Extension of the Yerkes-Dodson Law

Source: A. Melhuish, Executive Health, 1978.

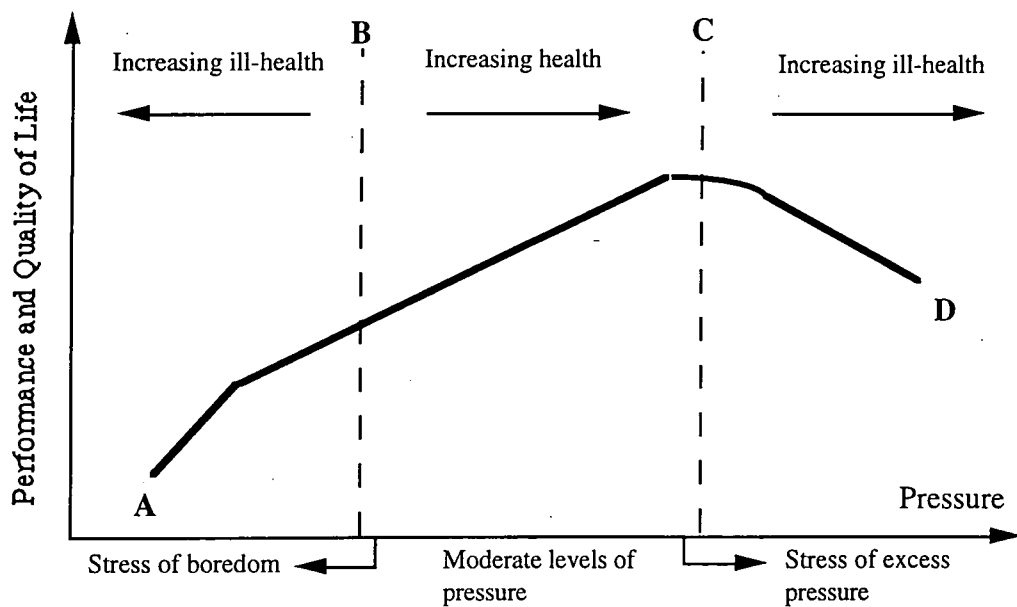


Figure 1.2

The negative side of stress is those stimuli which, in the terms of Schultz and Heuchert (1983), cause 'distress'. As can be seen from the above graphs, after a certain level of stress, the reaction of eustress changes to distress and a falling of both performance and quality of life is observed. The aim of this study originally was to examine the relationship between those aspects of school which act as stressors, and the individual perceptions within the children that may summate to cause distress rather than eustress. However, with the development of the thesis, this aim has been modified. The study now aims to have an understanding of how stress is perceived by the child and the relationship between differing elements in this perception.

Schultz and Heuchert (1983) define stress in children as:

"...what happens when a child encounters experiences (stressors) that require some form of action on his or her part. The action(s) taken by a child will depend upon how he or she interprets the stressor e.g. benign or threatening." (Pge 131)

However, from the results of this thesis, it seems that stressors do not necessarily require action, but do initiate a response, whether cognitive, emotional and/or behavioural. The focus of this thesis develops through its journey to be one that considers stress to be a total process rather than just situational or a response. Importance is given to the process of interpretation rather than the response to the stressor or the nature of the stressor.

The main driving force for the change of focus was the acknowledgement that the effect of stress also varies from person to person. For some, a relatively minor event may have deep repercussions, whilst for others a seemingly major event can be assimilated with no apparent consequence. It is also true that although stressors have a potential to cause stress, individuals may not perceive them in this way. Adams *et al* (1976) describe this thus:

"The severity of biophysical experienced strain is determined by a number of factors:

- a) The biophysical stress tolerance of an individual is not constant and varies according to the novelty of the situation and/or required behavioural responses, and as a result of the person's life history

and general state of health. As with the concept of general ability there will be genetically determined limits of tolerance, even if these are impossible to measure.

- b) The number of stressful events operating at one time.
- c) The importance of the event to the individual.
- d) The intensity of the stress.
- e) The duration of the stress." (Pge 15)

Thus, as an individual's response to stress is seemingly determined by their perception of it, a theory of personal development is necessary. The major theoretical bases from cognitive, behavioural, humanistic and psychodynamic philosophies will be considered

Although there are considerable variations in the way an individual responds to stress, human response is not infinite. This study will include an investigation of social theories, especially symbolic interactionism and its effect upon the perception of stress, as well as a consideration of human response as explained by the major counselling theories. Chandler (1984) argues, perhaps over-simplistically, that as a result of the finite responses available, response patterns follow a few basic themes, although these are manifest in a number of variations. When children are under stress, their activity levels vary. Some children become over-active, some withdrawn and passive and some become lethargic. Similarly, they may turn this activity inward or outward towards the world. Chandler argues that two basic dimensions - active-passive, and introvert-extrovert- should be useful in describing the behavioural responses in children. The model over the page shows these two dimensions. What distinguishes normal functioning from extreme behaviour in the emotional adjustment reaction is a matter of degree. He defines these emotional adjustment reactions as extreme patterns of normal coping behaviour in response to stress and says that children vary widely in the method that they adopt, and may even adopt more than one strategy, although one is usually preferred and is dominant.

Chandler's Stress Response Model
(Chandler (1984), Pge 53)

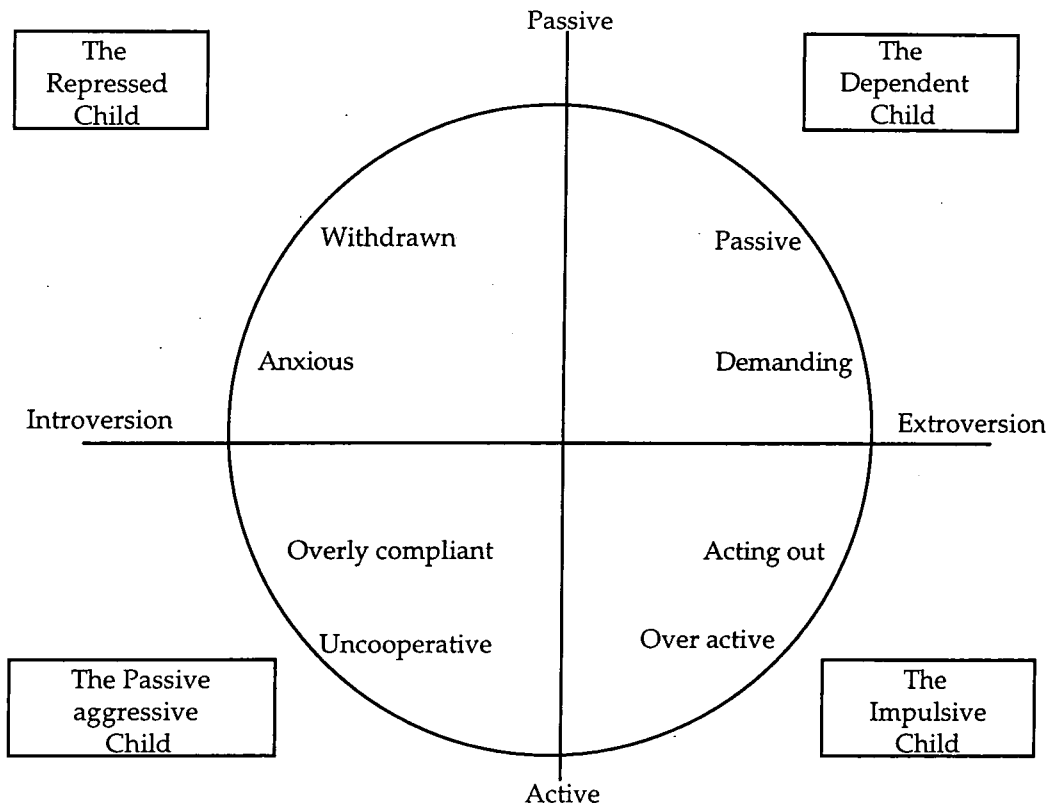


Figure 1.3

Work has also been done in the area of intervention. Several researchers have devised intervention systems and Elligett *et al* (1981) report that their stress management programme in Florida was highly successful in increasing achievement scores. Brown and Rosenbaum (1984) argue that:

"There are many ways to increase the number of stress-resisting factors to protect children from unnecessary risk. We can intervene in schools and other organisations to insure that organisational processes do not lead to over reactivity in children and families. We can design curricula and materials that allow learning to take place at optimal levels of arousal. The goal is to facilitate the self-regulation of motivated individuals in order to maximise their responsibility for self, their identity, their integrity and their coping capacity." (Pge 146).

It is the intention of this study to examine the elements in school that may be perceived by the children as stressful and, in the final chapter, to explore strategies which may be helpful in reducing this stress and/or to help children to manage in a positive way.

It would be apt, at this point, in a conventionally structured thesis to present a working definition of the term stress. However, as has been discussed previously, there is no single definition of stress (Carpenter, 1992, Lazarus, 1966) and one of the purposes of this thesis (see section 1.2) is to attempt to resolve the inconsistencies and conflicts inherent in this position. To this extent it makes it hard to label what I am investigating and it is not possible to have a working definition which permeates the whole thesis. However, the research has to have a starting point. Therefore in my initial usage of the term in the Pilot Studies I am using the term stress to describe either a stimulus or a response. This is in keeping with the commonly held belief that supports the use of stress inventories as a way of measuring stress and is consistent with the way the term is used in much popular and academic literature. As the thesis progresses, and as is argued in Chapter Four, this definition ceases to be an adequate description of the concept as it was emerging from the cumulative results of the studies in combination with a wider search of the literature. From Study Three onwards the term stress was used to describe a general concept which encompassed a total process linking demands to reactions and other outcomes as described by Lazarus and Folkman (1994).

As has been stated, the original motivation for the thesis came from observations of difficulties experienced by school pupils. The population studied were therefore identified as children, giving a purpose to the study of investigating the stress as it applies to people who, by virtue of their developmental stage, are in a process of rapid change in terms of their identity and patterns of behaving.

Childhood is seen as lasting from birth to a variety of ages but for the purposes of this study, it was decided to follow the example of Compas *et al*, (1985) and view childhood as extending from birth to twenty-one.

It would be beyond the scope of this study to explore childhood stress throughout the full span of what is considered to be childhood and so parameters were set. All the people who took part in this study were aged eleven or older. The reason for this was not that:

"..the number of daily events reported increased with age. This does not appear to be a simple consequence of response tendencies, since the number of major events remained stable with age. Rather, older adolescents may be confronted with a larger number of daily events than their younger counterparts." (Compas *et al* (1985) (Pge 687))

but because older subjects, due to their developmental stage, had a greater capacity to protect themselves by refusing to take part or limit their involvement and the power differential between me and them was less, although it was still a consideration. These ethical issues are discussed in the following section. Also, with phenomenological enquiry, an attempt is being made to discover the meaning that individuals ascribe to their experience. It was felt that children younger than eleven, although engaged in the same process, may not have the language necessary to be able to verbalise their experience and so, from a pragmatic stance, older children were chosen.

After the third study, older adolescents were chosen as subjects and also adults in their capacity as 'wise others' (Goffman, 1963). Goffman (1963) argued that there are those who understand issues because they have experienced them and those who have not experienced them but because of their shared humanity and experience, can understand the issues. The use of older adolescents and adults was partly because of the ethical issues encountered (discussed in section 2.6) but even if these had not been of paramount importance, methodologically the use of adult subjects to reflect upon their experiences as children and to comment upon observations of children is a well documented research method. Examples include Coddington (1972), Holmes and Rahe (1967), Johnson and McCutcheon, (1980) who all used adult raters when compiling their measurements of childhood stress, and Rogers (1980) who reflected upon how his childhood experiences contributed to his philosophy of interpersonal relationships. The reflection by adults on their childhood experience is also a central tenet of psychodynamic theory.

1.2 Research Questions

Five research questions will be explored:

- 1) To what extent is stress a meaningful concept to children?

- 2) How is the term stress understood in common usage and the academic literature?
- 3) How is stress perceived by children?
- 4) How is stress perceived differently by adults and children?
- 5) In what way can a child's perception of stress be modelled theoretically?

In the light of these explorations, consideration will be given to the implications for schools of the way in which children perceive stress.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis began with a belief that stress was a 'complex constellation of reactions' (Carpenter (1992) - the idea that the stimuli that caused stress were 'out there'. Each study undertaken informed the next and was part of a journey of exploration. Consideration was given to the idea that the meaning of the term may be situational and dependent on context. Several of the studies explored this concept. The thesis concludes with an understanding of the term as a total process linking perceptions made up from various stimuli, both internal and external to the person, and the response to stress. Both perception of and response to stress seem to be defined by experience.

Because of the nature of this exploration, a conventional structure for the thesis did not seem to reflect the journeying and developmental nature. The thesis will therefore attempt to re-create the journey by considering each study in turn and including in each section a description of the content of the study, a consideration of the dynamic process, a discussion, where relevant, of ethical considerations and an exploration of the research, both mine and the links it has with others. The thesis begins with two chapters describing my travelling companions in terms of general methodological issues and ethical considerations. A chapter which explores the philosophy upon which the methodology rests is included, together with a description of the rationale behind the way data has been treated. It was important to me that this thesis was conducted in an ethical manner and because of this a chapter follows which describes the process through which some of the very difficult ethical decisions were made. If relevant to the single studies, each study contains a

discussion of the resolution of the issues pertinent to that study. They are included here so the reader may have an understanding of the baggage I carried and an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of this work. The next two chapters describe the first two practical studies undertaken and relate to the literature and describe the links both forward in the journey and looking out of the metaphoric rear window. The first study is the starting point and within this I discuss the intention, the activity and the significance. There then follows a discussion of the bridge to Study Two. The sixth chapter is a review of the literature. This review describes and evaluates the field as it appeared to me and although it appears after the first two studies were undertaken, it was actually a constant companion from the inception of the research. As each study revealed a new perspective, a literature search was undertaken in order to illuminate the discoveries. These illuminations are included in the relevant sections and are presented in this way so as to enable the reader to share in the voyage of discovery. The thesis then describes each of the remaining four small studies in turn. This process continues through the six studies and culminates in a final chapter which examines the conclusions which may be drawn, the implications for schools, a discussion of the methodology and a consideration of future research directions. In keeping with the journeying metaphor chosen for this research, a 'map' of the thesis may be seen pictorially in Figure 1.4.

The methodological justification for this type of investigation is given by Stallings (1989) who identifies the corner-stones of the model as:

- Learn by doing - try, evaluate, modify, try again
- Link prior knowledge to new information
- Learn by reflecting and solving problems (Pge 4)

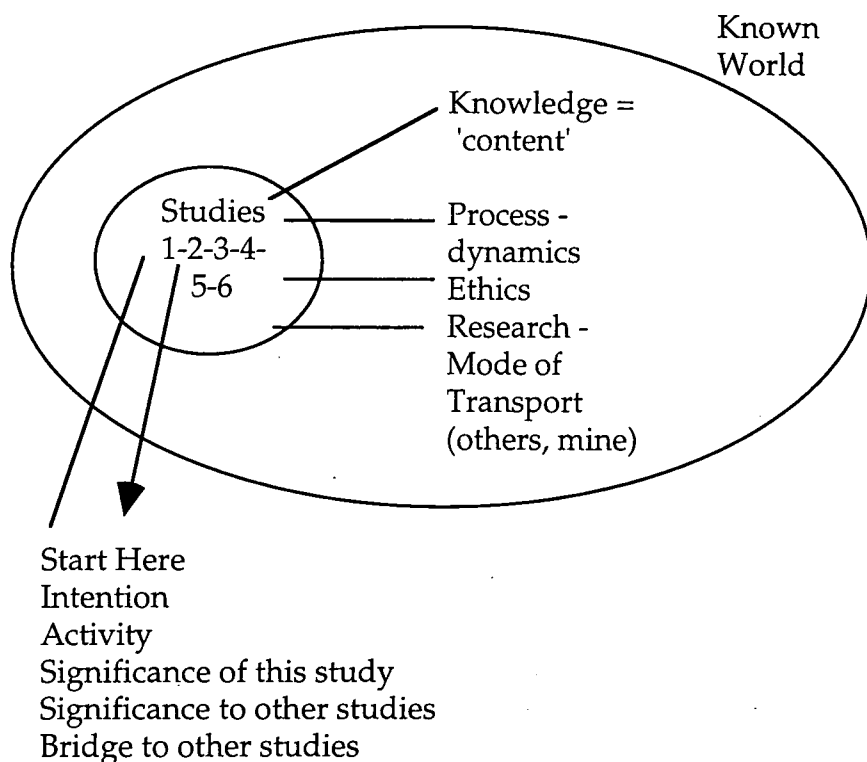


Figure 1.4

1.4 The Motivation

A statement of the issues seems to be irrevocably entangled with the motivation of the person doing the research, and by the researchers 'point of view' (Kuhn (1973)) so it seems appropriate to begin this section with a description of those motivations and to follow with an exploration of the 'point of view' and statement of the issues.

The motivation for studying in this area came from four directions. My first interest in, and initiation into, children being stressed came several years ago, from my son who was then aged six. We had spent a year living in Canada and on our return, he went back to the school where he had been before our trip. He had to re-establish his social network and re-integrate himself into the culture of school. He appeared to have, as a class teacher, someone who created an environment that felt very unsafe for him and where he felt very threatened and exposed. He went from being able to read to not being able to read. He burst into tears, seemingly for no apparent reason, and started having nightmares. By the end of the year he had been identified as having learning difficulties from his performance on a diagnostic test (the Richmond

Test) which was administered to all children in this county before they moved to secondary school. He was also medically diagnosed as having asthma. He showed his stress emotionally, behaviourally and somatically.

The second motivation came during research for an M.A. dissertation. I spent a lot of time in secondary schools gathering data at a time when course work became an increasingly important element in public examinations. Several teachers expressed concern about the increasing pressure this was putting upon children and about how little this was recognised.

The third source of motivation was from my work as a counsellor. I began to feel that much that was considered stressful - for example eating disorders - was often a way of coping with another 'stress' and that sometimes the 'source' of stress was locked away in the client and only accessed after a period of exploration. Also, that work which focused upon the presenting problem e.g. the weight loss, seemed doomed to failure unless the underlying 'cause' was 'discovered' and managed by the client.

The final motivation came from my work as a trainer and teacher. Stress management programmes for children seemed to be virtually non-existent, although, working with fellow professionals, there was an acknowledgement that children could be stressed and that there was a huge need for a greater understanding of the process.

1.5 The Issues

The previously discussed motivations affected my perception of the problem, as did the process of researching for this thesis. From these four areas of personal experience and being increasingly informed by the literature, a number of issues emerged to form the basis for this thesis. As the research has progressed, my idea of the issues has refined and changed. These changes and refinements will be discussed in greater depth in the appropriate sections of the thesis, but an overview is given here.

From being perceived as one issue - 'what was this concept of 'stress' which seemed to be able to make children so unhappy?' - the issues grew into a series. Each step of the journey seemed to address the previous issue but also to unlock another issue that needed an exploration. A description of the issues

and the journey appears below and is presented chronologically. This method of presentation perhaps implies a falsely linear structure to the exploration but is a convenient structure upon which to describe a journey.

Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest:

"Theory -building relies on a few general constructs that subsume a mountain of particulars. Terms such as "social climate," "stress," or "role conflict" are typically labels we put on bins containing a lot of discrete events and behaviours." (Pge 28)

In this study, one issue has been to examine the label of stress in order to understand the discrete events and behaviours and to explore both the content and the inter-relatedness of the bins.

The first issue or bin is that of the meaning of the term 'stress' (See Carpenter (1992) in Section 1.1 of this thesis). My initial understanding of this term was that it was something 'out there' - a stimulus, which caused a response. This idea is behind the popular notion of stress inventories - the idea that you can describe discrete events and assign a level of 'stressfulness' to them, add up the frequency of occurrence of these events and compute a 'stress-level'. This understanding led to my early work.

1.6 The Journey

From my initial reading, I saw the problem as being one of finding 'stressors' which adversely affected children, establishing mitigating factors or mediating variables, and then devising a system of intervention. 'Stressor' is a term used to describe experiences and has its origins in engineering. It is described by Seyle (1980) as whatever produces stress, with or without functional hormonal or nervous systems, and something which may be a somatic demand or purely psychogenic. This view of the stress process is described by Schultz and Heuchert (1983):

"The term *stress* , as we have used it, is what happens when a child encounters experiences (stressors) that require some action on his or her part." (Pge 131)

Also from my initial reading, I felt that stressors could be threatening or benign, depending upon the interpretation of the child, and that the outcome could be either eustress or distress. Eustress is defined by Schultz and Heuchert (1983) as:

"..the result of proactive, positive, or adaptive responses to stressful life events" (Pge 22)

They define distress as:

"..the result of negative, non constructive, or maladaptive responses to stressful life events" (Pge 22)

The following model was the result of adopting this perspective.

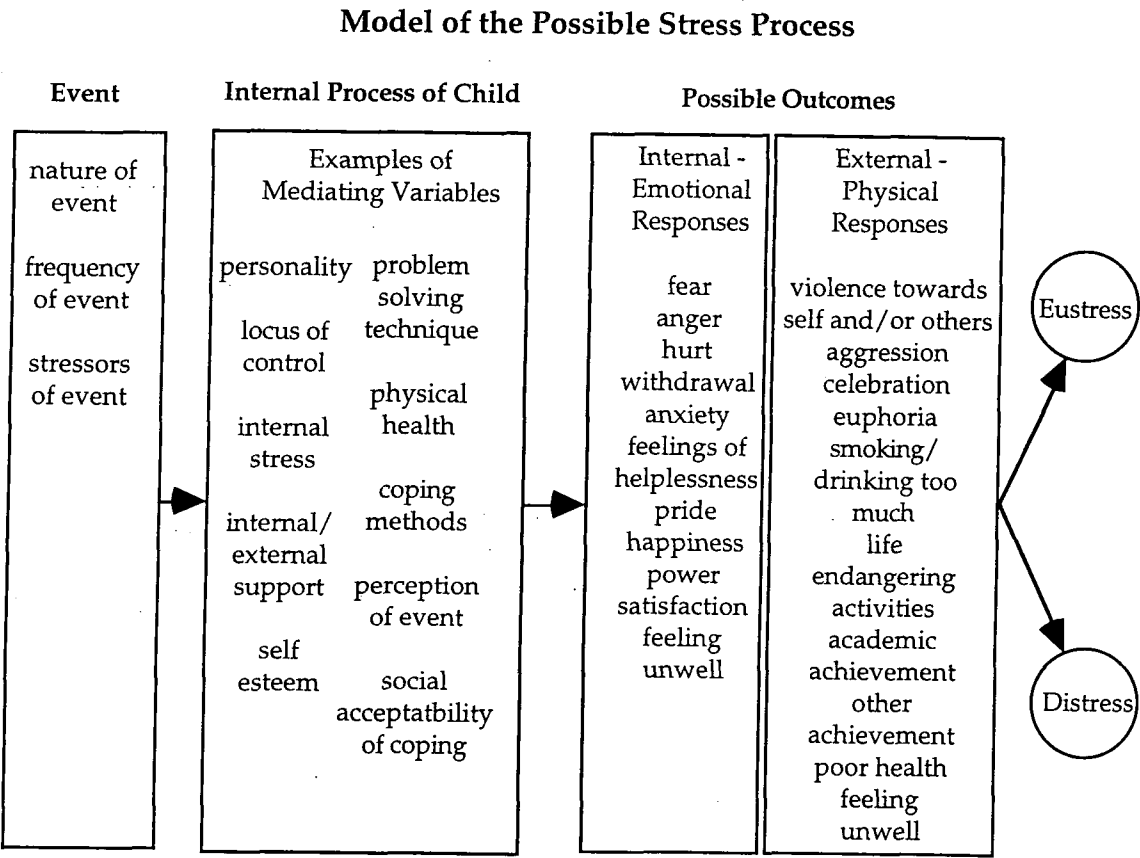


Figure 1.5

Studies such as those of Longfellow and Belle (1984), suggested that a number of everyday stressors and certain life events were related to behavioural, emotional and learning problems among school-aged children. Brown & Rosenbaum (1984) suggested that the effects of stressors could be mediated by 'mature connections' to nuclear and extended families, and for those who are tied into social networks and support systems. Coddington (1984) devised a scale to measure the stressfulness of children's environment. All these studies seemed to support my initial view of the stress process by focusing on stressors as the 'cause' of stress and by examining mediating variables from this perspective.

At the time, the model described in Figure 1.5 seemed to encompass all the attributes that a model of stress needed to explain personal experiences as a result of mediating factors operating on external causes. However, there remained the issue around the usage of the term 'stress'. Sometimes it seemed to be used to describe a process of perception, sometimes as a 'cause' - stressor, and sometimes as a response (Carpenter, 1992). This initial issue led to the first two studies where the aim was to explore the terms used in describing the stress concept and to explore the concept of stress as perceived by children.. The discoveries made in these studies, combined with a return to the literature, shaped the next studies and the journey through the thesis has resulted in the 'problem' being refined, changed, deepened and developed as the study has progressed. It is firmly rooted in the motivations described at the beginning of this section and has resulted in an original model of the perception of stress in children. The originality is in the extension of an existing transactional model (Lazarus, 1966, Lazarus and Folkman 1984) to incorporate an integrated view of the person as combined in a cognitive, psychodynamic and humanistic collaboration and one which is truly phenomenological. The uniqueness of the research methodology has also contributed to this study's originality.

The journey can be described thus:

The Journey

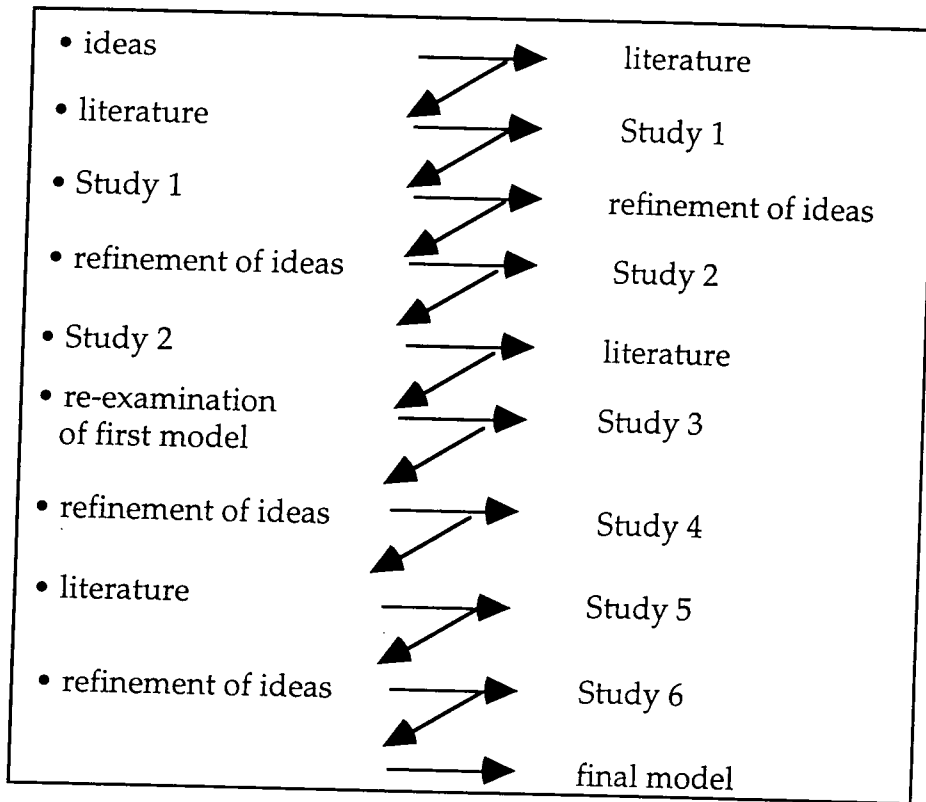


Figure 1.6

Mapping the journey on the computer gives a falsely linear structure to the thesis and loses the interesting contours, scenic routes and overnight stops in places of great beauty. However, it does represent, as would a map of a route, the roads which were travelled.

The journey ended with a model which allowed for the complexities and flexibility of individual behaviour. It is argued that the model described by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) fulfils both these conditions as it incorporates the psychoanalytic along with the cognitive and is also dynamic and phenomenological. However, the concepts of 'unconscious' and 'phenomenology', although incorporated in this model, did need further exploration. By the inclusion of the models of McCann *et al* (1988) and McCann and Pearlman (1990), an understanding of 'unconscious' as presented by Spinelli (1994), and a Rogerian view of 'self', it is argued that a synthesis can be created which strengthens the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) model and allows significant modifications to the earlier models.

The next chapter explores the philosophical foundations of the methodology used in this thesis.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the philosophical base of the methodology used within this thesis and discuss the general methodological issues encountered as well as providing a rationale behind the methods chosen. The methodology for each study will be described within section 2.3 of this chapter and within the descriptions of the studies (Chapters Three, Five, Six, Seven and Eight) and the motivational links between each one will also be included there. There is also included a description of the rationale behind the organisation and discussion of the results in the study.

2.2 General Methodological Issues

The aim of methodology is to produce a tool to gain knowledge about phenomena. If confidence in what we think we know or wish to assert is influenced by the process of 'getting to know', then a consideration of methodology is required.

In common with studies investigating the human condition, the challenge for this study is to find a methodology which will provide illumination and help us to 'get to know' more about stress in children.

2.2.1 Ways of Knowing

Heppner *et al* (1992) quote the nineteenth-century American mathematician, philosopher, and logician Charles Peirce, as arguing that there are a least four ways of knowing. The first way they term the 'method of tenacity' - truth we know to be true because we have always known it to be true. The second way of knowing is the 'method of authority' - we know because someone who is deemed to be an authority tells us it is so. The third way of knowing is the 'method of intuition' - if it makes sense, it is true. The fourth way is the 'scientific method' - involving empirical tests to establish and prove objective and verifiable facts. Heppner *et al* (1992) add a fifth way, the method of learning through one's own experience of the world. Given the complex nature of human understanding, it seems likely that we acquire truth from all

these ways. The task for this study was to find a methodology which could find truths about stress in children.

There are inherent dangers in all of the five methods of truth finding described above, but in order for the findings of this study to be plausible and useful, it is important that it is built upon credible facts and not solely upon tenacity, the authority of others or unsupported subjective opinions.

As has been previously discussed, one of the major problems with the investigation of the effects of stress upon children is that of defining the term. If we regard stress as a stimulus, then stressors are constructs inferred from observation and report and this therefore raises issues of reliability, validity and verification.

Selye (1950) regards stress from this perspective and describes stressors as noxious stimuli which lead to stress reactions and from this perspective they may be viewed as external forces which precipitate stress reactions of either a physiological or psychological nature or a combination of the two. The empirical problem which faces the researcher in this area is identifying these external forces and the intervening processes that determine when and in what form the stress reactions occur.

Several approaches to this were considered in regards to this thesis and include:

- 1) Observing the behaviour of the child/children after a specific stimulus, commonly held to be stressful, is introduced. Because of ethical issues this would have to be in the form of a natural experiment. The limitations of observations are discussed below.
- 2) Observing the behaviour of the child/children and following the process backwards to find the 'cause'.
- 3) Asking a selected group of children what they find stressful.
- 4) Asking a selected group of children what they find stressful and then using this information to draw up a stress inventory for use with a larger sample of children.

- 5) Asking adults who are involved with the children, such as parents and teachers, to identify stressors that they think affect their children.
- 6) Using adult subjects to reflect upon their stress as children and to make some sense of it.

However, these approaches view stress as a response to a stimulus rather than as part of an interaction, and again, the approaches outlined above may be useful if considering stress from this perspective.

It has been argued in the previous chapter that stress may be viewed as a process (Carpenter, 1992) which combines stimulus and/or response within a phenomenological field and is the product of a transaction between the event, the person and the environment. Thus a single methodology may not be the most appropriate 'way of knowing'.

The way the concept of stress is understood will define the methodology chosen. As Krathwohl (1985) argues, our orientation to knowledge affects the research methods used. The different criteria utilised by the researcher will be dependent upon their orientation. Several of the approaches mentioned above would come under the traditional experimental style of methodology, or the positivist tradition, others could suggest a 'Verstehen', or knowing through understanding, approach. The next section will explore the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches in relation to this study.

2.2.2 Positivism and Verstehen

Durkheim (1951) believed that social phenomena were orderly and generalisable. Stress can be viewed as a social phenomenon as it is to do with the experience of an individual who is partially formed by a social system. Durkheim argued that these phenomena adhere to underlying social laws just as physical phenomena follow physical laws. This view became known as positivism. Positivism emphasises the unity of scientific method. The proponents of this tradition argue that the natural sciences have set the methodological ideal against which the degree of development and perfection of all other sciences are measured. Its explanation of behaviour is causal and the paradigm of this can be seen in the hypothetico-deductive model. This model shows that a hypothesis produces empirical predictions which can be

tested and if confirmed, corroborate the hypotheses. Deduction must follow the strict laws of logic and a hypothesis that is often corroborated could become a law. Popper (1957) defends this model and argues that the difference between explanation, prediction and testing is only one of emphasis and our perception of what we consider to be our problem. He believes that by looking for initial conditions or universal laws, we are in fact looking for explanation. He argues that the testing of the theory is all, and that all tests can be interpreted as attempts to weed out false theories and if we fail to test rigorously, we will find what we are looking for, regardless of truth.

He believes that we have more direct knowledge of the inside of a human atom than a physical atom as the human atom is part of us, but that this knowledge is intuitive and must be formed into hypotheses which must be selected and submitted to selection by illumination. Because he assumes that human behaviour in social situations has an element of rationality, he says that it is possible to construct relatively simple models of their actions and inter-actions and use these models as approximations. He does, however, concede that there is a difference between the natural and social sciences in model building, as complete rationality cannot be assumed, neither can complete information although he believes that if one used model behaviour as a zero-co-ordinator, it would be possible to estimate the deviance of the actual behaviour.

The major difficulty of using this positivist approach is the reliance upon a stimulus-response view of behaviour. If all we take into account is the observable stimulus -response we may lose the reality of the situation. Suppose a child has a teacher who shouts at him/her, (stimulus). Normally, the child reacts by crying [response] and one could assume that it is because s/he finds being shouted at stressful. However, it could equally be not because they find the shouting stressful (perhaps they are used to this at home), but rather they find being the centre of attention stressful. The same misinterpretation is possible if we used the second approach outlined above and studied the response in order to identify the stimulus. If we were to observe a child crying (response) in a classroom after getting 4 out of 10 for a test, we could assume that she was upset by the mark. It could however be that her father left the family home that morning and she was so upset by that event that the low mark was an irrelevance. Without having a phenomenological knowledge of the child's world the issue of identifying

causes is fraught with difficulty. There may not be a single cause but a multiplicity of causes.

As has been argued, the same overt behaviour may have an entirely different meaning for each performer, thus making observation alone an unreliable form of data collection. This is not true of the physical sciences. The stimulus-response model remains constant. If you pour boiling water [stimulus] over tea-bags, you will always make tea [response], never coffee. If you beat a child, you may get tears on one occasion, and a fist in the face on another. The same is true across groups of children. You cannot predict the response of a given stimulus as the reaction is not constant within individuals or within groups, or over time. This is one of the methodological issues faced in this study.

Another issue is whether human behaviour is rational. If it is, then it could be assumed that there would be a 'normal', rational response to given stimuli and from this a model developed of the causes of stress. Methodologically it might be possible to devise a measure of stress and of 'rational' response and thus measure deviation. Popper (1957) produced a 'rationality' argument which, briefly states:

" For in most social situations, if not all, there is an element of rationality. Admittedly, human beings hardly ever act quite rationally...., but they act, none the less, more or less rationally; and this makes it possible to construct comparatively simple models of their actions and inter-actions, and to use these models as approximations." (Pge 22)

However, human behaviour appears not to be constant. What constitutes rational behaviour for one individual, may be irrational behaviour for another. If two men were taken prisoner during the last war and put into a prison of war camp, the rational action for one may be to try and escape. He may feel that he stands no chance of surviving in this camp and that it is his duty to return home and fight the enemy. The other man may decide that it is more rational not to escape. He may reason that he stands more chance of dying in an escape attempt and that the allies are fairly close so he will be free to fight again soon. Both men have behaved in a rational way, but the ensuing behaviour is completely different. Also, if we conceive of human action in terms of common-sense thinking we include in our repertoire of reaction what

Weber (1964) terms 'negative actions'. This is the intentional refraining from action which is again something which escapes sensory observation. This does not mean that the hypo-deductive model needs to be totally rejected, but it appears to be an unreliable model if used alone. Therefore another model upon which to base the methodology for this study needs to be explored.

Thomas (1952) has shown that social reality contains elements of beliefs and convictions which are real because they are defined as real by the participants. In terms of stress this means that events are stressful if we believe them to be so, and this is demonstrated in the different individual perception of, and response to the same event. It seems that it is less about the inherent stressful nature of the event than about the meaning it has for the individual. A example of this might be the transition that children make to secondary school. One child may find the move very stressful as it threatens his/her sense of safety and leaves him/her feeling vulnerable. Another child, making the same move may be excited by the prospect of the change, welcoming the challenge of new experiences and relishing the opportunity to meet new people. A third child may have very mixed feelings and find the meeting of new people stressful but the change in routine exciting. This reality cannot be revealed by adherence to the positivist tradition or the hypothetico-deductive model alone, so alternative methodology must be explored.

An alternative to the positivist approach is that of 'Verstehen'. This is the concept of direct understanding. Weber (1964) saw social phenomena as the product of human volitional action and not merely determined by social laws. He emphasised the different relationship that exists between natural scientists and their data and social scientists and theirs. A natural scientist will never be able to empathise with a splitting atom in the same way that a social scientist could empathise with a subject undergoing a divorce. We share a degree of common experience with our subjects that is not there for natural scientists. Weber argues that this allows a possibility of direct understanding or 'Verstehen' as social scientists and their subjects are members of the same group.

This method was first introduced by a German historian philosopher, Droysen (1858). He introduced the terms '*Erklaren*' and '*Verstehen*' which mean explanation and understanding. His ideas were enlarged by Dilthey (1894, 1900, 1910) who called this method of understanding '*Geisteswissenschaften*'. Simmel (1892) argued that understanding had a psychological dimension that

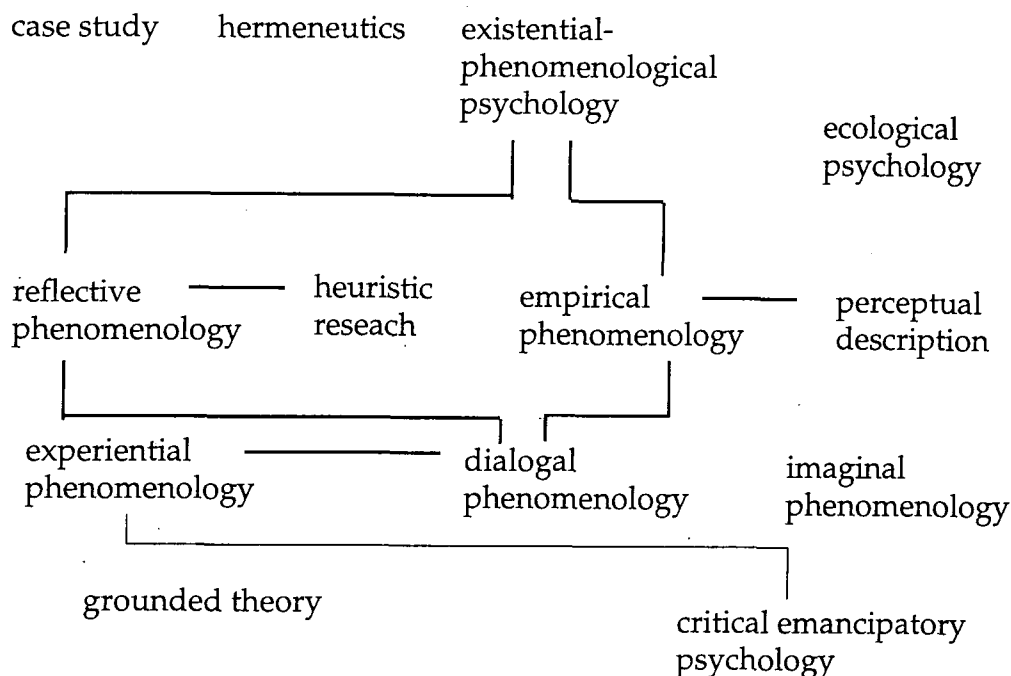
explanation did not have and he emphasised the empathic characteristic of the humanities. He saw empathy as the recreation in the minds of the researchers of the mental atmosphere of the objects of their study, in terms of their thoughts, feelings and motivations.

Logical positivism assumes that the only alternative to controllable and therefore objective sensory observation is uncontrollable and unverifiable introspection but proponents of Verstehen dispute this. They argue that Verstehen is an experiential form in which common-sense thinking takes cognisance of the social cultural world and is a result of the process of learning. In other words it combines three of the 'ways of knowing' cited by Heppner *et al* (1992) - method of tenacity, method of intuition and the method of knowing through one's own experience. It is not the private affair of the observer and can be controlled by the experiences of other observers in the sense that private sensory perceptions are ever controllable by others. An example of this type of control is that of a jury deciding upon the motive for a crime. They obey certain rules of procedure furnished by rules of evidence and verification by the process of Verstehen.

Verstehen is subjective. Critics argue that this understanding depends upon the private, uncontrollable and unverifiable intuitions of the observers and their private value system. Weber accepts that this method is subjective, but instead of viewing this as a weakness, he looks upon it as a strength. The goal of social enquiry is to find out what the actor means in his action, not what meaning the action has for the observer or other partners in the action. The only key to truth as perceived by the participants is a subjective one.

Positivism's perceived efficacy is that it is viewed as being objective. However, as has been argued above, subjectivity may be viewed as a strength and, the perceived objectivity of positivism may be a mirage and open to the charge of reductionism - reducing data to that which is measurable and in so doing losing corrupting its integrity. By the very choice of what researchers decide to study and what they decide is to be measured, they bring in huge elements of subjectivity.

More recently, this type of methodology has come to be known as qualitative methodology. Tesch (1990) offers the following diagram to demonstrate how the various paradigms inter-relate:



Qualitative Research in Psychology

(Tesch , 1990, Pge 39)

Figure 2.1

Qualitative research is based upon the philosophy of phenomenology and credited to Edmund Husserl (Tesch (1990). He left no instructions to transform this philosophy into a practical research tool, but van Kaam , from a Rogerian, client centred perspective, developed a methodology which was later extended and became known as an 'existential phenomenological' approach, (Tesch ,1990). The purpose of this method is to:

"....reveal the structures of experience through descriptive techniques'...thereby.. disclosing the nature of structure in the form of meaning" (Valle and King (1978), Pge 15 & 16)

From this beginning, as can be seen from Figure 2.1, other methodologies arose. Alongside these and, in some cases, before this, other qualitative methods arose. Methods such as the use of case studies, hermeneutics - 'seeks to elucidate and make explicit our practical understanding of human actions by providing interpretations of them' (Packer (1985), Pge. 1088). -and ecological psychology -the study of human beings in their nature 'habitat'.

Grounded theory is a fairly old sociological method which was described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a way to:

"...discover theory from the data" by the "general method of constant comparison" (Pge 1)

It seems, therefore, that one of the ways towards knowing about stress and its effects upon children lies in the Verstehen tradition and qualitative methodology. This was the rationale behind the methodology in all the studies of this research. The aim and precise methods are described for each study.

2.2.3 Methodology used in other studies

Use of a qualitative or Verstehen methodology appears to be unusual in the study of stress. Most studies undertaken to date in the field of stress in relation to children, have used quantitative methods and have looked at correlations between life events and stress. Numerous studies have found correlations in the 0.30 - 0.40 range, and although these figures are statistically significant with reasonably large samples, it suggests that the direct impact of life stress on health/adjustment is not great if the child/adolescent population as a whole is considered. Perhaps this approach suffers from what Heppner *et al* (1992) use the analogy of a flashlight to describe.

"The methods of science are only tools, tools that we use to obtain knowledge about phenomena. A flashlight is a good analogy. A flashlight is a useful tool but will only shine where we point it.....Similarly, our research methods will only provide us with information about the content we examine. If we are dissatisfied with the results, it does not necessarily follow that we should eliminate the research methods, but rather that we should try new angles with our research methods. ...Thus, sometimes new research methodologies may be needed to help us acquire new or different types of knowledge."
(Pge 13)

Thus, perhaps any single methodology will only illuminate part of the issue and because of this, a variety of methodologies were used in this thesis and will be described study by study.

One reason for the results in other studies could be that the measures of life stress used in the studies were not adequate. Life stress measures vary in the degree that they focus on assessment of life stress per se as opposed to a separate measure for desirable or undesirable change. Measures also differ in the way they index life events and, with the exception of Compas *et al* (1985), do not reflect other stressors than those usually reflected in life change. Adult measures of stress suggest that daily hassles correlate more highly with health related measures than major life change and it would be reasonable to assume that the same may be true for children. Daily hassles for children could include peer pressure, negative interactions with teachers and conflict with parents.

Another reason that correlations are not more significant could be that each individual perceives and reacts to each stressor differently and there are moderating variables around. These variables include, parental attachment (Greenberg *et al* (1983)), Type A - Type B behavioural styles (Fontana and Dovidio (1984)), family routines (Boyce *et al* (1973)), locus of control (Brand *et al* (1982)), perceived competence (Lawrence and Russ (1985)) and sex of subject (Compas *et al* (1985), Johnson and McCutcheon (1980), and Lawrence and Russ (1985)) and all have an effect upon the child's perception of stress. Most investigators fail to take these moderating variables and individual differences into account.

Time is an important element in recall of stressful events and studies have shown that the optimum time for recall is six months or less, and studies show that prospective investigations are more reliable. However, one of the original contributions of this thesis is the study of the importance of previous experience and one of the findings is that previous 'stressors', whether they are consciously recalled or not, have a powerful effect upon the perception of stress.

If stressors of various types and various temporal locations do bear a relationship to the child's reaction to stress, and we assess only some of these, we will not be showing the whole picture. It seems, therefore to find the truth it is important to use a variety of research methods. To relate this to Heppner *et al* (1992) and Charles Peirce (Heppner *et al*, 1992), and the five ways of 'knowing', the first way, the 'method of tenacity' is the base from which the study is directed. The initial thoughts, beliefs and assumptions of the researcher dictated the initial direction of the research and the results of the

initial study led to a refinement and to changes in 'what she thought she knew to be true'. The second way of knowing, the 'method of authority' came from the literature and again was changed, refined and extended throughout the course of the study. The third way of knowing, 'method of intuition' was used all the way through to interpret and make sense of the data and to suggest the next step. The fourth way, 'scientific method' was used from a '*Verstehen*' perspective and dictated the methods of testing. The fifth way, the method of learning through one's own experience of the world was the rationale behind using case studies and again, contributed to the shaping and understanding of the data collection.

2.3 Mapping of Research Process

As has been suggested in the previous section, this research began with an assumption on my behalf, supported from much of the literature, that stress was a stimulus and/or a response outside the individual. This view was challenged by the results of the studies undertaken, and each study dictated the direction of the next study.

An early decision involved the issue of sampling. Each study had a rationale behind this decision which changed as it built upon the experience of the previous studies. This rationale will be discussed later in this section in relation to each study, but some general considerations are discussed below.

Whatever methodology is chosen by a researcher dictates limits in terms of sampling. A quantitative study could not and would not attempt to survey every person in the world. This would result in unwieldy amounts of data and still result in a possible distortion of the phenomena under review through the questions or measures that were chosen to be used. As has been argued in Section 2.2, this thesis was driven by a phenomenological philosophy which dictated the use of a qualitative methodology. By its very nature, this philosophy argues for an individual perception of phenomena and therefore, greater truth is not attained by the use of bigger and bigger samples, but by an in depth study of individual's phenomenological world. These insights may then be compared and common or shared meaning making may emerge but it will still be limited by the individual's phenomenological field. Because of the richness of data that is available from this methodology, large samples are impractical as too much data would be produced to be practical to analyse. However, the quality of the data that can emerge from small scale qualitative

analysis can provide explanations of the phenomena without corrupting it if there are explicit, systematic methods for data analysis and drawing conclusions. (Miles and Huberman, 1984). For these reasons, small scale sampling was chosen.

As has been stated, the original motivation for the thesis came from observations of difficulties experienced by school pupils. The population studied were therefore identified as children, giving a purpose to the study of investigating the stress as it applies to people who, by virtue of their developmental stage, are in a process of rapid change in terms of their identity and patterns of behaving.

As has been stated in Chapter 1, childhood is seen as lasting from birth to a variety of ages but for the purposes of this study, it was decided to follow the example of Compas *et al*, (1985) and view childhood as extending from birth to twenty-one. The arguments for this position are presented in section 1.1.

Sex differences have been shown to have an effect upon the perception of stress. Humphrey (1984) argued that emotional stress seemed to have a greater effect upon boys than on girls in both the home and the school environment, although he does not cite his evidence for this proposition. Studies by Compas *et al* (Compas & Wagner, 1985, Compas, Davis & Forsyth 1985, Compas, Slavin, Wagner & Vannatta 1986, Compas & Davis 1986, Compas, Davis, Forsythe & Wagner 1987 & Compas, Malcarne & Fondacaro 1988), Johnson and McCutcheon (1980) and Lawrence and Russ (1985) show that the sex of the subject may act as a moderating variable. The reasons for this effect could be many. It could be that boys are socialised to respond in a certain way. It could be that boys perceive themselves to be vulnerable. It could be due to the differences in support systems experienced by each-sex. Whatever the reasons for these reported differences, it was important to include both boys and girls in the study.

The research process began with a review of the literature and from this starting point it was decided to test the initial hypothesis (that stress was an external stimulus or response) through the use of two pilot studies described in Chapter Three. The first step was to explore whether stress was a meaningful concept to children, and if stressors, in the way the term is described by Selye (1974), was a useful one. This was the task of the first study and in order to achieve this, the subjects were asked to complete a shield exercise. The sample

were drawn from three classes in a local comprehensive school, and could be described as an opportunity sample, as I was working in the school as a supply teacher. They were self-selecting in the sense that the activity was offered to each of the whole classes and only those who chose to take part were involved. After an explanation of what was involved forty-nine out of approximately ninety children chose to take part. They ranged in age from Year 7 secondary school children (11 years old, approximately), to Year 8 secondary school children (13 years old, approximately), and they also ranged in academic ability and social background.

The children were given a plain sheet of A4 paper and asked to draw a shield and then divide that shield into quarters, a, b, c and d. They were asked to depict in:

- a - things that made them sad,
- b - things that made them happy,
- c - things that made them worried,
- d - things that made them excited.

They were told that they need not put their names on them and no attempt would be made to trace the owners of the shields. Most chose to name their work. The intention was to examine stressors and to see if a syndrome of responses existed. However, semantics were an issue. I was concerned that if I asked about stress, this would set up expectations that it existed, and hence the decision to ask about responses which may be viewed as part of a syndrome.

After the first class had completed their shields, I realised that I may have difficulty in correctly interpreting the drawings, so the subsequent two classes were asked to write their feelings about the four areas on the back of the paper, as well as completing the shield on the other side.

The second study, also a pilot study, aimed to further clarify the concept of stress. This was done by eliciting the words used by children and adolescents to describe stress. It was felt that by asking them directly what they found to be stressful may, in fact, suggest to them that they should find some things stressful even if they didn't, and this may lead to the results being confounded. Conversely, if the question was not specific enough, then we may find that the experiences, feelings and behaviours they describe are about

something else and not about the concept that we accept as 'stress'. An analogy here could be the idea of asking respondents about their leg when it is really their arm we are interested in. They are both limbs and have several things in common and are related, but they are not the same thing.

This study was designed to investigate the actual words used by children and adolescents when describing situations that could be perceived as stressful, for two reasons. Firstly, so as to avoid ascribing to them a condition or concept of stress that they may or may not perceive to be 'real'. Secondly to see if stress could be encapsulated in one word or if, as Lazarus's definition suggests, that it encompasses a very general concept that is made up of a range of emotions and therefore is described by many words.

The subjects were a self-selected, non-random sample of boys and girls personally known to the me. The boys (2), were 15 and 17 years of age, and the girls (5) were aged 10, 13, 14, 15 and 17 years. They were all white, middle-class children attending a local comprehensive school with the exception of the youngest boy and girl who attend private schools.

In order to escape the possible confounding of results which could occur by using the word 'stress', with its seeming multiplicity of meanings, this study focused on wordless stimuli - TAT-like (Thematic Apperception Tests) pictures. These pictures were selected for their possible stressful content and the subjects asked to describe what they felt was happening.

Each participant was asked to look at a set of nine TAT-like pictures, (The Open University, 1976, 1977), in their own homes, in their own time, unsupervised by the researcher. The pictures may be seen in Appendix A. The subjects were given the following written instructions:

'Please look at each of these pictures, one at a time and for each one can you:-

- a) Tell me what happened before,
- b) Tell me what's happening now,
- c) What the people are feeling,
- d) What will happen next.

Don't spend more than five minutes a picture.
Can you also put your sex and age on your paper.
Thanks very much.'

The third study built upon the results of the pilot studies and the rationale behind this third study will be described in relation to the work of Kelly (1955, 1991), (See Chapter Five) It has been argued that how a child perceives and copes with stress will depend upon:

- a) their view of the world
- b) their view of self including:
 - i) self esteem
 - ii) locus of control
 - iii) learned helplessness vs. mastery orientation
 - iv) general belief system
 - v) motivation
- c) frequency and type of event - major life event, daily hassle and including transitions and loss of 'love objects'
- d) age and stage of development of individual
- e) relationship to peers and parents
- f) social support - including 'main effects' and 'buffering effects'

It was decided therefore, that practical work should be undertaken in order to elicit these factors. The subjects were a self-selected group of boys (8) and girls (5) from a local Catholic comprehensive school. They were all aged 17 years except for one boy who was 16 years. One girl had to leave before completion of the last task - a Repertory grid test. Full details of the tasks may be found in Appendix B but, briefly, the tasks were as follows.

The group was given several tasks to do by the researcher, both working in a small group (two groups of 4 and one of 5), pairs, and individually.

The first task was to brainstorm the word "stress" in groups of five and then to work in pairs and think of things that they find stressful, the ways in which they deal with them, and then to try and generate as many alternative ways of coping with stress as possible. These tasks were designed to find out what they meant by the term 'stress' and the words they use to describe it, and also to see how they cope with stress.

In the second hour of the session, the subjects were asked to take all the words generated by the whole group and to group them in any way that felt appropriate to them. This was an attempt to gain insight into how they viewed their world. To further this, they were then asked to complete a Repertory grid test .

The fourth study was, in some senses, a partial recreation of the third study but using teachers to define what they meant by stress, what causes stress in secondary pupils and how pupils showed they were stressed. The aim of this study was to look at teachers perceptions of children's stress, and compare this with the adolescent's view to see if there was common ground. In this study, teachers were considered 'wise others' (Goffman, 1963) as they have an understanding (hopefully) of the experiences of the children with whom they are in day to day contact.

This group of 15 secondary school teachers agreed to take part in several exercises as part of a workshop exploring stress in children, and agreed that their material could be used. It was another 'opportunity' sample but one which came from a cross-section of schools in the county and contained a great amount of experience. All of the teachers concerned had been teaching for at least four years and most for longer. They were all concerned with the children in their care in a pastoral role as well as academic. Most were Heads of Year with several deputy heads present. Therefore, although not a large or random sample, I feel that the knowledge and experience they had collectively of children allowed them to be thought of as 'wise other'.

This group were asked to engage in three tasks:

1. To brainstorm the term 'stress'
2. To postulate upon the causes of stress in secondary school children
3. To describe how children show they are stressed.

The teachers worked in a whole group for task one and in self-selected groups for tasks two and three. There were four groups for each of the second and third tasks and for task two, two groups chose to focus on general 'causes' of stress while another group focused on 'causes' for year nine, and the last group on 'causes' for year eleven. For the third task, two groups focused upon 'general' ways children show they are stressed, one group on year eleven, and one group on year nine.

The practical work for the fifth study was driven both by a return to the literature and a consideration of the implications from this and by the results of the previous studies. The ideas and tenuous model building were the starting point for this next study. Several questions had been raised from previous studies and the aim of this practical work was to inform and evaluate the developing model. The purpose of this practical work was to see if there was evidence to support an extension of the Folkman Lazarus model to include elements of 'unconscious' knowing about stress and to test the 'new' model of stress that has been refined from the previous studies and the literature review.

The activities in this study were designed to examine relationships between the transactional view of stress described above, individual's perception of stress, whether the perception of stress had a history, and whether all perception was available to conscious awareness.

Volunteers were asked for from a group of Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students (4) who were in my cross-curricular issues group and from a Bachelor of Arts fourth year (BA 4) group (5) who were completely unknown to me. These students were selected as they were available and represented a group of students with proven exam success and a group just about to take their finals. Both groups had their final Teaching Practice - a possible source of stress - looming.

The activities in this study were designed to examine relationships between the individual's perception of stress and the meanings they had developed over time. The first activity was designed both to elicit individual definitions of stress and a working definition for the practical work. In this, it was similar to the first tasks offered to the subjects in Studies Three and Four. The later exercises were an attempt to go beyond the completely conscious mind of the subjects and to see if it was possible to observe the contradictions suggested by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as ways clinicians may infer the unconscious. These contradictions are:

"...between what is said and what is done, between what is said one moment and another, and between what is said and what is felt"(Pge 152)

The subjects were invited to fill in a questionnaire about stress experienced as if they were of school age. I did not specify the age, feeling that the subjects would then engage with a stressful memory that was appropriate to them in this situation. In order to aid them in this task I facilitated a relaxation and focusing exercise. It was hoped that by using this method it may be possible to uncover some of the 'images burning their way out of my unconscious'.

The third exercise was to complete a repertory grid but this time, another method of data gathering was introduced as another way of 'shining the flashlight'. Instead of using relationships as the elements, I split the subjects into two groups and asked one group to think of as many stressful experiences as they could (up to 12) that they had had over the last year and write them down as elements. The second group were asked to write as elements, specific situations which related to the following experiences:

1. glad, 2. sad, 3. threatened, 4. valued, 5. useless, 6. frustrated, 7. not valued
8. interested, 9. frightened, 10. in control, 11. happy, 12. anxious.

It was hoped by using this method of producing elements that clusters of meanings may emerge and to see, by using 'non stressful' situations in some of the elements, whether as Bannister (1962) suggests:

"...psychological measures need to be "stimulus bound" i.e. operate in terms of assumed real characteristics in the stimuli?"(Pge 119)

The final exercise was designed to give the participants an opportunity to 'recover' themselves before rejoining the world, and was not included as part of the research. Not all of the participants could stay to complete all of the tasks.

The final piece of practical work came at the 'issue' from a different direction. I felt much of my intuitive knowledge about stress in children had come from my counselling work, and although I felt unable, for ethical reasons (see section 2.6), to use client material, a counselling exploration of the issue seemed to offer a rich source of data. The aim of this study was to produce theoretical propositions directly from the data using a technique described more fully in the methodology section of this study. This was a different focus from the other studies in that the previous studies gathered data with a view to finding the answer to questions. This study gathered data and generated theoretical propositions from that data.

I undertook two case studies in the form of two counselling sessions with two subjects. For ethical reasons (see section 2.6), it was not felt to be appropriate to ask my existing clients to be subjects, and this issue was resolved by asking for volunteers from a full-time counselling course to contract for an hours counselling session with the agenda childhood stress being set from the outset. Two students agreed to take part and a full explanation of the research and the purpose of the sessions was given. The resulting counselling sessions were videoed, transcribed and subjected to grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The research process has been a reflective one and the thesis attempts to map this. As has been suggested in Chapter One, the process has not been linear but multi-layer. In order to give the reader a sense of this, a normal structure was laid aside and the research presented, as far as possible, as vehicle to enable the reader to experience something of the process. In order to facilitate this, the review of literature (Chapter Four) comes after the description and evaluation of the pilot studies. This may suggest, falsely, that the literature was not consulted until then, but, as is evidenced by the constant reflection on and incorporation of relevant literature throughout the studies, it was a continual companion. If the literature review had come earlier in the thesis, this would have given an overview that was not available to me until after the pilot studies and not enabled the reader to flavour something of the research process. Any research is, of necessity, a process, and the structure of the this attempts to make an implicit process explicit through its reflective nature.

The next two section of this chapter will describe how the results from the data were presented and discussed and the final section will describe the ethical considerations pertinent to this study.

2.4 Results

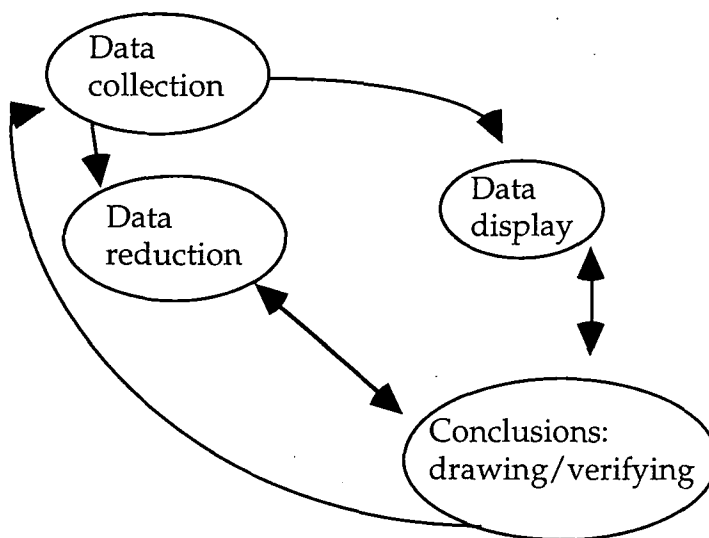
As has been argued in the previous section, the potential benefits of qualitative data collection in this thesis were deemed to be greater than quantitative data. The benefits are described by Miles and Huberman (1984) below:

"With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanations. Then too, qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and new theoretical integrations; they help the reader go beyond initial preconceptions and frameworks. Finally, the findings from qualitative studies have a quality of "undeniability," as Smith (1978) put it. " (Pge 15)

However, this approach is not without its dangers. These are described by Miles (1979) in Miles and Huberman (1984):

" The most serious and central difficulty in the use of qualitative data is that the methods of analysis are not well formulated....the analyst faced with a bank of qualitative data has very few guidelines against self-delusion, let alone the presentation of unreliable or invalid conclusions to scientific or policy making audiences. How can we be sure that an "earthy," "undeniable," "serendipitous" finding is not, in fact, wrong? " (Pge 16)

Therefore qualitative research needs explicit, systematic methods for data analysis and the drawing of conclusions. Because of this, the data collected in this study has followed the interactive model suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984, Pge 23). It is shown below:



Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model

Figure 2.2

Data reduction is described by Miles and Huberman (1984) as:

"... the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data..." (Pge 21)

They argue that this process happens throughout a qualitative study and is part of analysis.

They define 'data display' as:

"..an organised assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking." (Pge 21)

In order for this to be possible, data reduction and analysis has to take place as well.

The results from the data will be described in a study by study format. This is because, as has been previously suggested, each exploratory study provided a pathway to the next. The common patterns and the developmental links found in the studies will also be discussed.

2.5 Discussion of Results

As has been argued in the previous section, qualitative research needs explicit, systematic methods for data analysis and the drawing of conclusions. This section in each of the studies tackles the third part of the analysis suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984), and examines conclusion drawing and verification. A discussion of the results of each study is presented where it seems possible in Miles and Huberman's (1984) terms to begin:

".. to decide what things *mean*, ..noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions." (Pge 22)

As well as discussing the possible conclusions that may be drawn from the data, the meanings which have emerged from the data have to be tested for their validity. In this study, as has been described in the methodological

section, this has involved shining the torch of exploration from many angles and to involve as many 'ways of knowing' as possible.

The results from each study will be discussed as to their possible meanings, in a study by study format. The common patterns and the developmental links found in the studies will also be discussed within each study.

The next section will describe the ethical issues faced in this thesis and explore the process of decision making.

2.6 Ethical Dilemmas Pertinent to this Study

As a general principle, in this study, the dignity and welfare of the subjects has been of prime concern. The ethical dilemmas which appeared have related to occasions when this general principle seemed to be compromised. In the case of this study, two main dilemmas have appeared - that of using children as subjects and of using client material.

2.6.1 Working with Children

Kitchener (1984) reports that :

"The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research (1977) has taken the position that using children in research has important potential benefits for all children and as a consequence, they argue research with children can be carried out in an ethical manner. "(Pge 47)

This, initially, was the basis for including children in this study. It was felt that in order to find out about how stress is perceived in children, children needed to be the subjects and any results were potentially beneficial to all children. However, as the research went on, several ethical dilemmas emerged.

The first was to what extent can children give informed consent. The ability to give informed consent rests in part on competency. Powell (1984) sets out the following guidelines:

"1. Sixteen year old and older adolescents of average or better intelligence, should normally be presumed competent to make critical, self-determining decisions, unless other factors cause significant doubts.

2. In the absence of clear and compelling evidence so far for 12 to 15 year olds, we might do well to incorporate Gaylin's (1982) stringency correction, and presume incompetence to make critical, self-determining decisions, unless considerable empirical evidence to the contrary can be provided for the individual case.

3. Eleven year old and younger children should normally be considered incompetent to make critical, life-determining decisions." (Pge 60)

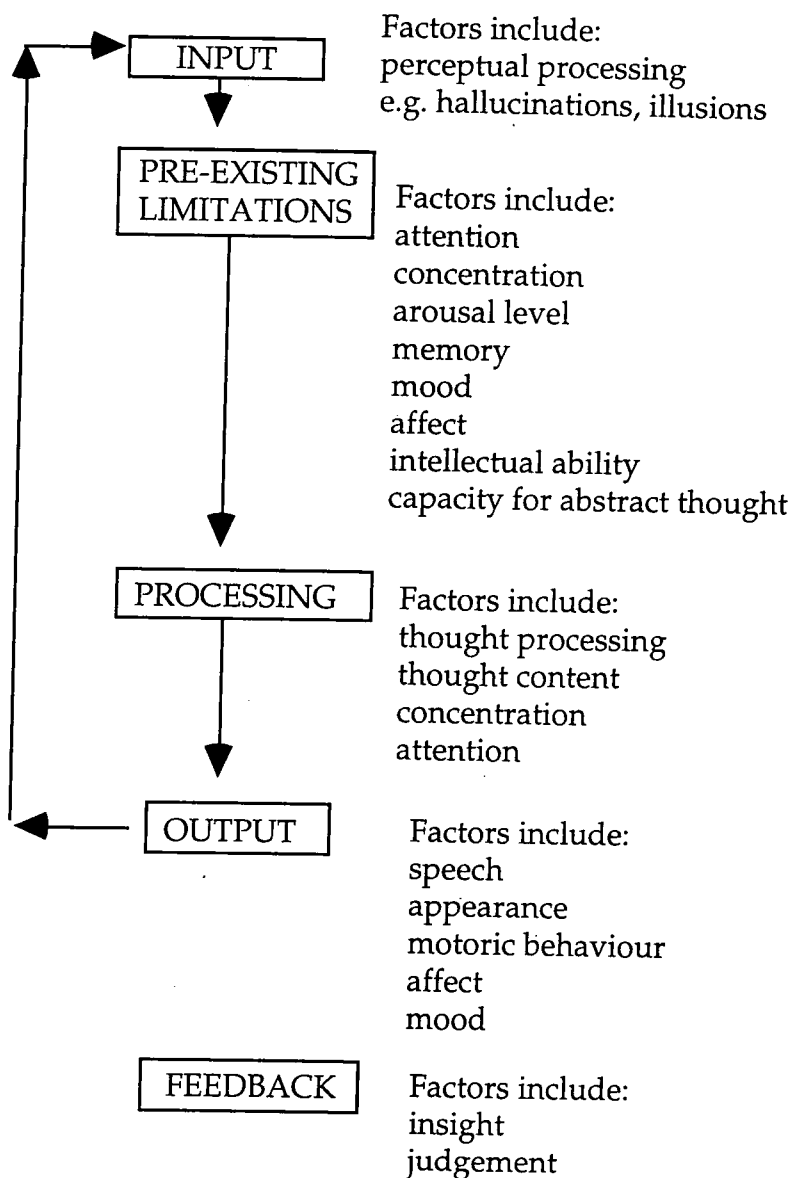
The children used in this study ranged from 10 years to 17 years and, if we follow the guidelines suggested above, the younger ones were not in a position to give informed consent. However, as Powell (1984) argues, competency requires a context and because contexts differ, there can be no single test of competency. Roth, Meisel and Lidz (1977) suggest:

"The search for a single test of competency is a search for a Holy Grail. Unless it is recognised that there is no magical definition of competency....the search for an acceptable test will never end. In practice, judgements of competency go beyond semantics or straightforward applications of legal rules." (Pge 286)

In the case of this study, the children involved were in different contexts. In the first study the children were in a school situation, and a mark of their competence to give consent may be that out of ninety children invited to take part, only forty-nine agreed. Fifty-one children exercised their right to withhold consent. In the second study, the children were all known to me and had been from childhood. This could have meant that they were less likely to refuse me than a stranger and, as a consequence, careful permission was given not to take part. The third study involved older children and was purely on a volunteer basis. None of the group knew me, and, as far as I am aware, no pressure was put on them to participate. They were also given permission to withdraw at any time.

Powell (1984) suggests that as well as age/intelligence indicators of competency, there are also psychological indicators of it. Although he is using

his model to assess adolescents' competence in terms of ability to accept or decline medical treatment, it can be useful in this context. He suggested the following model for assessing psychological indicators of competence.



Powell's Model for Assessing Psychological Indicators of Competence (Pge 61)

Figure 2.2

The children used in this study did, through a subjective evaluation, seem to be psychologically competent. They showed no signs of impaired perceptual processing and seemed able to function at the 'pre-existing limitations' level, 'processing' and 'outcomes' levels and, during feedback, showed evidence of insight and judgement through their responses.

Another tenet of informed consent is that of 'voluntariness'. Children may, because of the difference in power and status, not perceive their participation as voluntary. This dilemma was recognised and that the children were offered as many permissions as possible to opt out.

The final dilemma I faced in this study with regard to child participation was, to me, the most difficult. After the third study, I became increasingly concerned that the children may not be able to protect themselves as well as adults in terms of choosing the level of their involvement. Also, I was concerned that if they were upset by involvement in the study, they may well not be in a position to seek help.

These dilemmas included the notion of capacity - were the subjects able, because of their limited experience of the world and the power differential between adult and child, to make a real choice about the material they chose to disclose. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) suggest that the dissimilarities between research with adults and children can be emphasised by the "three R's" - responsibility, respect and reflection. In terms of responsibility, they argue that:

"We do not believe that the adult ...can ethically take the same laissez-faire attitude with underage informants that he or she might adopt with adults. Children may need to be protected from the consequences of their actions.....Adults feel a moral responsibility for all children. This moral responsibility should not be casually dispensed with." (Pge 75)

Although the thrust of their argument was about participant observation, the same moral responsibility applies. This is related to the notion of autonomy. If autonomy rests upon the idea of rational choice, if such a thing exists, then can children make a rational choice here? I believe not, as their experience of the world is necessarily limited and thus they may not be aware of the consequences of their actions.

The second dissimilarity - respect- is seen to be dissimilar in that adults often do not show respect to children. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) argue that:

"Respect thus must be a specific methodological technique, overthrowing the "natural" adult tendencies both to take children for granted and to accord them provisional status, depending upon how their behaviours accord with adult standards." (Pge 75 -76)

Although Fine and Sandstrom (1988) suggest that:

Children have opinions and make judgements, and even if these judgements are not always those which would be made by an adult, they have the same moral legitimacy" (Pge 76)

In this context, a more important principle is that of justice, and Kitchener's (1984) view that:

"..non equal persons have a right to be treated differently if the inequality is relevant to the issue in question." (Pge 49)

The children's relative inexperience seems a very relevant issue and would affect the principle of nonmaleficence (Kitchener, 1984) Because of this perceived danger of doing harm, it was decided not to continue to use children in the fourth, fifth and sixth studies where it was hoped that deeper material might be accessed. In terms of the validity of the research, I feel this ethical decision had the effect of producing richer material than would have been possible using children as the adults could make connections and come to understandings of how stress in childhood affected them as adults.

The second major ethical dilemma I faced in this study was that of using client material.

2.6.2 Using Client Material

As has been previously mentioned, during the course of this study my thinking on the issues of stress in childhood had been informed by my counselling practice. It seemed therefore, that client material would provide a rich source of data. However, several ethical issues became apparent. In the course of my counselling work, no contract had been made to use client material in this study and therefore to ask for permission, sometimes of clients long gone, would be to change the nature of our original agreement. To pursue clients in order to obtain permission could be intrusive and might even

lead to harm. The contracted time between us had passed and to pursue the client might be unwelcome and could possibly lead to the re-opening of old issues.

Also, the nature of my original contract had been a therapeutic alliance and not for the purposes of research. To then attempt to alter the contract could lead to confusion of boundaries and to an assault upon the client's autonomy. The ability to make an autonomous choice could be impaired by the counselling relationship. They may feel pressure to oblige me and thus call their voluntariness into question. It could also compromise the therapy as I would have a strong agenda of my own.

Because of the different power relationship, the students whom I counsel, might feel uncomfortable refusing permission or might grant permission in order to please. Either way it would not be a consent freely given.

I also wished to video the sessions for my research and this again might change the nature of the sessions and affect our counselling relationship.

However, the benefit of using client material was great. It could provide an in depth exploration of childhood stress within a supportive environment.

This issue was resolved by asking for volunteers from a full-time counselling course to contract for an hours counselling session with the agenda childhood stress being set from the outset. Two students agreed to take part and a full explanation of the research and the purpose of the sessions was given. This meant that client material could be used with as informed a consent as possible. The material proved to be very rich and will be described later in the thesis.

Ethical issues were a concern during this study and the preceding section has attempted to examine them in relation to the field work undertaken. As has been discussed, making these decisions has not been simple and perhaps the best that can be hoped for in any study involving people is that we are, to misquote John Holt, ethically 'good-enough'.

Chapter 3 - Clearing the Ground

3.1 Introduction

As has been discussed in previous chapters, the term 'stress' has been a difficult one to operationalise. As Carpenter (1992) suggests, it has been used to describe a stimulus and a response as well as a process and a perception. The purpose of the first two pilot studies described in this chapter was to 'clear the ground' by exploring what the term 'stress' might mean to children and to further clarify the concept of stress. Each study is described separately and discussed with reference to the literature

3.2 First Study - Self Disclosure Exercise

3.2.1 Introduction

A first school based study was undertaken to see what the term 'stress' might mean to children and if stressors, in the way the term is described by Seyle (1974), was a useful one in this context.

Anthony and Thibodeau (1979) argued that:

" Psychological stressors produce a syndrome of subjective and objective responses. Dominant among the subjective reaction are feelings of anxiety. Other emotional reactions such as anger, hate, depression, fear and guilt are also common subjective responses to psychological stressors. Some characteristic objective responses are restlessness, fidgeting, criticising, quarrelling, lying, and crying" (Pge 672)

Leaving aside the working definition used to differentiate between objective and subjective responses as this seems to link into another issue of location of response, Anthony and Thibodeau's suggestion of a syndrome of responses seemed useful. In order to explore this usefulness the subjects were invited to complete the task described in the next section.

3.2.2 Methodology

The sample were drawn from three classes in a local comprehensive school. They were self-selecting in the sense that the activity was offered to each of the whole classes and only those who chose to take part were involved. After an explanation of what was involved forty-nine out of approximately ninety children chose to take part. They ranged in age from Year 7 secondary school children (11 years old, approximately), to Year 8 secondary school children (13 years old, approximately), and they also ranged in academic ability and social background.

The children were given a plain sheet of A4 paper and asked to draw a shield and then divide that shield into quarters, a, b, c and d. They were asked to depict in:

- a - things that made them sad,
- b - things that made them happy,
- c - things that made them worried,
- d - things that made them excited.

They were told that they need not put their names on them and no attempt would be made to trace the owners of the shields. Most chose to name their work. The intention was to examine stressors and to see if a syndrome of responses existed. However, semantics were an issue. I was concerned that if I asked about stress, this would set up expectations that it existed, and hence the decision to ask about responses which may be viewed as part of a syndrome.

After the first class had completed their shields, I realised that I may have difficulty in correctly interpreting the drawings, so the subsequent two classes were asked to write their feelings about the four areas on the back of the paper, as well as completing the shield on the other side.

3.2.3 Results

As can be seen from the histogram below, the responses were divided into those which could be perceived as being associated with 'eustress', and those which could be perceived as being associated with 'distress'. These terms

were chosen as a method of reducing the data as they distinguish between the positive and negative effects of stress. The term 'eustress' being derived from the definition of Schultz & Heuchert (1983) as:

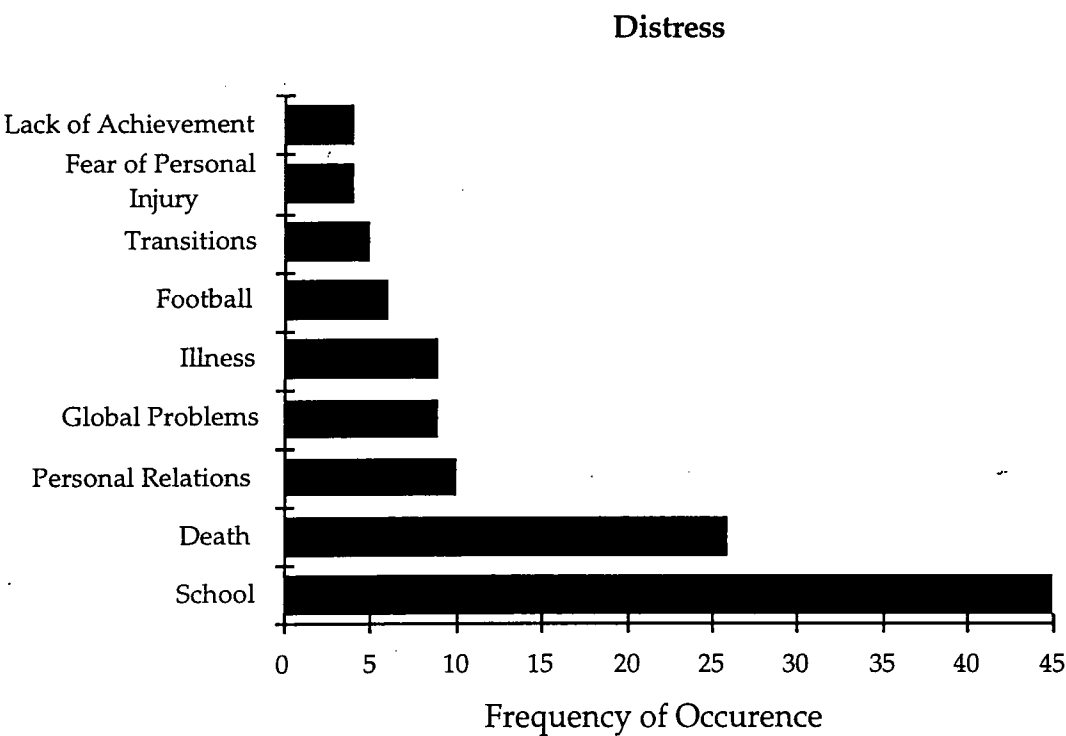
"...the result of proactive, positive, or adaptive responses to stressful life events."(Pge 22)

and 'distress', from the same source as being:

"...the result of negative, non constructive or maladaptive responses to stressful life events" (Pge 22)

The results were then scanned for broad categories and sixteen categories emerged. Sad and worried responses were included in the histogram of stressors associated with 'distress' and the happy and excited responses were included in the histogram of stressors associated with 'eustress'.

Table 3.1



Total number of responses in categories associated with distress = 121

Table 3.2



Total number of responses in categories associated with eustress = 77

Total number of responses in both categories associated = 198

Nine categories emerged associated with 'distress', and seven categories emerged associated with 'eustress'.

Categories Associated with Distress:

1. The **school** category included non-specified fears of school, fear of examinations and fear of 'getting wrong'.
2. The **death** category mainly consisted of worry that people or pets close to them would die rather than a fear of their own death.
3. The **personal relations** category included worries about relationships with peer group, boy/girl friends and relationships with family.
4. The **global problems** category included worries about global warming, acid rain etc.
5. The **illness** category included illness in others as well as in themselves.

6. The **football** category in this context was the viewing of England's progress in the World Cup and the sadness caused by Gazza's second yellow card.
7. The **transitions** category included moving house and the move from the school they attended to the upper site at the end of the second year.
8. The **fear of personal injury** category included fear of being involved in some sort of transport crash as well as the fear of being bullied.
9. The **lack of achievement** category included the fear of not doing well in examinations and assessments as well as the fear of losing. Losing what, was not specified.

Categories Associated with Eustress:

1. The **holiday** category included holidays with peers and/ families, as well as trips of a shorter duration.
2. The **personal relations** category included relationships with family as well as with peers.
3. The **festivals** category included Christmas and personal birthdays.
4. The **participating in sports** category included such things as horse riding, tennis and football.
5. The **football** category is again associated with England's progress in the World Cup.
6. The **achievement** category encompassed examination success as well as winning. Winning what, was not specified.
7. The **transitions** category referred to moving abroad.

3.2.4 Key Findings

This first study found that:

- the experiences described by the children could be labelled stressors if we use the term as defined by Schultz and Heuchert (1983), (Page 5, Chapter 1).
- 91.86% of the respondents listed some form of worry or sadness connected with school
- 53% of the respondents mentioned death as a worry.
- personal relations were associated with both distress and eustress.
- cultural as well as unique experiences can be viewed as stressors.

3.2.5 Discussion of results

The aim of this study was to see if 'stress' was a meaningful concept for children. As has been discussed in the introduction of this study, it was decided not to use the term 'stress' when eliciting responses in order to eliminate the possibility of suggesting responses to a concept that did not occur naturally. In retrospect, this was like asking questions about a leg when you really wanted to know about an arm. They are similar in many ways and yet essentially different. The concepts of sadness, worry, happiness and excitement are closely linked to the stress concept but are not synonymous. Literature and further studies suggest that stress is not a single emotional and or behavioural response, but a process which involves many responses and emotions. Anthony and Thibodeau (1979) argue for a syndrome of subjective and objective responses.

As can be seen from the results of this study, it was possible to, in Miles and Huberman's (1984) terms, reduce and display the data. The conclusions that can be drawn from this must be tentative. The experiences identified by the children could be labelled 'stressors' if we use the term in the way suggested by Schultz and Heuchert (1983) as they seem to require action on the child's behalf. The problem with this broad definition is that 'stressor' could then be seen to refer to any experience which required action e.g. being offered a

milkshake. Whilst this definition is sustained by Seyle's view of stress being located on a continuum of experience, it did not seem to support the 'common' view of stress as being a response to an unpleasant experience.

Other studies have considered the effects of pleasurable versus unpleasant experiences. Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer and Lazarus (1981) constructed a scale to measure stress in terms of daily hassles and uplifts for use with adults. Their questions used words such as:

irritants, minor annoyances, major pressures, problems, difficulties, sources of peace, satisfaction or joy.

They found that the Hassle Scale was a better predictor of concurrent and subsequent psychological symptoms than the more usual life events scale. Although they do not use the term 'stressors' directly, the words used are perhaps closely related to 'syndrome' the concept of stress suggested by Anthony and Thibodeau (1979).

Compass *et al* (1987) also developed a measure of major and daily stressful events - this time focused on adolescents, and called the "Adolescence Perceived Events Scale." Their subjects were asked to provide lists of events in response to the following sets of instructions:

"1. During our day-to-day lives, each of us experiences events which can either cause problems or which bring us pleasure. Daily hassles can be events that irritate, annoy, or upset us or can cause problems, pressures, or difficulties for us. Daily pleasures are events which make us feel happy, joyful, or at peace. Daily hassles and pleasures can happen once, twice or many times during a month. In the blank spaces below, please describe in your own words any daily hassles or pleasures which have happened to you during the last six months.

2. List what you would consider the major life events , either positive or negative, which have happened in the past 6 months of your life. This should include those events which have had a large effect on your life or lead to changes in how you feel about yourself, your health or your well-being, your relationships with other people, or how well you do at school. Each of these events has probably happened only once during the last 6 months but had a large effect on you when it occurred.

List what you feel have been the major events of the past 6 months of your life in the blanks below."

Both the above studies were more prescriptive in their request for experiences and this perhaps enabled them to begin to identify stressors more clearly rather than general areas of stress. This seems to suggest a way forward for my future studies in terms of asking about 'stress' , if this is a meaningful concept to the subjects.

Also, the studies described above support the everyday notion that stress is connected in some way with negative experiences, rather than any experience which requires action.

Despite the limitations of this study, some interesting results were found which corresponded well to the results of other authors' research.

91.86 % of respondents listed some form of worry or sadness connected with school - forty-five out of a total of forty-nine respondents. Most did not expand their responses beyond saying school made them sad or worried although several cited examinations and results as a source of worry. Humphrey (1984) asserts that test anxiety is a near universal experience and suggests that:

"Competitive stress occurs when a child feels that s/he will not be able to respond adequately to the performance demands competition. This is a threat to the child's self-esteem that results in stress. Competitive stress is a negative response which is perceived as personally threatening."(Pge 9)

Caplan (1970) suggests that situations that challenge individuals beyond their current capacity are likely to be stressful. This idea is based upon a homeostatic view of people - that we seek to maintain equilibrium. This may often be the case for children in school, but is also one of the tenets upon which learning in general may be based. If we are never challenged beyond our current capacity, will we ever develop our skills and capacities? Perhaps the question is more about how these challenges are presented and supported.

53% of the respondents in this study mentioned 'Death ' as a worry - mainly concern about the death of relatives or friends. This seems to be a fairly common fear and Leick and Davidsen-Nielsen (1991) suggest that grief is a universal human emotional process. Concepts of death seem developmentally linked and Wass (1984) suggests the following framework:

Table 3.3

Life Period	Predominant Death Concepts
Infancy	No concept of death
Late Infancy, early childhood	Death is reversible; a temporary restriction, departure, or sleep
Middle childhood, late or preadolescence	Death is irreversible but capricious; external-internal physiological explanations
Preadolescent, adolescent, adult	Death is irreversible, universal, personal but distant; natural, physiological and theological explanations

Development of Death Concepts

This table is constructed with a view to the 'normal' developmental concepts of death and is based upon a Piagetian perspective. It does appear, however, that experience can modify the child's ability to conceive death and children who have experienced death at a very young age are able to develop a sophisticated and 'adult' concept of death.

In the case of the sample group of children, it may be possible to assume that they are reaching the 'adult' concept of death described at the bottom of the table and becoming, as Blom, Cheney and Snoddy (1986) suggest:

"..confronted with the possibility of the death of their parents and their own death" (Pge 117)

Jewett (1982) suggests that:

"Deep within every child is the fantasy that one day his parents will be gone."(Pge 12)

Keating (1980) suggests that adolescent thinking is characterised by thinking about possibilities ahead, thinking about thought, thinking through hypotheses and thinking beyond conventional limits. Thinking about death may be in keeping, therefore, with these suggested characteristics of adolescent thought.

Personal relations were mentioned by 57% of the respondents in association with both eustress and distress. Several studies have investigated the importance of both social support and family relations. Boyce *et al* (1977) in their study of the influence of life events and family routines on childhood respiratory tract illness found strong family routines augmented the impact of stressful change. They postulated that this may be due to the rigidity of parents or harshness of family rules but concluded that from their personal knowledge of the families studied that this was unlikely. They felt that an alternative explanation could be that under the impact of a life change, general family routines could be undermined. They also argue that:

"...it is distinctly plausible children accustomed to a highly routinized life are relatively more *stressed* than *protected* by their routines when a major life change is encountered. Conversely, the adaptability gained from coping with a changeable, uncertain daily life may well be in some way protective against the effect of subsequent crisis. " (Pge 614)

They do admit that their study was limited by retrospective methods and a small sample, and other studies do not seem to support this position. Rutter (1979) reports that:

"...poor supervision has been one of the most common antecedents of delinquency in most investigations (West and Farrington (1973), Glueck and Glueck (1959))"(Pge 64)

He also reports that Wilson (1974) found that in conditions of chronic stress and poverty, strict parental supervision was more effective in preventing delinquency than a happy family atmosphere. As Rutter points out:

"..there are many unanswered questions. In the first place, the findings should be replicated before they form the basis of

policies. In the second place, outcome was assessed only in terms of delinquency, so that the costs in other aspects of development remain unknown. "(Pge 65)

His own studies, examining the protective function of one good relationship with a parent, showed that having a good relationship did provide a substantial protective effect. The 'good relationship' was defined in terms of the presence of high warmth and the absence of severe criticism, and he found that of those children with a good relationship, only a quarter showed a conduct disorder compared to three quarters of those who didn't. Again, as with Wilson, only one 'outcome' was examined, conduct disorder, and the findings may need to be replicated. However, it does seem that the quality of primary relationships are a factor in the process of perceiving stress.

Wadsworth (1984) reports that research indicates that stress in childhood can be related to loss or drastic change in relationships with one of the parents in the first five years of life. He argues that this experience is associated with an increased incidence of illness and anti-social behaviour in early adult life. He also suggests that this is associated with an increased chance of divorce or separation in adult life and a greater likelihood of cool affectional relationships. Although there seems little empirical evidence cited to support this view, it is a very powerful one. It is, however, quite a sweeping view.

Greenberg *et al's* (1983) study into the nature and importance of attachment relationships to parents and peers during adolescence found that the perceived quality of the adolescents relationship to both peers and parents related to measures of well-being, and that the quality of the attachment to parents was significantly more powerful than that to peers in this prediction.

An Australian study by Andrews, Tennant, Hewson and Schonell (1978) found that life event stress, adverse childhood experience and poor social support were related to both physical and psychiatric illness. Life events stresses were measured using a life events scaled inventory and previous discussion in this study has highlighted some of the difficulties in relying upon this type of measure.

Adverse childhood experience was defined in terms of what they describe as:

" the four best predictive questions of psychological morbidity developed by Srole *et al* (1962)" (Pge 29)

These are 'death ' or 'separation of parents before the age of 16', 'parental unemployment or economic hardship' and 'either parents perceived as the worrying type'. These categories seem very broad and generalised. The whole concept of what constitutes an adverse childhood experience seems to be so linked to individual perception that although separation or loss of a parent may be devastating for one child, it may not be so for another. This seems true of all the categories.

Social support was derived from questions assessing the perceived social support and the respondents were asked to compare themselves to others and the number of supports was emphasised rather than the quality.

Andrew's *et al's* study found that physical illness had its strongest association with an adverse childhood and in psychiatric illness; life event stress and an adverse childhood had the strongest associations. Poor social support was also linked to both physical and psychiatric illness.

The problem with all these studies is that they seem to isolate certain variables and then look for associations with other factors. Whilst this may be valuable in that it could inform us about general trends, it seems to be less informative about individuals. Also, by separating out variables and operationalising them, it seems as if something of the wholeness of the process is lost. It seems to be like trying to assess the aesthetic qualities of a great painting by extracting the colours used and comparing these with others used in equally great works. It may tell us something, but it loses a 'wholeness', a gestalt. A gestalt is defined by English and English (1958) as:

".... a form, a configuration or a totality that has, as a unified whole, properties which cannot be derived by summation from the parts and their relationships....It may refer to physical structures, to physiological and psychological functions, or to symbolic units"(Pge 225)

Passons (1975) describes Perls as noting several propositions within the theory of gestalt and two of them seem relevant here. The first is that 'a person's behaviour is a whole which is greater than the sum of its specific components,' and ' a person's behaviour can be meaningfully understood only in context'

The final 'stressor' identified from this first study was 'Football'. It may be explained by the world cup fever that gripped the country when the study was undertaken. It seemed to be important because, as Compass (1987) suggests:

"Whilst most incidents are unique experiences of particular individuals, many others are of such scope and magnitude that they affect an entire culture ...Cultural events have a wider social distribution, thus providing an individual with a large source of potential social support and numerous reference figures to serve as norms for behaviour (Brim and Ryff (1980))"(Pge 278)

This view is supported by Clarkson and MacKewan (1993) :

".... a person's behaviour can only be understood in terms of interdependence with his environment because of social, cultural and historical fields are intrinsic to him"(Pge 42)

3.3 Conclusions and Links to Next Study

Despite the tentative nature of this first pilot study, some useful ideas and possible connections have emerged. The way the data was reduced seemed to allow some tentative meanings to be offered and the results of this study linked into other research being done in the area. Perhaps the semantics of the task set encouraged focusing on a wide set of responses which may have meant that the focus of the study, to explore stress, may have been diluted, but several useful connections with the literature developed.

The situation in which the survey took place was less than ideal. The participants were asked to reveal personal feelings to a researcher that in most cases they had only just met and in a few cases they knew only too well as she was friendly with their parents. It was also conducted in the

classroom where the respondent's peers could see the responses. What emerged was probably a 'first stage' set of responses that seemed to be useful indicators of areas of stress, and the creation of more questions about the usefulness of the 'stimulus response' concept of stress.

This study succeeded in highlighting possible stressors and supported other research in demonstrating that stressors were an element in causing stress if we accept Seyle's definition of:

"Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it"(1974) (Pge 27)

The subjects seemed well able to describe the demands which led to sad, happy, worried and excited and in Seyle's terms lead to stress. He argued that it is:

"immaterial if the agent or situation we face is pleasant or unpleasant - all that counts is the intensity of the demand for readjustment or adaptation."(1974) (Pge 29)

He describes an experience continuum thus:

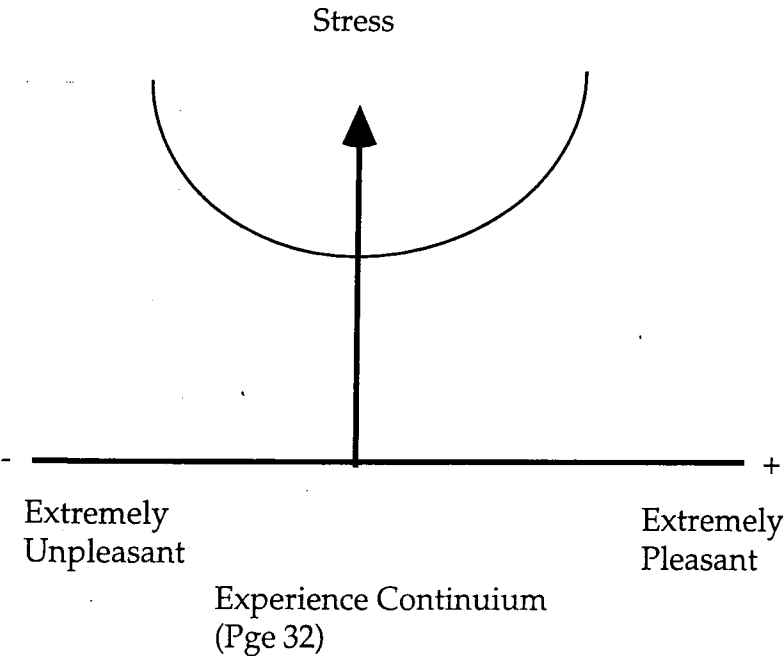


Figure 3.1

This notion accords well with the results from this first study.

The next step in the journey was a further exploration of these terms and concepts, with the intention of exploring what children understood by the term 'stress' and whether a second study would support the findings of the first study or lead to a more specific description of the concept.

3.4 Study Two - Description of Ambiguous Pictures

3.4.1 Introduction

Semantics were still an issue at this point in the study. Whatever the meaning ascribed to the term 'stress', it has its origins in some conceptual and/or semantic framework, and because of the confusion meanings of the term, one of the aims of this study was to explore its meaning to children. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) report that:

"Members of an Institute of Medicine panel (Elliot and Eisdorfer (1982)), for example state:"...after thirty-five years, no one has formulated a definition of stress that satisfies even a majority of stress researchers"(p.11)

Ader (1980), is even more forceful:

"....there is little heuristic value in the concept of "stress". "Stress" has come to be used (implicitly, at least) as an explanation of altered psychophysiological states. Since different experiential events have different behavioural and physiologic effects that depend upon the stimulation to which the individual is subsequently exposed and the responses the experimenter chooses to measure, the inclusive label, "stress", contributes little to an analysis of the mechanisms that may underline or determine the organism's response. In fact, such labelling, which is descriptive rather than explanatory, may actually impede conceptual and empirical advances by its implicit assumption of an equivalence of stimuli, fostering the reductionistic search for one-cause explanations." (Pge 312)

Mason (1975) argues:

" The disenchantment felt by many scientists with the stress field is certainly understandable when one views two decades in which the term "stress" has been used variously to refer to "stimulus" by some workers, "response" by some workers, "interaction" by others, and more comprehensive combinations of the above factors by still other workers."(Pge 29)

The aim of this study was to further clarify the concept of stress. This was done by eliciting the words used by children and adolescents to describe stress. It was felt that by asking them directly what they found to be stressful may, in fact, suggest to them that they should find some things stressful even if they didn't, and this may lead to the results being confounded. Conversely, if the question was not specific enough, then we may find that the experiences, feelings and behaviours they describe are about something else and not about the concept that we accept as 'stress'. An analogy here could be the idea of asking respondents about their leg when it is really their arm we are interested in. They are both limbs and have several things in common and are related, but they are not the same thing.

As was pointed out above, many studies fail to operationalise the concept of stress and use multiple and conflicting definitions of this concept. It has been defined as both a stimulus and a response, and in some cases, an umbrella concept that seems to encompass most human emotions. Lazarus (1966) tried to settle the problem by regarding stress as a rather unspecific concept, like emotion, motivation or cognition, which was the result of the meaning attributed to transactions between the person and environment which taxed or exceeded the individuals resources or those of the social system within which the individual lived.

This study was designed to investigate the actual words used by children and adolescents when describing situations that could be perceived as stressful, for two reasons. Firstly, so as to avoid ascribing to them a condition or concept of stress that they may or may not perceive to be 'real'. Secondly to see if stress could be encapsulated in one word or if, as Lazarus's definition suggests, that it encompasses a very general concept that is made up of a range of emotions and therefore is described by many words.

3.4.2 Methodology

The subjects were a self-selected, non-random sample of boys and girls personally known to the me. The boys (2), were 15 and 17 years of age, and the girls (5) were aged 10, 13, 14, 15 and 17 years. They were all white, middle-class children attending a local comprehensive school with the exception of the youngest boy and girl who attend private schools.

In order to escape the possible confounding of results which could occur by using the word 'stress', with its seeming multiplicity of meanings, this study focused on wordless stimuli - ambiguous pictures of the type used in the Thematic Apperception Tests (TAT). These pictures were selected for their possible stressful content and the subjects asked to describe what they felt was happening.

Each participant was asked to look at a set of nine TAT-like pictures, (The Open University, 1976, 1977), in their own homes, in their own time, unsupervised by the researcher. The pictures may be seen in Appendix A. The subjects were given the following written instructions:

'Please look at each of these pictures, one at a time and for each one can you:-

- a) Tell me what happened before,
- b) Tell me what's happening now,
- c) What the people are feeling,
- d) What will happen next.

Don't spend more than five minutes a picture.

Can you also put your sex and age on your paper.

Thanks very much.'

3.4.3 Results

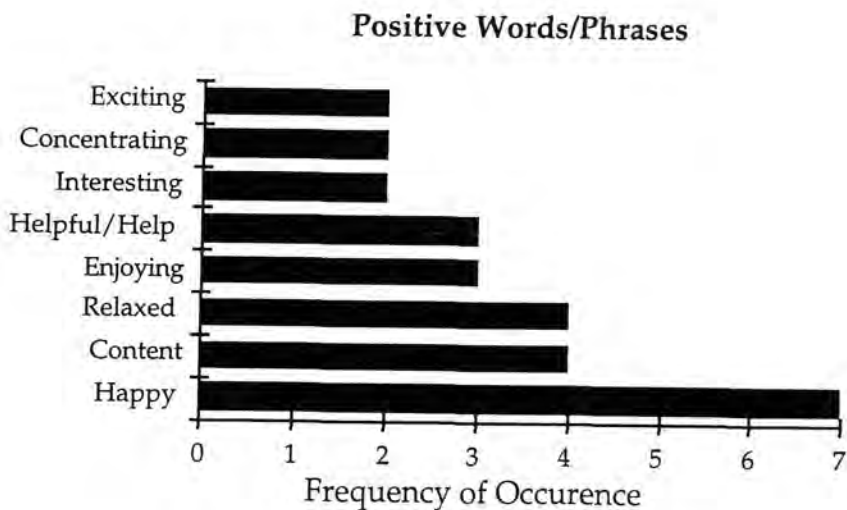
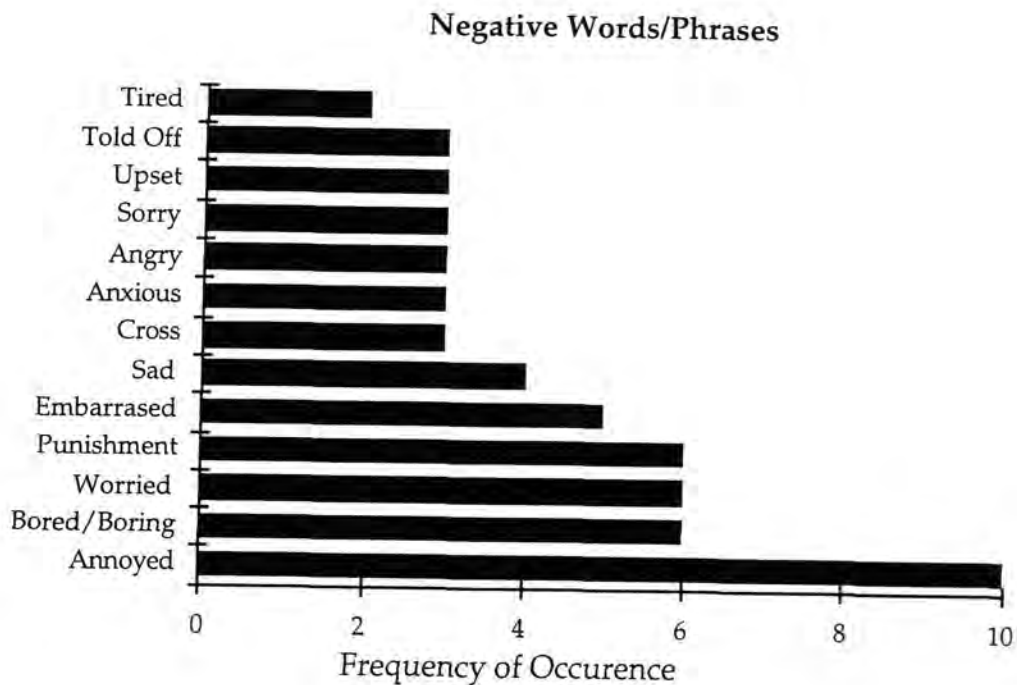
Because stress is often seen as an emotional state or a behavioural response, (see discussion in the statement of the issues) it was decided to go through each response and to extract words which seemed to describe an emotional state or behaviour likely to provoke an emotional response. This produced 56 words/phrases and, as in the

previous study, these were further divided into positive and negative words/phrases. A table of these may be found below.

Table 3.4

Words/Phrases Elicited from the Respondents			
Negative Words/Phrases		Positive Words/Phrases	
exhausted	cannot help	happy	fascinating
sorry	hurt	worry less	proud
cross	helpless	confident	
jealous	contempt	content	
sad	punishment	relaxed	
angry	bad	satisfied	
guilty	tired	courageous	
feeling serious	silly	funny	
told off	sorry	approve	
annoyed	upset	joyful	
nervous	concerned	forgiven	
boring/bored	struggling	likes	
embarrassing	revenge	enjoying	
worried	scared	laughing	
ashamed	apprehensive	interest	
anxious	fed up	concentrating	
empty	uneasy	helpful/help	
lost	disinterested	interesting	
teasing		exciting	

As a way of finding the most preferred words/phrases, the number of times they were used by all respondents was recorded and the results may be seen in the histogram below. Thirteen negative and eight positive words/phrases were used more than once.



As is explained in the discussion of results, the above results, although useful, seemed quite sterile so the stories the children told were re-examined and are presented below in terms of general mood of the subject and predictive elements drawn from the stories.

Table 3.5
Results of TAT-like Test by Pictures

Subject, Age and Sex	General Mood	Events	Feelings and What happens next
Subject 1, 10 years, female	In this account there is a general mood of vulnerability - a sense of being apart from others and to have to conform to be accepted. There is also a sense of routines being a safety e.g. school, church.	1. Long Trip 2. Dropping bottle 3. Getting new bike 4. Telling joke 5. Death of friend 6. Examination 7. Broke a cup, told off 8. Broke a school rule, sent to head 9. Talking at back of class	1. Exhaustion, made better by eating. 2. He's sorry, others cross, made better by doing some work. 3. Girl happy, boy jealous, made better by going to school. 4. Feeling happy, go home 5. Feels very sad, then go to church 6. Thinking, then has lunch 7. He is sorry, woman angry, he's sent upstairs 8. Boy feels guilty, will get told off 9. They feel happy but others are serious, they will get told off
Subject 2, 13 years, female	In this account there is a sense of adults as 'enablers', people who will help in a difficulty as well as adults as 'boundary setters'. The subject seems have a real sense of being someone who can give pleasure to adults and seems happy and content.	1. Parents relaxing, boy looking at records. 2. Broken vase caused by boys silliness 3. Vandalism to girls bike 4. Traffic warden joking with children 5. Taking Gran for a drive 6. Working in school, all concentrating, one boy struggling 7. Boy made to wash up, mother feels no-one helps in house 8. Boy done something wrong, sent to head, seen by another teacher 9. Two girls talking in class, one boy, bored, one boy concentrating	1. Parents full of food and tired, boy enjoying the scene and his records. 2. Teacher angry and will punish boys, boys sorry 3. Girl, angry and upset, teacher takes charge and is concerned. 4. Traffic warden enjoying interest of children and vice-versa 5. Boy, enjoying view, girl feeling squashed, Gran enjoying company 6. Teacher helpful, children concentrating, struggling boy receives help 7. Boy and Mother both annoyed, resolved by sharing task 8. Boy, sorry, teacher curious 9. Girls are interested in their conversation and get told off

Subject 3, 14 years, female	There is a sense in this account of a perception of adults being tired and bad tempered and of a certain vulnerability in relationships e.g. girl, boy. There is a strong sense of supportive friends and of a divide between adults and child's worlds. There is also a sense of fascination with the adult world and a determination to succeed.	1. Parents, tired after days work, boy playing records and bored 2. Boy breaks glass, teacher stands over him while he clears it away. Another boy gloating over punishment. 3. Girl broke up with boy friend, friends try and cheer her up, old boy friend comes to apologise. 4. Soldier telling exciting stories about the army 5. Travelling in a cab 6. Answering questions from a blackboard in class, one boy being helped by teacher 7. Boy looking out of kitchen window, Lady leaving kitchen 8. Boy caused corruption (!) at school, sent to head 9. Kids testing each other ready for an exam, boy sends girl a note	1. Adults annoyed with boy because of loud music. 2. Teacher annoyed with boy, boy annoyed with both teacher and other boy. Results in first boy taking revenge e.g. fighting 3. Girl feels lonely, everyone else seems to have own boy friends, supported by friend, refuses to accept boy friends apology. 4. Kids, fascinated, excited, tells parents about it, soldier, proud 5. Deep thoughts about their destination 6. Determined to answer questions, teacher goes over questions, gives homework 7. Boy happy, content, joyful, Lady. anxious, in a hurry 8. Boy, scared, apprehensive, anxious, fed up of waiting 9. Girl is happy, teacher will catch them talking

Subject 4, 15 years, female	There is a real sense of contentment in this account. A feeling of being happy and accepted and that whatever difficulties may appear, they will be resolved, possibly by an adult 'enabler'. There is also a strong sense of a very positive teacher's role, and a sense of being well loved	1. Family relaxing, boy reading, all content 2. Child broken something of another child. Teacher told child to clear up mess. 3. New boy being bullied, friend to scared to help, other people unaware of what's going on 4. Police talking about road safety, tells them something funny 5. Family taking Gran out for outing 6. Teacher feels pupils work not up to standard. Boy and other pupils working hard 7. Boy has been bad, has to do washing up as a punishment 8. Boy punished by teacher but so bad he's sent to head 9. Girl meets a boy she likes, they are talking and joking	1. Parents will answer boys questions with interest and pride and answer in a way which will fit in with the atmosphere. 2. Child whose belonging it was is sad and reflective, and angry with the person who broke it. Teacher pleased matter seems resolved, other child angry at being made to clear it up. Children become friends again. 3. Bully happy, new boy trying to pretend he's not bothered, but feeling hurt, other boy feels helpless, Resolved by friend standing up to bully and being taught a lesson 4. Children are happy, Policeman interested in their reactions. 5. Gran and boy are feeling content, girl concentrating on something in her lap and is feeling contempt • They will go home and be fussed by Gran. 6. Boy feels determined to prove himself, others also concentrating. Teacher will approve of work. 7. Mother cross, boy angry and sad, resolved by mother washing up and all forgiven. 8. Teacher angry, walks off, boy worried, severely told off by head, teacher angry for rest of the day 9. Other pupils concentrating, boy and girl are happy, told off by teacher. • This seems very out of context with her other responses and I wonder if it is a misspelling of 'content'!

Subject 5, 17 years, Male	This account seems to demonstrate an adolescent in transition. He's still dependent upon his family, but embarrassed by them. He's beginning to be interested in 'adult' things, e.g. Gulf War, and is restless and bored and aware of his potential power e.g. walking out when a teacher tells him off.	1. All been shopping and return restless and think about the outcome of the Gulf War. 2. Made to tidy room 3. Boy asked girl out and has been refused 4. Postman talking interestingly to kids in playground 5. Boy gets his parents to give 2 friends lifts into town 6. Boy told off by teacher 7. Boy and friend waiting for parents return, deciding what to do 8. Boy told off and sent to heads room 9. Boy and girl discussing some work	1. Mum will go and make tea. 2. Boy annoyed with Mum, Mum just a bit annoyed with boy - they will go and have tea. 3. Boy happy before refusal, girl deep in thought, both go home, girl rings up and apologises and they go out 4. They are interested in what he is telling them 5. They are nervous and mother will make a boring and embarrassing remark 6. Boy really annoyed and gets up and walks out. 7. A little bored and they go into town 8. Boy worried about what's going to happen and embarrassed to be seen by another teacher. Is expelled by head. 9. Both happy and pleased to have sorted work out, teacher tells them to get on with work
Subject 6, 17 years, Male	This account again seems to reflect the embarrassment and worry of the transition to adulthood. Adults seem often angry and the children embarrassed, uneasy, confused, distressed or bored.	1. Boy relaxing after lunch 2. Boy drops glass and made to clear it up by teacher 3. Girl drops books, boy returns them 4. Police Officer tells pupils funny stories about the police 5. Family taking Grandma out 6. Pupils trying to do a Maths exercise 7. Boy and Mother have an argument 8. Pupil swore at teacher and waiting to see head 9. They are given work to do and he is helping the girl	1. Feels content and will change the record 2. Boy embarrassed, teacher cross 3. Girl embarrassed, boy uneasy 4. Feel relaxed and interested 5. Children bored, Grandma content 6. Pupils bored and confused but the test will finish 7. Son distressed, Mother annoyed 8. Pupil worried and he will be punished 9. They are happy and the test will finish

Subject 7, 17 years, female	This is not a full account and so loses some of the richness of the other accounts. However, the picture given here seems again to be of the ambivalent nature of adolescent transition with a lot of feelings of worthlessness, shame, worry, emptiness, sadness, being lost along side confidence	1. Reading back of record sleeve, listening to record 2. Clearing up broken bottle in front of teacher 3. Boy with books asking to borrow bike 4. Explaining a tricky situation to amused police man 5. Going to a funeral 6. Thinking - writing an essay 7. Trying to think of something to do 8. Waiting to see Headmaster 9. Working in class	1. Feels young 'worry less' 2. Ashamed, embarrassed 3. Worried about lending bike 4. Anxious to find right words to say, but not worried about the punishment 5. Empty, Lost, Sad, Thinking about life 6. Trying to put thoughts into words - getting ideas together - quite confident 7. Bored 8. Oh not again! Why me? He started it...Worried about what he will say 9. Annoyed - wish they would shut up behind - trying to work to do well

Table 3.6

Subject	Event	Feeling	Frequency over all subjects
Picture 1			
Subject 1, 10 years, female	Long Trip	Exhaustion	1
Subject 2, 13 years, female	Having a meal	Tired	1
Subject 3, 14 years, female	Working	Tired	1
Subject 3, 14 years, female	Parents tired	Parents annoyed	1
Subject 4, 15 years, female, & Subject 6, 17 years, Male	All relaxing	Content	2
Subject 5, 17 years, Male	Shopping	Restless	1
Subject 7, 17 years, female	Listening to records	Feels young and 'worry less'	1
Picture 2			
Subject 1, 10 years, female & Subject 2, 13 years, female	Drops bottle/vase	He's sorry, others cross	2

Subject 3, 14 years, female	Being 'told' on for breaking glass object	Teacher annoyed, 'Teller' pleased, Boy who dropped it, annoyed	1
Subject 4, 15 years, female	Something belonging to another child is broken	Child whose possession is broken - sad, Teacher -satisfied, Child who broke it - angry	1
Subject 5, 17 years, Male	Being made to tidy bedroom	Boy - annoyed with Mum, Mum- a bit annoyed with boy	1
Subject 6, 17 years, Male	Glass dropped, teacher makes him clear it up	Boy - embarrassed, Teacher - cross	1
Subject 7, 17 years, female	Clearing up broken bottle in front of teacher	Ashamed, embarrassed	1
Picture 3			
Subject 1, 10 years, female	Girl got new bike, showing to girl	Girl - happy, Boy - jealous	1
Subject 2, 13 years, female	Bike been damaged, showing to teacher	Girl - angry and upset, Teacher - concerned	1
Subject 3, 14 years, female	Girl broke up with boy friend	Girl - upset and hurt and feeling sorry for herself, Friend - annoyed with ex boyfriend	1
Subject 4, 15 years, female	New boy being bullied, friend can't protect him	Bully - happy, New boy - pretending he's not bothered, Friend - feeling helpless	1
Subject 5, 17 years, Male	Boy asks girl out	Girl - deep in thought, Boy - happy	1
Subject 6, 17 years, Male	Girl drops her books, boy picks them up	Girl - embarrassed, Boy - uneasy	1
Subject 7, 17 years, female	Asked if can borrow bike	Worried about lending bike	1

Picture 4			
Subject 1, 10 years, female, Subject 2, 13 years, female & Subject 4, 15 years, female	Boy/ the traffic warden /the policeman tells joke. They are laughing at the joke	They are feeling happy/The traffic warden is enjoying the interest the children have in him and the children are enjoying his joke / The pupils are feeling happy shown by the expressions on their faces. The policeman is interested in their reactions	3
Subject 3, 14 years, female, Subject 5, 17 years, Male & Subject 6, 17 years, Male	Children listen intently as soldier/ postman/ Police officer tells them exciting / funny stories about the army/ police	Kids -fascinated, excited Soldier - proud/ people interested in what he is telling them / Relaxed and interested	3
Subject 7, 17 years, female	Explaining a tricky situation to amused police man	Anxious to find right words to say, but not worried about the punishment	1
Picture 5			
Subject 1, 10 years, female Subject 7, 17 years, female	The girls friend was killed in an accident. They are going to her funeral/Going to a funeral	They are feeling very sad/Empty, Lost, Sad, Thinking about life	2
Subject 2, 13 years, female Subject 3, 14 years, female Subject 4, 15 years, female Subject 6, 17 years, Male	The children are taking their Gran for a drive/ Family travelling in cab/The children have been for an outing with their Gran, maybe to see a museum/ Family taking their Grandma out	The boy is enjoying the view, the girl is feeling squashed and the Gran is interested in what the person in the front is saying/ All quiet, so deep thoughts about their destination/The Gran (far left) and the boy (far right) are feeling content. The person in the middle is concentrating on something in her lap (contempt)/ Children: bored Grandma: content	4

Subject 5, 17 years, Male	The boy is getting his parents to give 2 friends lifts to town	Mother will make a boring and embarrassing comment	1
Picture 6			
Subject 1, 10 years, female	They are having an exam	They are thinking	1
Subject 2, 13 years, female Subject 3, 14 years, female	The teacher is helping a child, the other children are doing the work, except the boy near the front who is struggling/ Boy looking at the blackboard and answering questions from it. One boy getting help from teacher.	The children are concentrating on their work, the teacher is feeling helpful to those in difficulty/ Determined to answer questions	2
Subject 4, 15 years, female	The teacher saw that their work wasn't quite up to standard. Boy is working hard and so are the other pupils	Feeling that he is going to prove himself, determined, the other boys are also concentrating. The teacher will come round and check the boys work and approve of it	1
Subject 5, 17 years, Male	Boy has been told off by teacher	He is thinking about what to do. The boy is really annoyed. He gets up and walks out	1
Subject 6, 17 years, Male	Pupils given a Maths exercise	Pupils: bored and confused	1
Subject 7, 17 years, female	Thinking - writing an essay	Trying to put thoughts into words - getting ideas together - quite confident	1
Picture 7			
Subject 1, 10 years, female	The boy broke a cup. He is being told off	The boy is feeling sorry but the woman is angry	1
Subject 2, 13 years, female	The boy is going to the kitchen to do the washing up as his mother has told him	The boy is feeling annoyed that he should have to do the washing up and the mother is annoyed because nobody seems to do any work around the house except her	1

Subject 3, 14 years, female	Boy looking out of window into the sun. Lady leaving kitchen	Boy - content, happy, joyful Lady - anxious (in a hurry)	1
Subject 4, 15 years, female	The boy has been bad. His mother is telling him to do the washing up as a punishment	The mother cross, the boy angry and sad. The mother will wash the cups up and all will be forgiven	1
Subject 5, 17 years, Male	They (boy and friend), went to house and had a snack. Waited for parents to return.	Deciding what to do, and a little bored	1
Subject 6, 17 years, Male	Boy and Mother had an argument. He is leaving the room	Son: distressed Mother: annoyed He will leave the room.	1
Subject 7, 17 years, female	Trying to think of something to do	Bored	1
Picture 8			
Subject 1, 10 years, female Subject 2, 13 years, female Subject 3, 14 years, female Subject 4, 15 years, female Subject 5, 17 years, Male Subject 6, 17 years, Male Subject 7, 17 years, female	The boy broke a school rule. He is waiting outside the Headmasters office/ the boy has been told to sit outside the headmasters office because he has done something wrong and another teacher is walking by/Boy caused corruption at school so sent by teacher to headmaster/A boy has been punished by his teacher and it is so bad he is sent to the headmaster. His teacher has walked off/ Boy has been told of and sent to H.M.'s room/ Pupil swore at a teacher. He is waiting to see the headmaster/ Waiting to see Headmaster	The boy is feeling guilty/The boy is feeling sorry for what he has done and the teacher is wondering what he has done/Boy: scared, apprehensive, anxious, fed up of waiting/ The teacher angry, the boy worried. The boy will get told off severely and the teacher will be angry for the rest of the day/ Boys worried about what's going to happen, and is embarrassed to be seen by a teacher. H.M. will come out and expel him/ Worried/ Oh not again! Why me? He started it...Worried about what he will say	7

Picture 9			
Subject 1, 10 years, female Subject 2, 13 years, female	They come into school. The two at the back are talking/Two girls are talking at the back of the classroom	The two at the back are feeling happy but the others are feeling serious/ The boy at the front of the classroom is feeling bored, the boy behind him is concentrating on his work and the two girls behind are interested in what the other is saying	2
Subject 3, 14 years, female Subject 4, 15 years, female Subject 5, 17 years, Male Subject 6, 17 years, Male	Kids test each other ready for an exam. Boy sent girl a note. Girl replying back to the boy/The girl has met a boy she liked. They are talking and joking/Boy and girl were discussing some work/Given work to do. He is helping the girl	Happy/The other pupils are concentrating, the boy and girl are happy/Both happy and pleased to have sorted work out/ Happy	4
Subject 7, 17 years, female	Working in class	Annoyed - wish they would shut up behind - trying to work to do well	1

Table 3.7
Number and percentage of times perception of similar event occurred

Frequency	Number of Times Occurring	Percentage of Responses
1	32	51%
2	5	16%
3	2	9%
4	2	13%
5	0	0%
6	0	0%
7	1	11%

3.4.4 Key Findings

This second study found that:

- an intricacy between negative and positive words/phrases

- ways of viewing the world seemed to colour the perception of events
- appraisal is phenomenological
- response to stimulus is both individual and located in a developmental phase

3.4.5 Discussion of results

As with the previous study, the aim of this was further to examine the term 'stress', but this time from a different focus. Again the word 'stress' was not used, instead, children were asked to look at a set of ambiguous pictures and answer questions about them.

As in the previous study, and for the same rationale, words were extracted which seemed to describe an emotional state or behaviour likely to provoke an emotional response. As Anthony and Thibodeau (1979) argue, a syndrome of subjective and objective responses seem to be linked to the stress process, (see discussion in Chapter 4). This produced 56 words/phrases and these were further divided into positive and negative words/phrases. These may be found in Table 3.4.

'Happy' was the most frequently used word to describe positive situations, behaviours or feelings whilst 'annoyed' was the negative word that occurred most frequently. It is interesting to note that there was just over a third more negative words/phrases isolated than positive ones. This may be due to the subject matter, although most of the cards are sufficiently ambiguous to allow for either positive or negative interpretation.

It is very difficult to find an explanation of these results using this method of data reduction. Happiness seems to be regarded as a basic emotion and its related concept 'joy' is one which Humphrey and Humphrey (1981) regard as being one:

"..for which we strive because it is so important in maintaining emotional stability"(Pge 29)

As has been previously argued, stress is commonly held to have three meanings. One of these meanings is that it describes a response. With this in mind, if we examine these results in relation to the concept of stress proposed by Selye (1974), the descriptions offered by the children could be seen as falling within the continuum of the experience. Their perception of the pictures may have been more focused upon the 'unpleasant' end of the continuum, thus explaining the preponderance of negative words/phrases.

In our culture, adolescence is often seen as a time of change, often accompanied by conflict and challenge. They are expected largely to conform whilst also needing to discover their own norms and values, and a tool commonly used by adults to enforce conformity is anger/annoyance. Also, this is a time when the adolescent is commonly observed to re-act with anger. This phenomenon has been incorporated into the major theories of development. Cognitive theorists would suggest that adolescence is the time when the child begins to emerge from an egocentric world and that this loss of egocentricity causes turbulence and results in hostility to and rejection of parents and other adult authority figures. This is seen as the adolescent's realisation that others have opinions that are being evaluated and observed outside the family, as well as within it. Psychoanalytic theorists such as Anna Freud, believe that the Oedipus conflict re-emerges during adolescence and because of this the child displays rejecting, rebellious behaviour as s/he feels the need to escape. Erikson (1963) has described stages through which an adolescent may move towards a stable identity and ways in which this may be frustrated. Whatever explanation is accepted, one of the above, or a synthesis, anger and annoyance do seem to be important emotions in the emotional perceptions of the group of children in this study.

Apart from 'bored/boring' and 'tired', all the negative words/phrases used more than once may be associated with power or powerlessness. Adolescence is a time when the child is growing into an adult and is, perhaps, expected to behave in an adult, responsible way, without ever having experienced the 'power' to do so. Many schools and some homes, give teenagers no responsibility and yet expect them to respond in a responsible way. We tell them what to do and what we expect of them and punish them for being 'cheeky' if they question what is being asked of them. We often allow them very little real power and thus it may be

expected that a lot of the negative words may be associated with power or lack of it.

Bored/boring was used the second most frequently. Again, because this is a time of transition, perhaps boredom is to be expected. The pass-times of childhood are losing their appeal and the ones of adulthood not quite available. Also, being 'bored' can be seen as a way of regaining power. If you can be bored with what has been given to you, you can stamp your own individuality upon it by rejecting it. Also, as was discussed earlier, adolescence is viewed by some theorists as a time of rebellion and boredom may be viewed as a silent rebellion and rejection of a world imposed upon us.

'Tired' may again be associated with the transition that takes place during this time. Huge mental, physical and emotional changes are taking place and this will undoubtedly take its toll. 'Tiredness' may also originate from the pushing at and changing of childhood boundaries which results in activities such as watching late night T.V., trying to manage homework and 'things you want to do', resulting in having to wake up early to complete homework!

The inclusion of 'positive' words as well as 'negative' words suggests that experiences are seldom either wholly negative or positive and that each experience probably contains an element of both feelings. Children who have been abused sometimes feel disgust and fear for the perpetrator at the same time as feeling a degree of warmth for them. This seems to be because the child feels the perpetrator has actually given attention to a child, destructive as it may be, and for a child starved of warmth, the spark that seems to be there is welcomed. Also the child may love the perpetrator and fear and/or hate the actions of the perpetrator. Although 'outsiders' may regard the abuser as completely negative, it seems important to acknowledge that positive feelings may exist. Also we often hear of bereaved people attesting to extra strength they have gained from their loss. It seems that feelings when we are experiencing stress must include positive as well as negative and perhaps questions the notion of distress and eustress. This concept argues that some events cause us negative reactions whereas some events cause us to have positive reactions. Whilst it appears to be valid to argue that some events are, on the whole, connected to positive reactions, there are also associations within the same

event that appear to be negative. For instance, the birth of a child can be viewed as exciting, a joy etc., but alongside this we see post-natal depression, disruption of previous life patterns and sleep deprivation. Few events appear to be associated wholly with either eustress or distress but have elements to a greater or lesser degree of both.

The results from this study do seem to support Lazarus's definition of stress and suggests that stress encompasses a very general concept that is made up of a range of emotions and therefore is described by many words, both positive and negative. It is not a simple concept that can be described by a single emotion as for instance anger could be. Stress seems to involve a complex and interrelating range of emotions from fear, panic, anger, anxiety, to pleasure and sense of achievement.

The study did not assume that stress was a universal experience and so avoided the expectation of it being experienced because it was expected. The words /phrases elicited do indicate a range of feelings that are present when we feel stressed.

The reduction of the data into Table 3.4 and the ensuing histogram seemed to be useful in the terms discussed above, but also felt quite sterile. It seemed to leave more questions than answers and, although it was possible to map this data onto Selye's definition of stress, there seemed to be a more complex process occurring than that described by a stimulus response model. Because of this, the data was approached from a different direction. The stories that the children wrote were re-examined in the light of conversations I had with my own children and an emerging model of the stress process that I was beginning to form.

In discussing my 'stuckness' in interpreting the data from this study with my children (then aged 11 and 13), they unanimously agreed that what the children saw in the ambiguous picture would depend upon how they were feeling at the time. This struck a phenomenological chord and made 'common' sense. However, it did not seem to be a complete explanation as it was firmly located in the 'here and now' and I agreed with Lovell (1992) when he talked about learning as a process, resulting from our past interactions with the environment, which leads to relatively permanent changes in our potential for performance.

What my childrens' explanations seemed to lack was this 'learned' element. When I discussed this with them, that what the children saw could have been the result of previous experience, they refuted this and held to their 'here and now' explanation. This seems to be in keeping with the idea that we are shaped by our life experiences, but that that shaping is often an unconscious element. The children would not be aware of the effect upon their perception of the world that had been caused by experience as these effects were largely unconscious.

In order to investigate these ideas, the stories that the subjects wrote were put through a phenomenological filter in order to examine if what you see is dependant on the mood you are in. They were also examined to see if there was a predictive element, whether certain feelings follow certain events and whether a correlation exists between feelings and events. As the subjects had not been asked the mood they were in, it was decided to see if a mood suggested itself from the stories. The data from the TAT-like pictures was then examined to see if there was a predictive element between events and feelings. The results can be seen in Table 3.5. The number of times perception of similar event occurred can be seen in Table 3.6, with Table 3.7 showing the number and percentage of times perception of similar event occurred

From reducing the data in this way, several interesting ideas emerged. From the material available, it was not possible to identify specific moods but a 'general mood' did emerge. For all of the subjects these 'moods' , or ways of viewing the world seemed to colour the perception of what they saw, and to be very unique although they also seemed to be related to age and developmental level.

Spinelli (1989) suggests that:

" We have no idea whether 'things in themselves' truly exist. All we can say is that, as human beings, we are 'programmed' to interpret an object-based or 'thing-based' world....Since ours is an object world, it can be stated that, even at the most basic level of consciousness, an interpretative act has occurred. "(Pges 11 &12)

From the data recorded in this study it does seem that most events have the potential to be interpreted in many different ways and so may all have the

potential to be seen as stressful, and become so as a function of the meaning that is attributed to them by the individual. Shakespeare says of this:

" there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so"
(Hamlet, Act II, Scene 2, line 259)

Rogers (1955) argues that:

"Intellectually, we match carefully the symbol we select with the meaning which an experience has for us"(Pge 269)

This would go some way to explaining the different interpretation of the same representation. This may be seen in Table 3.6. For example the same picture (Picture 5) being seen as a funeral and a family outing. The individual subjects could be seen to have selected the symbols which had meaning for them through their own experience. So, for each child, an event could be viewed as stressful for a variety of different reasons. An examination may be viewed as stressful by one as they fear failure will lead to rejection by their parents. Another could find examinations stressful as they were physically ill in an exam previously and equate examinations with physical discomfort.

The philosophical basis of this idea of the creation of meaning may be found in the work of Kant (1724-1804) and termed 'critical philosophy'. It is described by McCann *et al* (1988) as a philosophy which :

" recognises individuals as actively organising experience by making judgements and interpretations. In essence, Kant believed that the mind possesses a pro forma capacity to create order and meaning through developing categories of understanding"(Pge 555)

This notion suggests two questions. Is the appraisal of an event purely phenomenological or are we limited by 'what is there'? Secondly, is all appraisal conscious - are we only stressed if we know we are stressed?

The first question is addressed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). They identify the importance of individual differences in vulnerability or

resilience to stress and support a phenomenological view of appraisal. However, they do suggest that:

"We see what is there, so to speak, and there is little opportunity for individual differences to manifest themselves except in what is attended to and in styles of responding." (Pge 47)

This would suggest that there is a completely objective reality and that we all see the same things but attend to the part of what we see differently. The difference in attending will then affect our response. The data from this study did not support this view. If we look at Table 3.6, we can see that there were quite marked differences in interpretation of the same stimuli - for example Picture 3 had a different interpretation by each subject, as did Picture 8. Picture 5 does not have such a number of different interpretations as 3 and 8, but does have very different interpretations - from a family outing to a funeral. This is a common finding throughout the data.

Thus, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue for an objective reality that the data from this study does not support. They say:

"... people are normally constrained in what they perceive and appraise by what is actually the case, although their perceptions are not perfectly correlated with objective reality" (Pge 48)

Watzlawick *et al* (1974) argue that some denial of 'reality' is socially engendered. They suggest that the:

"...very process of socialisation in any society consists of teaching the young what they must *not* see, *not* hear, *not* think or say. Without definite rules about what should remain outside of one's awareness, an orderly society would be as unthinkable as one that fails to teach its members what they *must* be aware of and communicate about" (In Goldberger (1983) Pge 87)

A phenomenological perspective on objective reality is described by Spinelli (1989)

"What phenomenologists propose, then, is that our experience of the world is always made up of an interaction between the raw

matter of the world, whatever that may be, and our mental faculties. We never perceive only raw material; just as, similarly, we never perceive only mental phenomena. We experience an interaction between the two." (Pge 8)

He concludes:

"There is a physical reality which remains separate from our consciousness, and which, in this sense, can be labelled **objective reality**. Equally, however, we do not have direct access to that reality, nor can we, in any sense, ever know it as it actually is. All we can do is acknowledge its existence and construct theories that might provide approximations of its nature and mechanics. In the end, however, we are forced to concede its mystery." (Pges 9 & 10)

The data from the study does seem to support this view of reality. The children, in order to complete the task, may be seen as constructing theories to approximate the event within the context of their experience. If objective reality did exist, then all the children would have seen the same things in the pictures, even if they may have attended more to one part than another. As it was, they did not. As can be seen in Table 3.7, most of the responses to the pictures the children offered (51%) were unique. Only one picture (Picture 8) evoked the same or similar responses from the children. They did seem to attend to different features in this picture but overall 'saw' the same thing - a boy being told off by a teacher. I wonder if this is because this is such a wide and possibly universal experience of all school children, that it precluded them 'seeing' anything else?

So, the data from the study does not seem to support an 'objective reality' and can be explained from a phenomenological view point. In this, it does differ from the phenomenology suggested by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) but the data does support their general contention that psychological stress depends upon how a transaction with the environment is appraised or understood by the individual and that is not a demanding environmental condition or the body's generalised mobilisation or defensive reaction to that demand. They go on to say that stress may have its origins in environmental events and may produce bodily changes, but emphasise the meaning that individuals attribute to the event.

If we accept that psychological stress depends upon how a transaction is appraised or given meaning by an individual, does this mean that we are only stressed if we know we are stressed? Can we be stressed and not know? Do we deny stress? Were the children in the study consciously aware of their appraisal of the pictures or was some of it unconscious?

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that:

"Appraisal is often taken to be a conscious, rational, and deliberate process. We have argued, however, that an individual may be unaware of any or all of the basic elements of an appraisal....Our position allows the concept of appraisal to be integrated with depth or psychoanalytic-type theories."(Pge 52)

Exploring 'unconscious' is fraught with difficulties. By its very nature, it is 'unconscious' and hidden. This study was not designed to examine the unconscious elements of appraisal, but perhaps our phenomenological reality is coloured by our unconscious appraisal. The difficulty with trying to examine the unconscious has long been recognised (Erikson 1962, Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that:

" ...it is difficult if not impossible to empirically define lack of awareness without being tautological"(Pge 151)

They go on to suggest that three kinds of contradictions are typically looked for to infer unconscious process. These are contradictions between:

- what is said and done,
- what is said and felt
- what is said at one moment and another

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that:

" These criteria help anchor the inference of unconscious in the observables; however, they cannot serve as *proof* of self deception"(Pge 152)

The design of this study does not lend itself to have the contradictions applied to it, but it suggests material for future studies.

The other interesting issue raised by the responses to these pictures is the development differences between the responses. Each subjects response, as well as being individual also seems to be located in a developmental phase. Subject One who was ten at the time of the study seems very located in the family. There is a sense of a need to conform and routines being a safety. She seems a little person in a big world. Subject Two who was thirteen at the time, seems to be much more 'emerging'. She is not fully a part of the adult world, and yet is much more a part of it. She also seems more able than the ten year old to understand the feelings of others e.g. mother feels no-one helps in the house. Adults seem to be viewed as enablers and also as boundary setters. She still seems very involved with the family and more interested in same sex friendships than 'boy friends'. Subject Three, fourteen at the time, seems much more alienated from adults. They seem bad tempered, tired and annoyed. She seems much more involved with her peers and with boy friends. She seems on the brink of the adult world and both fascinated and scared by it. Subject Four, fifteen, seems very content in this account. She seems to feel accepted and that whatever difficulties may appear, they will be resolved, possibly by an adult 'enabler'. There is also a strong sense of a very positive teacher's role, and a sense of being well loved. Opposite sex relationships form part of her world, and there is not a sense of antagonism towards adults. Subject Five, a seventeen year old male, seems to typify the 'adolescent in transition'. He is still dependent upon his family, but embarrassed by them. He's beginning to be interested in 'adult' things, e.g. Gulf War, and is restless and bored and aware of his potential power e.g. walking out when a teacher tells him off. He seems to see adults as interferers. Subject Six, another seventeen year old male, again seems to reflect a troubled adolescent. This account again seems to reflect the embarrassment and worry of the transition to adulthood. Adults seem often angry and the children embarrassed, uneasy, confused, distressed or bored. Subject Seven, a seventeen year old girl, also seems to show some of the ambivalence associated with adolescence - a lot of feelings of worthlessness, shame, worry, emptiness, sadness, being lost, along side confidence.

Although it would be possible to explain these differences purely in terms of individual differences, their similarity to the phases of development

described by developmental psychologists suggests that their responses are framed by their developmental level or 'where they are at'. This has important implications for the exploration of stress in children. Because children are not mini-adults but see the world uniquely and from their developmental perspective, this suggests that their perception of and response to stress will be determined by their developmental stage. Kagan (1983) argues that:

" One of the significant generalisations wrenched from laboratory work in biology and psychology during the last three decades is that the organism's biological or psychological reactions to an event depend upon its preparedness, which often means its stage of development. "(Pge 191)

He goes on to say:

"The emphasis on the child interpretation of events that might be potential stressors implies that there should be, across developmental stages, different receptivity to specific events because of the lawful changes in cognitive functioning that occur over the first dozen years of life. "(Pge 209)

The major theories of growth and development can be considered from two main focuses. Those who concentrate on the child as an individual, and those who view development as a product of social interaction. This may be seen diagrammatically below.

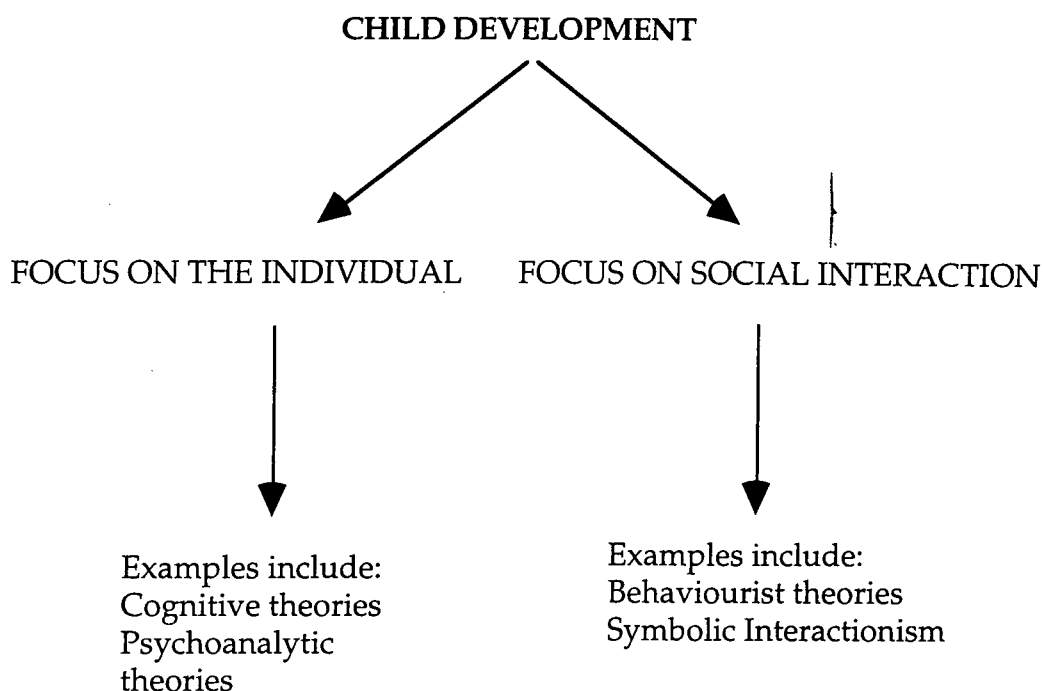


Figure 3.2

Although this is not strictly a discussion of the results from the second study and it is outside of the scope of this study to explore all theories of child development, it seems relevant to consider the major theories and their place in the understanding of the stress response in order to set a context for the results. The major theories that will be described are those mentioned above.

Cognitive theories view stress as a necessary factor in learning. The world must become unbalanced for the child to adjust their thinking to include new information. When children find, through their actions, that their cognitive schemas do not cover the situation, disequilibrium ensues, followed by a readjustment to their thinking in order to achieve equilibrium. Cognitive theories also assume that all human behaviour is the product of 'thinking', and that this thinking is a process of adapting and re construing cognitive structures.

Most cognitive theories suggest that knowledge is stored in schemas. For example, Piaget (1963) viewed schemas as building blocks of knowledge and as a way of organising our experience which makes our world more simple, more predictable and more knowable. We use these schemas to guide and

direct our behaviour and tackle new situations by extending our existing ones.

We can summarise the cognitive approach to learning and development in the following model.

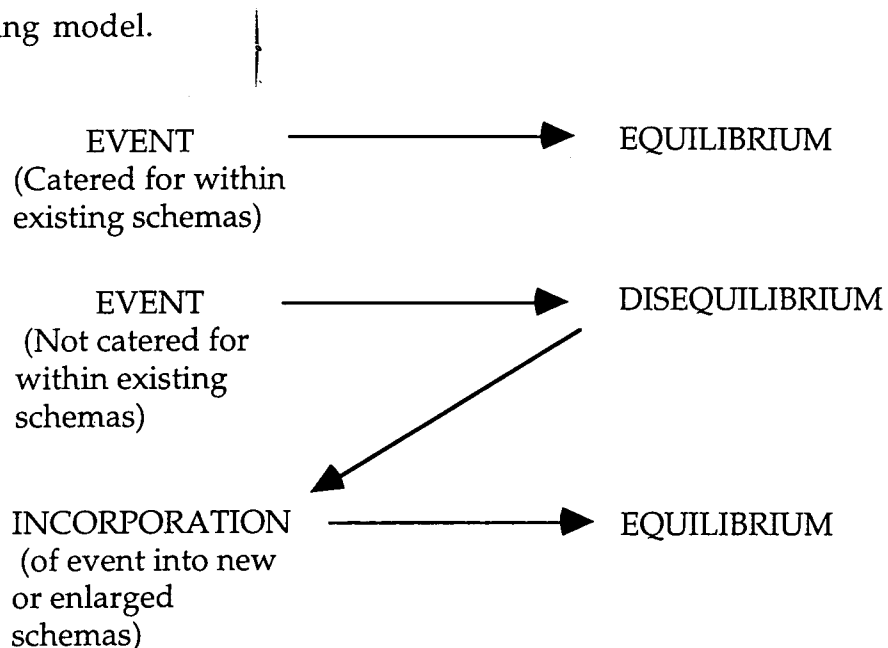


Figure 3.3

Psychoanalytic theories assume that babies are born with internal, instinctive drives that need to be discharged. Behaviour is dependent upon whether these drives are fulfilled or not and stress is defined as the interplay between the tension of an un-met drive and the energy spent in the release of a drive. As the child matures, s/he develops conscious thought and an ability to control these drives. These theories are based upon the concepts that:

- a) the need to control instinctual drives is developed as the child develops,
- b) early forms of behaviour remain in the child's repertoire and can be activated if the unconscious demands it,
- c) current behaviour can only be explained in terms of the individual's past experience.

Development is seen as dynamic in that it is the result of experience gained in the fulfilment of drives. Individuals develop mental structures that enable them to adapt to the environment and gradually gain control over these instinctual drives. Development progresses, due to an internal maturation plan, through invariant stages. Psychoanalytic theorists also

postulate that there is a limited amount of energy to be spent in the fulfilment or postponement of gratification of these drives. Children who do not achieve an optimal balance between need gratification and delay tend to become disorganised under stress.

We can summarise the psychoanalytical approach to learning and development in the following model.

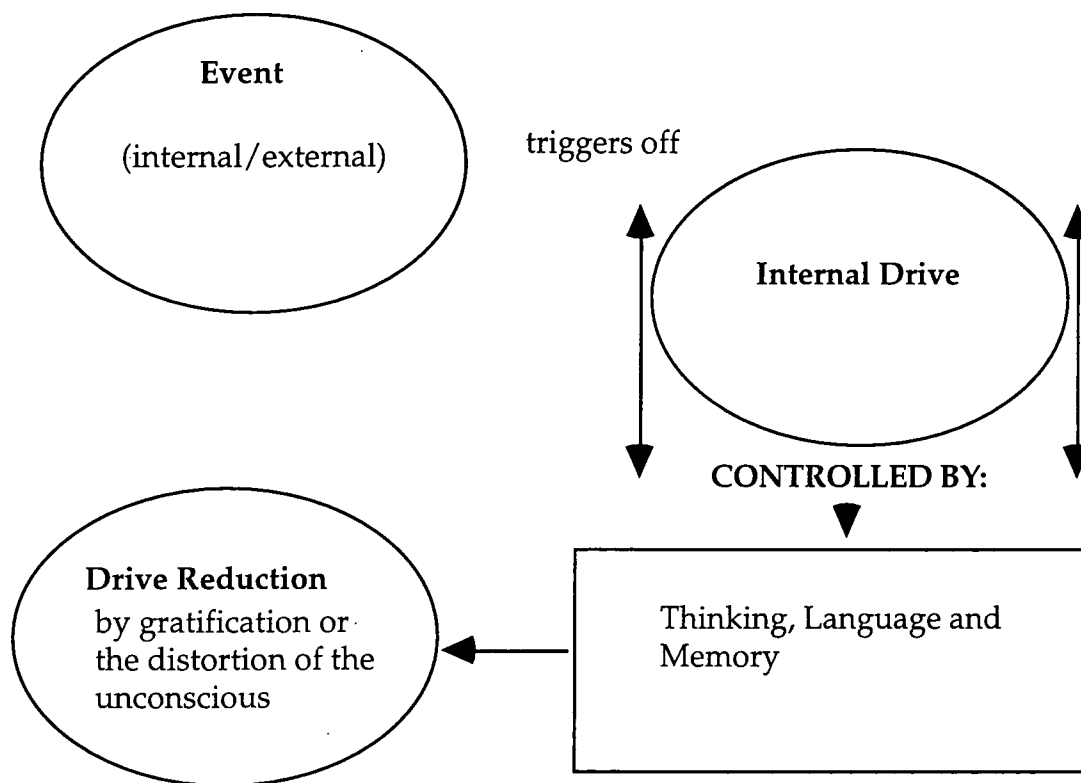


Figure 3.4

Behavioural theories see stress as coming from the external environment, not from internal states. They believe that behaviour arises from a reaction to stimuli from the environment mediated by the accumulation of experience based upon past environmental conditions. They maintain that stress and fear is learned, reinforced and maintained by environmental consequences. It can be learned through classical or operant conditioning. Conditioning is a process by which a response comes to be elicited by a stimulus other than that to which it is the normal response. It can also be learned through imitation and/or modelling. The main component of this theory is that behaviour is learned by means of reinforcement and mediated

by past experience but it also emphasises the processes of attending, memory, observation and imitation.

By watching a model, the child can learn new behaviour. This involves several processes:

- a) attentional process whereby the child is able to attend to the model,
- b) retentive process whereby the child can symbolically code and cognitively organise the observations,
- c) motivational processes whereby the child evaluates the external, vicarious and self reinforcements.

Research evidence suggests that the social learning theory can explain the socialisation process and provides one explanation for a child's response to stress. Bandura (1964) regards the problems associated with adolescence as a result of our culture and social learning. He argues that it is the culture that demands that teenagers become increasingly independent and that peer groups uphold and reinforce the values and behaviours of teenagers. To Bandura (Bandura & Walters (1963)) , the primary determinant of successful coping is the ability to feel in control of the situation.

We can summarise the simple behaviourist approach to learning and development in the following model.

STIMULUS → RESPONSE → REINFORCEMENT → LEARNING

Figure 3.5

This is a very simplistic model and we must remember that a reaction to stimuli from the environment is mediated by the accumulation of experience based upon past environmental conditions. Gazda & Corsini (1980) suggest that Bandura's theory of social learning is moving away from a simple stimulus - response model towards a more cognitive model and differs from the traditional behaviourists model in that it emphasises symbolic representation and self regulatory processes in addition to observational learning.

Symbolic Interactionism stresses the importance of social interaction and the symbols - or meanings - which exist between people in those interactions. Mead (1934) argues that there can be no 'self' outside the interpersonal context. He suggests that 'the self' is not present at birth but develops through the process of social experience and activity and is the result of an individual's relation to that process as a whole and to others within that process. He suggests that the self is essentially a social structure arising from social experience.

Mead believed that the self depended upon the symbols - like words and gestures - that people use to express themselves. He argued that it was through interaction that symbols become to have a shared meaning.

In this theory, the self-concept is divided into two parts, the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'I' is the basic capacity for awareness. It enables individuals to be free from absolute reliance upon others view of them for their sense of self. It does have some similarities to the Rogerian concept of 'the experiential field.'

The 'me' is made up of the internalised perceived attitudes and perspectives of other people and can be viewed as being similar to the Rogerian concept of 'awareness of self'.

Mead believed that the self was reflexive. In other words that we can think about ourselves in the same way as we think about others. This is achieved by looking at ourselves from the role of other people. Mead suggested that this ability develops through three stages - the preparatory stage, the play stage and the game stage. After the game stage, Mead believed that the self continues to develop through relationships with a variety of other people through a process of secondary socialisation.

Mead's approach to social development can be summarise in the following model:

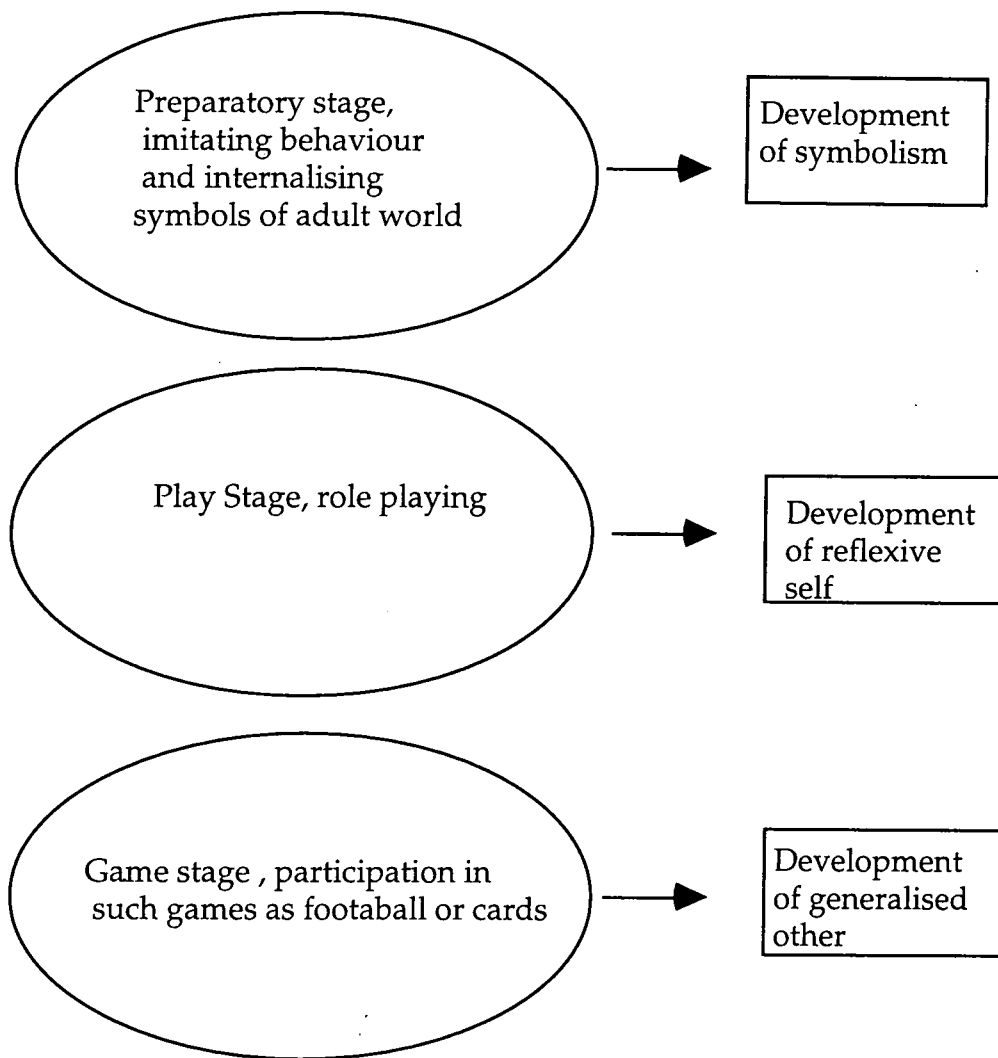


Figure 3.6

It has been argued as to whether Mead's theory is strictly a developmental one as it lacks depth in terms of the mechanics of the development of role taking, but other researchers such as Selman (1980), have addressed these developmental points more fully.

However we regard these developmental theories, it seems to be commonly agreed that children experience the world differently from adults, and differently at different ages. This will have an effect upon the stress they perceive.

Most of the work done in regards to stress and development has approached the area from a different perspective. Not from the perspective of developmental effect upon perception, but from the

perspective of the effect upon development of certain stressors. Rutter (1983) suggests five main ways in which early experience might be linked with subsequent disorders. Briefly these are:

"First, early events might lead to a disorder at the time, which then persists for reasons which are largely independent of the initial causation or provocation.....

Second, the early events may lead to bodily changes which in turn influence later functioning.....

Third, the early events may lead directly to altered patterns of behaviour which, although changed at the time of the event, take the form of an overt disorder only some years later.....

Fourth, early events may lead to changed family conditions which in turn, later predispose to disorder.....

Fifth, however, early events may operate through their action in altering sensitivities to stress or in modifying styles of coping which then protect from, or predispose towards, disorders in later life only in the presence of later stress events."(Pges 29 & 30)

As can be seen from the above discussion, developmental stage is very important in the exploration of stress in children.

In conclusion, I feel this study has been useful in pointing out the complexity of the stress concept and the initial reduction of the data into words and phrases allowed the intricacy of the interaction between negative and positive words/phrases to be seen. However, the second way the data was reduced seems to have been a much richer source. It points the way forward to other studies which could look in more detail at how children see their world and to the unconscious elements in the perception of stress.

The sample used in this study cannot be said to be in anyway representative or experimentally controlled as they were self selected and small in number, but I feel that this does not necessarily invalidate the results. It was intended as a 'taster' and as such proved quite succulent. It has offered many possible routes forward.

3.7 Conclusions and Links to the Previous Study and the Third Study

The results from these two pilot studies contained positive as well as negative descriptions which supported Selye's view that stress is seldom a wholly negative experience. It often contains positives as well. The children did seem able to describe these experiences, but, because the word had never been used, stress, as a meaningful concept to them had not been explored. Therefore, as in the first study, the common notion of stress being perceived as negative was not explored.

Again, as in the first study, the words extracted from the experiences that the children described could be linked to Anthony and Thibodeu's (1979) concept of a syndrome of responses to stressors and to Selye's (1994) theory of a continuum of experience. However, the second method of analysing the data suggested that a more complex process was occurring rather than a stimulus or response process.

The results seemed to support Lazarus's (1966) definition of stress as a general concept organised around the meaning of transactions and suggested a need to approach the exploration of stress from a phenomenological perspective. This perspective suggested two questions:

- a) Is the perception of stress purely phenomenological or are we limited by 'what's there'
- b) Is perception purely conscious - do we always know we are stressed?

and suggests material for future studies.

The results from this study also highlighted the developmental differences which affected perception and need to be taken into consideration in future studies.

These results left me with a need to refine what I was investigating and to become more specific in the terms I used. I wanted to explore what children understood by the term 'stress' and this led to the third study. As a companion to my journey, the literature has always been important. Each

new idea resulted in literature searches and an exploration of other researchers' experiences. At this point in the thesis it felt important to return to the literature (had I ever been away?) in order to set the practical work in a wider context. The review seemed to suggest that research into stress was divided up into several areas. The most prominent of these were:

- Nature of the stressors
- Models of the stress process
- Mediating factors
- Coping
- Interventions

and will be described and evaluated in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 - Review of the Literature

4.1 Introduction

The literature has been a constant companion throughout this thesis as evidenced by its use in directing the previous two studies and in understanding the results from them. Its presentation at this point in the thesis suggests a falsely linear approach to my exploration of stress but it is felt that its inclusion at this point will give a fuller context for the emerging picture.

Comparatively little has been written about children and adolescents' perception of and response to stress. The main focus of much of the research has been on adult perceptions and responses, some, but not all, of which appears to be relevant to children. As was highlighted in Study Two, developmental issues suggest that a straight transfer of what is known in relation to adults and stress is not always applicable to children.

Stress, in common with other psychological concepts such as intelligence, is a difficult concept to define as it is impossible to observe it or to measure it unless you are convinced that it exists. Measures and observation of stress rest upon the researchers' belief that such a concept is valid and useful. As Kuhn (1973) indicated, most researchers have a 'point of view' concerning their subject matter as they carry out their research and this guides their research activities and to a large extent determines what is studied and how it is studied. Thus, the writing, including research, speculation and theory, about stress, both in adults and children, appears to be quite fragmented. The focus of the research seems to be dependant upon the 'point of view' of the researcher. but I have identified six main areas which seem to have emerged from the literature.

- 1) The events/conditions perceived as stressors,
- 2) Models of the stress process
- 3) Mediating factors
- 4) Coping patterns
- 5) Resilience to stress
- 6) Interventions.

The five areas, which are presented in this chapter, may seem to be separately identified and researched as discrete entities but they are inter-connected. The stance of the individual researcher affects their theoretical comprehension of how stress is perceived by the individual and how coping patterns are affected by that perception. If a model of the process is accepted which argued that stressors are inherently stressful then interventions would be affected. They may be approached from a more 'seek and destroy' position. Certain events which were considered stressful may be targeted and ways sought of minimising their impact or eliminating the stressor. If the model accepted was that which suggested that having a certain personality type made us more or less susceptible to stress, interventions could seek to identify the 'risk' group and set up some behaviour modification programme. If an embedded depth model is accepted, interventions which encompassed the event, the environment and the person and including a concern with problem solving and perceptual issues, would be sought.

Additionally, Rutter (1979) argues that some children are resilient to stress and proposes the following as variables:

- 1) Interactive effects between stresses
- 2) Genetic Effects
- 3) Individual differences
- 4) Influences outside the home with reference to schools
- 5) Self esteem
- 6) Scope of opportunities
- 7) Structure and control
- 8) Bonds and relationships
- 9) Coping Skills

He argues that from these variables, some factors appear which may give a form of 'protection' and he suggests that exploration needs to continue.

The following is an attempt to review and, to an extent, evaluate the usefulness of some of the available literature in these areas in relation to my proposed research.

4.2 Definitions of the Concept

Unfortunately, as has been discussed in the introduction to this thesis, because of the historic derivation of the term (coming originally from structural engineering) and the subsequent general usage of the term as a stimulus, response or process, much research into stress has not had a clear operational definition of the concept. This is acknowledged by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Compas (1987), and Lazarus tried to settle the problem by:

“...regarding stress as a very general concept like emotion, motivation or cognition, but organised around the meaning of transactions that tax or exceed the person's resources or the resources of a social system.” (Lazarus and Folkman, (1984), Pge 307)

This definition has the advantage of concentrating upon the process, rather than the stressors that may cause the process, and, as the study progressed and in light of the findings from the first two studies, became my accepted definition for the purpose of this research. Before undertaking Study One, however, the definition I accepted was one of stress being a response to a 'stressor'. As has been discussed in Chapter Three, there is a body of research in this area, but, due to the results from the previous studies, the focus of this study has moved away from stressors to the process.

However, much research does regard stress as a stimulus and/or a response and so 'stressful events' have been the focus of much previous research. Compas (1987a) argues that the nature and impact of stressful events during childhood and adolescence have been the focus of two different groups of researchers, those who are concerned with the stressful nature of life events and those concerned with life-span development.

4.3 The Events

4.3.1 The Stressful Nature of Life Events

As is the case with the general concept of stress, the work of those researchers interested in the stressful nature of life events has been characterised, as Rutter

(1981), points out, by a failure to explicitly define what constitutes 'stress' or a 'stressful life event' and the use of terms without any attempt to clarify the meaning.

Compas (1987a) outlines the various sources of stress diagrammatically as seen in Figure 4.1. This will be used as a framework for the review of this area of research.

Demand is viewed as a stimulus that requires an adaptational response from an individual. Johnson (1982) describes a stressful life event as:

"life experiences or events that may result in changes in their lives and that necessitate varying degrees of coping and adaptation"(Pge 219)

These demands may not only be present in external sources in the environment, but also may be the result of internal demands relating to psychological change or development.

4.3.2 Acute and Chronic Demands

Writers also differentiate between acute and chronic demands (Compas 1987,a). Acute demands are seen as those which involve changes in existing conditions and as Compas (1987a) argues, have been the focus of the majority of the research concerning child/adolescent stress. They also involve the cumulative effects of numerous life events over a specific time period or a specific event whose effect is felt independently of other life events. Examples of the latter include the work of Winefield and Tiggemann (1989), Tirman and Woody (1989) and Steiner and Levine (1988)

Chronic demands are seen by Compas (1987a) , as:

"...often characterised as enduring aspects of the social and/or physical environment which involve deprivation or disadvantage and create a continuous stream of threats and challenges for an individual. "(Pge 276)

Sources of Stress during Childhood and Adolescence
(Compas (1987a), Pge. 277)

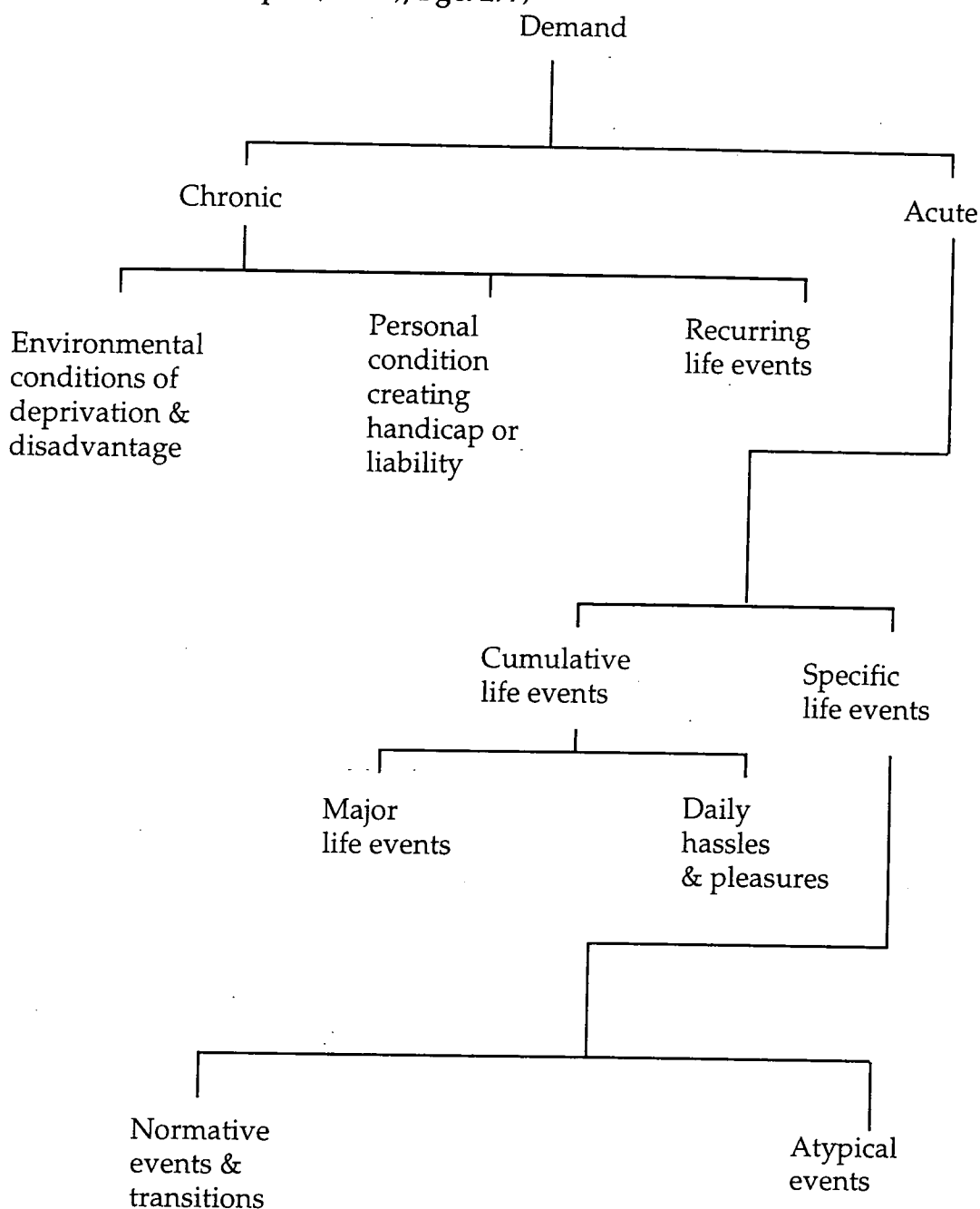


Figure 4.1

An example of this research is that of Rutter (1981) who investigated the chronic psychosocial adversity in which a child might function.

It is also important to distinguish between stress and 'life events'. Not all stress results in dysfunction. The Yerkes Dodson law (1966) , discussed in the

introduction to this thesis, shows this graphically. This shows absence of stress to be as potentially damaging as too much, and suggest that we all need an optimum level of stress to perform at our best. This optimum not only varies between individuals, but also varies within the individual. Sometimes lots of stress produces that powerful 'I can walk on water' feeling and sometimes the seemingly smallest stress can reduce us to heaps of shivering emotion. Research by Kanner *et al* (1978) also demonstrated that the lack of positive features are associated with work tedium and dissatisfaction.

Equally, not all 'life events' are perceived as stressful, and individual differences in perception again seems to be important. This view is substantiated in Study Two through the different 'meanings' each child gave to the same pictures. If we view stress as a transaction, as suggested by Lazarus (1966), rather than as a reaction, then this may help in explaining how and why these individual differences occur. The process of researching this thesis has led me to support Lazarus's view and some of the arguments against viewing stress simply as a reaction to a stressor are discussed below. The arguments can be seen through a critique of the life events inventories and checklists.

Life events inventories and checklists do view stress as a reaction to a stressor and give selected events a 'stressfulness score'. Some have been specifically designed for children, (Johnson and McClutcheon (1980) and Monaghan *et al* (1979)), but are also underpinned by this 'reaction' theory. This view seems to have several weaknesses. Firstly, as argued above, not all life events are seen to be stressful and each child's perception of the stressfulness of an event is unique so therefore impossible to give each event a 'score'. Secondly, categories of events in these inventories are sorted into desirable/undesirable events and do not take into account the fact that most events have an element of both factors. Thirdly, most of the events are rated by adult raters and not by the adolescents themselves which could result in the personal nature of perception being lost. This also leads to questions about the inventories being value laden as exemplified by such items as 'outstanding personal achievement' being rated as better than other sorts of achievement, for example, 'helping others'.

However, as Compas (1987a) points out, research does seem to indicate a relationship between life events and dysfunction:

"The correlations....in cross-sectional studies are modest, with life events rarely accounting for more than 15% of the variance in symptoms." (Pge 296)

Perhaps this finding could be related to Lazarus's transactional view of stress in that it might not be an inherent characteristic in the life event which causes the stress but rather the effect it has as part of the transaction between the individual, the event and the environment. Thus, life events can be seen to affect the perception of stress, but in the way that they are bound within the transactions of the individual within and towards their world, rather than by their inherently stressful nature.

4.3.3 Life-Span Development

The focus of the second group of researchers, those interested in life span development, is on the role of life events with regard to development. Brim and Ryff (1980) state that:

"Life events are as integral to life-span development theory as are atoms and other lesser particles to physical theory." (Pge 368)

Life events are viewed as agents of disequilibrium that make positive development possible. Behind this view is an implicit model of growth based upon the cognitive theory of schema building. Cognitive theories view stress as a necessary factor in learning. The world must become unbalanced for the child to adjust their thinking to include new information. When children find, through their actions, that their cognitive schemas do not cover the situation, disequilibrium ensues, followed by a readjustment to their thinking in order to achieve equilibrium. Cognitive theories also assume that all human behaviour is the product of 'thinking', and that this thinking is a process of adapting and reconstruing cognitive structures.

The group of stress researchers (e.g. Brim and Ryff, 1980, Danish *et al*, 1980, Hultsch and Plemons, 1979) who are interested in life span development have identified several characteristics of life events that seem to be important in the study of adolescent stress but appear to have been neglected in the research. These characteristics, reported by Compas (1987a), include:



- a) the age-relatedness of many biological and social events, with a high frequency of these events occurring during childhood/adolescence. For example, physical growth, changes in the endocrine system, development in the brain and central nervous system, changes in social roles and family and school transitions.
- b) emphasis upon the social distribution of events. An example of one affecting an entire culture may be that of economic depression. Another example may be that of the children's preoccupation and identification with 'Gazza' in my first study.
- c) a highlighting of historical or cohort effects upon events. For example, an adolescents experience of life events during the second world war would be different from that of an adolescent during the 'swinging sixties'. (Page 278)

The importance of life events in the investigation of the stress process in children from this focus seems very relevant and connects with importance of developmental issues highlighted in Study Two.

4.3.4 Daily Hassles and Pleasures

Kanner *et al* (1981) compared the standard methodology of measuring life events with one which focused upon relatively minor events - daily hassles and pleasures. They define hassles as:

"...the irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that to some degree characterise everyday transactions with the environment." (Page 3)

It is interesting to note their use of the term 'transactions' which may have links to the Lazarus (1966) usage. They suggest that life events could operate by affecting the individuals pattern of daily hassles. Thus, for a child, the divorce of his/her parents could result in a change of schools, less frequent visits to one set of Grandparents, less treats and a less relaxed lifestyle-all of which could be a set of 'hassles' which did not have to be dealt with previously. Alternatively, they may be viewed through their affective significance for the person, or as disrupting the coping process. Kanner *et al* (1981) conclude by arguing:

"They might even serve as a direct indication of how a person's routine is being affected by life changes and, therefore, be a better predictor of health status." (Pge 4)

Daily uplifts are defined by Kanner *et al* (1981) as:

"...positive experiences such as the joy derived from the manifestations of love, relief at hearing good news, the pleasure of having a good night's rest, and so on." (Pge 6)

Lazarus *et al* (1980) described three ways in which 'uplifts' could contribute to coping. Firstly, they could act as 'breathers' from regular stressful encounter. Secondly, they may act as 'sustainers' of coping activity and thirdly, they may act as 'restorers' that help the replenishment of depleted resources when recovering from harm or loss. Kanner *et al* (1981) argue that:

"If we are to assess stress fully, not only must we supplement lists of major stressful life events with day to day hassles measure, but also we should consider the role of positively toned events in preventing or attenuating the effects of stress" (Pge 6)

In their study, Kanner *et al* (1981) found that the Hassles Scale was a better predictor of concurrent and subsequent psychological symptoms than were life events scores. They also found that uplifts were positively related to symptoms for women but not for men. They concluded that:

"...the assessment of daily hassles and uplifts may be a better approach to the prediction of adaptational outcomes than the usual life events approach." (Pge 1)

Delongis *et al* (1982) examined the relationship between both major life events and daily hassles and somatic health and found that hassles were more strongly associated with this than life events. Daily uplifts seemed to make little contribution. They conclude that:

"The assessment of daily hassles appears to be a useful approach to the study of life stress and could be an important supplement to the life events approach, which by itself, is insufficient for a full

understanding and practical prediction of health outcomes." (Pge 119)

There does seem to be evidence that the study of daily hassles and pleasures could be a useful supplement to the study of life events but again I feel, for reasons of individual differences in perception, that this approach is insufficient. A more complex model seems to be required to explain the very complex process of stress perception. Also, the research evidence is not unchallenged. Dohrenwend and Shrout (1985) claim to have found evidence of confounding between measures of some items in Kanner *et al's* (1981) Hassle Scale and measures of psychological distress. This would call into question some of the findings and therefore some of the relationships between stress and daily hassles that have been suggested.

The measure that included an assessment of both major and daily stressful events specifically designed for adolescents is that of Compas *et al* (1987) - 'the Adolescent Perceived Events Scale' (APES). Although Compas acknowledges several limits to the scale, namely that it is biased towards stressors experienced by white, middle to low socio-economic status, rural and suburban populations, it appears to be a useful measure of adolescent stress. It cannot be criticised in the same way that the life event checklists and inventories (Johnson & McClutcheon, 1980, Monaghan *et al* 1979) were criticised. Firstly, each child's perception of the stressfulness of an event was scored. Secondly, the results showed that the inclusion of scales to measure the desirability of events was appropriate to middle and older adolescents, but not to younger ones. This may be a useful measure to include in the study of adolescent stress.

4.4 Models

A survey of the literature, where the theoretical models have been explicitly described, reveals that the predominant models for explaining and managing stress currently are:

- a) Stimulus response models such as that of Selye (1974)

- b) Trait models such as the Type A and B model identified by Friedman and Rosenman (1974)
- c) Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) model described by Spivack and Shure (1982, 1985)
- d) Cognitive- phenomenological models such as those described by Lazarus *et al* (Lazarus, 1966, Lazarus, Kanner and Folkman, 1980, Folkman and Lazarus, 1980, Lazarus and Folkman, 1984,) and McCann *et al* (McCann *et al* 1988, & McCann and Pearlman, 1990)

The first three models are discussed briefly as the evaluation of their usefulness in providing a framework for an understanding of the stress process is seen as limited. Evidence of this may be found from discussion in the two previous studies and in the following discussions of the models. The cognitive-phenomenological model will be discussed more fully because it seems to offer a framework that can encompass the complexity of human reactions to stress and can offer the theoretical framework from which to base further exploration.

4.4.1 Stimulus Response Model

This is the model which underpinned the practical work of the pilot studies and viewed stress as being either a stimulus or a response. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) evaluate the stimulus-response model of the stress process and describe it as being based upon a view of human behaviour that is motivated by reactions to stimulation. The stressors are viewed either as stimuli or responses.

As stimuli, stress is viewed as events impinging upon the person and also includes conditions arising within the person, for example, drives such as hunger and sex. This approach relies upon the assumption that certain situations are inherently stressful. Blom *et al* (1986) define stress as:

“...a clearly identifiable external life event or chronic life situation (stressor) that causes a psychological disequilibrium in a child sufficient to result in a behavioural reaction (response).” (Pge 17)

Implicit in this definition is the notion that it is something about the nature of the stressor that engenders stress. The stressor is outside or external to the child and the reaction is caused by all and every appearance of the stressor.

This stimulus-response definition and model of stress also provides the rationale behind the 'life events' approach where major events are scaled on various measures. Coddington (1984) was the first to attempt a systematic measurement of stress in children in terms of the amount of readjustment required by an event. His scale was based upon the adult scale developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967). Other measures used have been the desirability of the event, the anticipation of the event and the perceived control over it. A review and evaluation of measures currently used is described by Compas *et al.* (1987)

The main weakness inherent in this definition and model is the assumption that the stressor is always external to the individual, (except when it is a condition such as hunger arising within the person), always identifiable and always causes disequilibrium. Although the stimulus-response-reinforcement model can allow for individual differences in the reaction to stressors, it focuses on the nature of the stressor rather than the nature of the individual's perception of the stressor. Levine *et al.* (1978) argue that:

"It appears that it is not just the stimuli or physical environment *per se* that determines the physiological response, but the individual's evaluation of these stimuli." (Page 6)

The alternative approach within the stimulus-response model is to regard stress as a response. Response models refer to a state of stress. Selye's (1974) definition of stress, as the non-specific response of the body to any demand, treats stress as a disturbance of the body's homeostasis produced by environmental change. This definition assumes that a stressor is anything that causes a response and therefore has no limits. It may be that an increase in heart rate occurs in someone taking exercise when psychologically they are at peace. In terms of the response model, exercise would become a stressor, as would any stimuli.

Implicit in this model is the notion that the goal of an individual is always to maintain homeostasis. This is not always the case and Zuckerman (1979) argues that individuals seek to increase their arousal by seeking sensations

rather than trying to reduce it. Also, this opposes the view proposed by the Yerkes-Dodson law (1908) that individuals have an optimum level of arousal at which their performance is best. This law suggests that we do not seek homeostasis.

The appeal of the stimulus response model which views the stressor as a stimulus is that it can simplify the measurement of stress. A level can be assigned to a stressor by a variety of means and a measure of individual stress can be made. Also, although perception of stress is individual, humans do share a history and most have been socialised into a system where values and beliefs are shared. It would be expected then, that responses to stressors may also be affected by socialisation and that it would be valid to apportion a 'score'. It can be useful to categorise and find trends in responses. From an administrative and a planning perspective this has obvious attractions and can result in stressors, perceived as such on a global level, being modified. It can also result in individual empowerment by virtue of belonging to, and identifying with, a group who have stressors in common. Examples of this can be seen in support groups for rape, abuse and bereavement. The danger of this approach is that by focusing upon the stressor, the repertoire of individual response is lost. Each child's perception of the stressfulness of an event is unique, so by giving each event a 'score' there is a danger of losing that individuality in order to gain generality. By concentrating upon the stressor, either as a stimulus or response, sight can be lost of the distinctness of individual perception. The findings from Study Two suggest support for a phenomenological approach which takes into account the individual meaning that is given to an event or events. The children in this study did not perceive the same thing, even though the same 'stimulus' was given to each.

4.4.2 Trait Models such as the Type 'A' and 'B' Model

These models of stress in children, derived from adult models, rest upon a distinction between Type A and Type B behaviour patterns. Friedman and Rosenman (1974) identified the two personality types, A and B and the linked behaviour pattern. They see the stress reaction as being definitely linked to the type of personality and this is an approach to stress that is often seen in leaflets distributed in school or picked up at the doctors. The behaviour of individuals is determined as belonging to one of the personality types described as Type 'A' and 'B' and individuals are encouraged to change their behaviour so that it conforms to a Type B stereotype. Several researchers, Friedman and

Rosenman (1974), Fontana and Dovidio (1984), Krantz *et al* (1974), Moos and Tsu (1977), have found these categories useful and have added to the profiles of the behaviour associated with the personality types.

Fontana and Dovidio (1984) examined the relationship between stressful life events and school related performance between groups of adolescents determined as belonging to Type A and B. They defined Type A individuals as achievement motivated, aggressive, competitive, unable to relax, restless, impatient, with exaggerated speech and sense of time urgency. They indicated that Type A's received more academic honours, studied longer, employed more hours and slept less. Type B's were defined as those where:

"the characteristics that describe a Type A person are relatively absent or present to a lesser degree..." (Pge 51)

They argue that Type A's have been shown to be more effective at using such coping strategies as denying fatigue and focusing upon the central aspects of a task in order to attain higher levels of achievement.

Krantz *et al* (1974) found that the performance of individuals determined as belonging to Type A were more adversely affected when compared with Type B's when they were exposed to an uncontrollable stressor, noise. Krantz *et al* (1974) interprets this as Type A's eventually becoming very threatened, feeling helpless and their goal oriented behaviour suffering when their attempts to achieve control of the environment collapse. Lovello and Pishkin (1980) , however, found uncontrollable stress had a significantly greater detrimental effect upon Type B's performance, while Fontana and Dovidio (1984) found that stressful life events related to poor school performance across all categories of controllability and occurred primarily for Type B students. They proposed a possible explanation for this could be that Type B students do not have an adequate repertoire of coping mechanisms as they are less concerned with control than Type A's. They contend that Type A's generate more coping strategies and that there is a weaker relationship for this Type between stress and poor school performance. However, Type A's do seem to be more prone to coronaries which may suggest that they do not cope well with stress.

Lovello and Pishkin (1980) concluded that laboratory paradigms:

“...lack the precision necessary to elucidate the psychological factors motivating the behaviour of the coronary-prone individual” (Pge 963)

and this appears to be one of drawbacks to using such categories as Type A and Type B personalities.

A weakness of this model, in terms of a theoretical approach to underpin an understanding of the stress process, is the breadth of the categories. The categories proposed by researchers in this area are very broad and univariant and, as such, do not suggest themselves as vehicles for the complex process of appraisal and coping. Appraisal and coping appear to be a intricate amalgam of thoughts, feelings and behaviour and, as the work of Moos and Tsu (1977) using the example of physical illness, exemplifies, the complexity of the reaction to these tasks would be hard to capture on a univariant measure.

The Type A and B model depends upon an acceptance of a univariant measure which appears to fail to capture the complexity of stress appraisal. Lazarus (1966) suggests that the appraisal of stress is a complex amalgam of thoughts feelings and behaviours which cannot be encapsulated in a single measure. Also, the model depends upon an assumption that human behaviour is constant across various situations but this consistency is rarely observed in the perception of stress. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) argue, this consistency has seldom been found in personality research. Stressors that seem intolerable one day can, seemingly inexplicably, can be coped with the next. Coping may also be seen as a shifting process during which an individual relies upon different forms of coping at different times. An example of this is sometimes seen in children when bad news is broken to them. They seem not to have understood or heard what is said and could be said to be operating on denial. Later, they ask questions about what has happened and seek solutions by attempting to change the problem This could be seen as problem-focused coping. Later still, they may give way to uncontrollable weeping and become overcome by sadness and despair. This could be seen as emotion-focused coping. However, there are also links with locus of control.

Some individuals cope with stress more effectively than others and it may be possible to find some communality in the way they view the world. However, binding seemingly similar responses together and labelling this as a

personality type runs the risk of losing the individual meaning behind the response.

4.4.3 Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving Model

Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) is a concept put forward by Spivack and Shure (1982, 1985). They argued that maladaptive youngsters:

- a) do not tolerate the tension of waiting,
- b) do not project themselves into the future in their thoughts,
- c) have a constricted focus on the present which severely limits their consequential thinking.

and that the cognitive steps an individual takes act as mediators of the quality of social and personal adjustment, in accord with the above principles. Also, how well an individual solves inter-personal problems depends upon complex, interacting, emotional and cognitive factors. From their research they assert that in order to solve interpersonal problems, children needed to be able to generate alternative solutions, think through the consequences of actions and be aware of the other person's standpoint.

Compas (1987, b), in reviewing this area, reported that evidence to support the success of the intervention programme designed by Spivack and Sure is somewhat mixed.

Spivack and Shure's approach relies upon the view that the stress we perceive has a rational and logical resolution and that we can recognise its cause. This may be the case for certain of our perceptions but not for all. The stress faced by a child who is overweight may be that of rejection from the peer group and a loss of self esteem. A cognitive problem solving approach may be to generate an alternative solution - to loose weight in order to feel better about him/herself and become more accepted by the peer group. S/he may fail in this attempt and plunge even lower into self hatred. Spivack and Shure recognise the interaction of emotional and cognitive factors on a conscious level but not at an unconscious level. Suppose the child in question had been abused as a child and unconsciously sought to be unattractive as a protection as well as being unable to believe in the possibility that she would ever be

attractive. No amount of cognitive skill will resolve the stress because the perception and response are triggered in the unconscious.

Spivack and Shure's model has, and is designed to have, a limited application. It only considers one strategy, problem solving, for one type of stressor, interpersonal. It may be valuable as part of an intervention, but cannot be considered as a complete model of the complex concept of stress.

4.4.4 Cognitive-Phenomenological Models

This complex relationship between conscious and unconscious processes is more successfully incorporated in Lazarus and Folkman's model of the stress process (1984). Whilst defining itself as a cognitive model, it does integrate psychoanalytic theories, and is phenomenological.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that:

"...the transactional model that underlies our cognitive theory of stress views the person and the environment in a mutually reciprocal, bi-directional relationship....Further, in traditional models variables retain their separate identities. In a transactional model separate person and environment elements join together to form new meanings via appraisal; threat, for example, does not refer to separate person and environment factors, but to the integration of both in a given transaction. The transactional model is concerned with process and change ..." (Pges 325-326)

This view leads to a rejection of the linear model of:

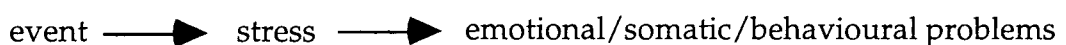


Figure 4.2

and to an acceptance of a circular and an embedded model as shown in Figure 4.3:

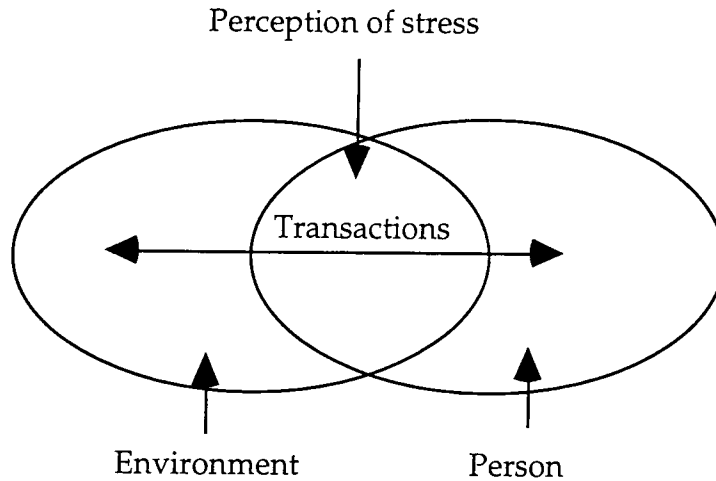


Figure 4.3

In this model the event is both external and internal to the individual as is the environment and allows the person and the environment and the event to unite together to form new meanings. These meanings are temporal and dynamic.

This model of stress views the person and the individual as being in a mutually reciprocal and bi-directional relationship. It moves the emphasis of the perception of stress from being a personal problem to one which is bi-dimensional. It moves from individual alone, to a relationship between the individual and the environment which act upon each other. Neither are prescribed to be paramount and both can have an effect upon the other. Hence, stress is no longer a personal inadequacy. It may be that the individual feels stressed because their transactions with the environment tax or exceed their perceived personal resources. The boss (environment) might be asking them to work too hard, in inadequate conditions and with poor support.

A third element is the event. As has been discussed earlier, stress is often assumed to be triggered by an event, either acute or chronic. Some stress inventories suggest that events have a stress score and if the individual has experienced enough events to score a certain number, they will be stressed. This view does not account for individual differences in the meaning of the event. In the transactional model proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984)

“... separate person and environment elements join together to form new meanings via appraisal; threat, for example, does not refer to separate + person and environment factors, but to the integration of both in a given transaction.” (Pge 326)

The event, the environment and the individual, through their transactions, determine the stress perceived by the individual. The transaction between individual and environment is also important in determining the actions that are possible. Heider (1958) produced the “Naive Analysis of Action” which is a systematic formulation of external and internal factors combining to produce a particular action. Gilmore (1980) represented this schematically.

Heider's Naive Analysis of Action (Gilmore (1980) (Pge 197))

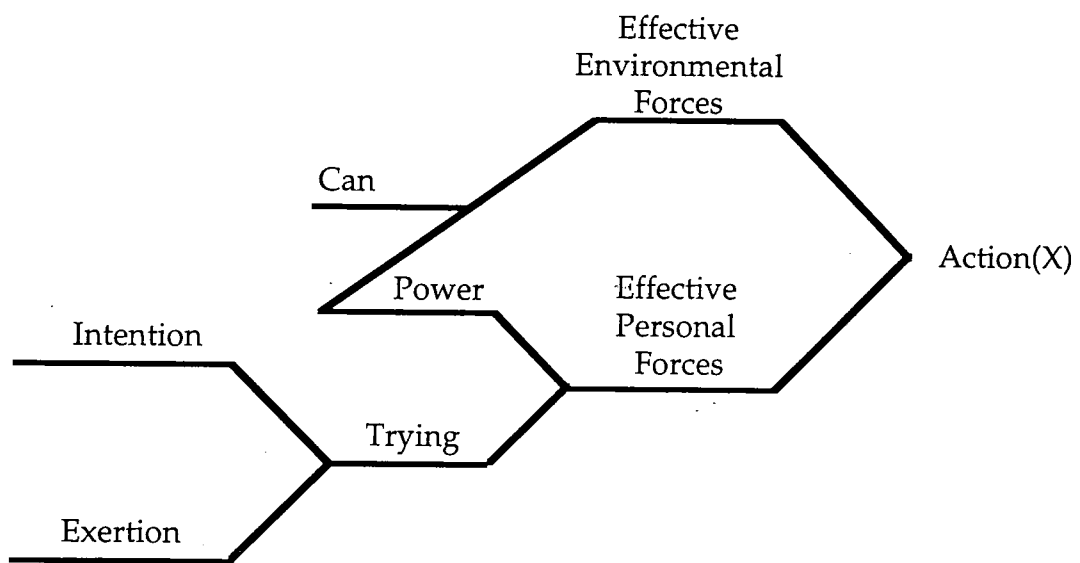


Figure 4.4

Gilmore (1980) argues that any action (represented as X in Figure 4.4) is the result of the effective forces of a person in combination with the effective forces of the environment.

This again suggests that it is important to move away from viewing stress in isolation from context and towards a view of stress which attends to the multiple systems within which humans operate. Gilmore (1980) illustrates these systems thus:

Systems Which Define Humans

(Gilmore (1980) (Pge199)

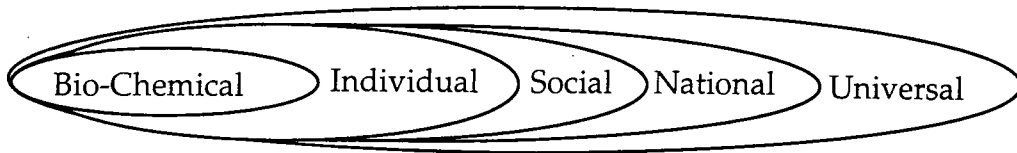


Figure 4.5

An individual operates within the constraints of both an internal and external environment. The perception of stress for an individual results from transactions between the elements, within the parameters set by the conscious and unconscious internal processes.

This model is also cognitive. Cognitive psychology is concerned with how knowledge is stored and retrieved and the most widely held view is that knowledge is organised in schemas. From a very small project I conducted (unrelated to this thesis) on vividness of memory, several links between the perception of stress and cognitive psychology seem evident, and therefore pertinent to include here. The three factors which have emerged so far from research as factors which influence the vividness of memory are recency, importance and emotionality. From the small project, it seemed that although the age (age in memory) varied quite considerably, the vividness was very strong and in discussion with the subjects it appeared that strong emotions, both pleasant and unpleasant, were attached to each memory. One subject commented that it connected with 'extremes of pleasure and awfulness'. This seemed to be the most important factor in vividness of recall.

This links very strongly with the findings from Study Two of this thesis. It seems that this perception is strongly linked to past experience through which present experience seems to be processed. The top-down, bottom-up model of the relationship of semantic and episodic memory to the interpretation of experiences, (shown in Fig 4.8) is similar to the model developing in this thesis of the perception of stress seen below.

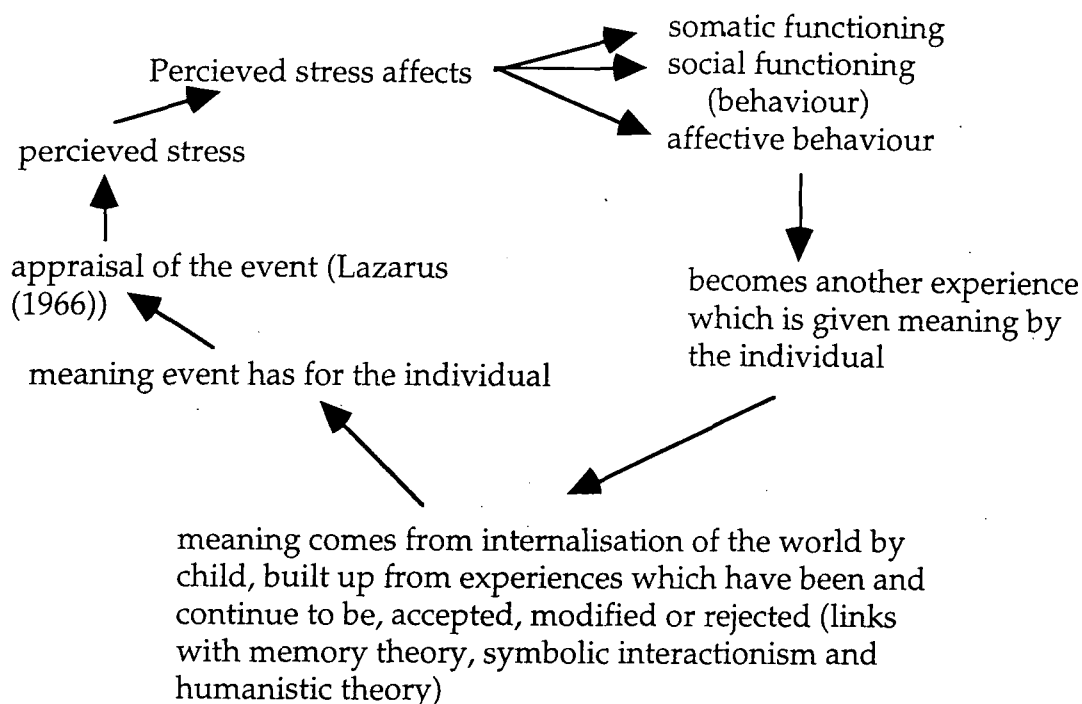


Figure 4.6

The relationship of the above figure to memory theory is through autobiographical memory. The memories of personal experiences and events are known as autobiographical memories. These memories are episodic, rather than semantic. The distinction between episodic memories and semantic memory was first put forward by Tulving (1972). He argued that semantic memory consisted of meaningful facts about the world in general, while episodic memory consisted of records of specific experiences. Autobiographical memory is concerned with specific life experiences which have significance for the individual.

Autobiographical memory is usually located in a specific time and place - a spatio-temporal context- whereas semantic memory need not be. The relationship between these types of memory is not excluding and Tulving suggested that episodic memory is embedded within semantic memory and there is a top-down, bottom-up trade between them. There appears to be a cyclical relationship between episodic and semantic memory in everyday memory as our general knowledge is founded upon everyday experiences and that general knowledge allows us to interpret every day experiences. This would help to explain the differences in perception demonstrated by the children in Study Two.

The distinction between episodic and semantic memory is closely related to schema theory. Schemas contain bundles of general semantic knowledge, much of which has been derived from repeated experiences and the schema are then used to interpret new experiences. By substituting semantic and episodic memory for sensory clues and perceptual model in Neisser's (1976) model of perception (Figure 4.7) we can produce the model underneath (Figure 4.8) which shows a model of the possible relationship between semantic and episodic memory in the interpretation of new experiences.

In discussion with the subjects from the small scale memory project referred to earlier, and reflecting also upon my experience of being a subject, several things emerged:

- The order in which the words were presented had a knock on effect. This seems to suggest a web of connected memories. One subject saw two definite themes running through his responses. This may have links with the subjective importance for us of certain experiences and also link with the phenomenology seen in Study Two.
- Doing the task 'stirs up horrible things' almost like a key unlocking a tangled network of inter-linking processes, some of which are unconscious - memory theory suggests that much memory is unconscious and an 'automatic' process
- For one of the subjects, the exact year was very easy to pinpoint, and for all subjects, physical location was very clear. This links with the finding that autobiographical memory is usually located in a spatio-temporal context.
- The mean age of the subjects memories (7.3 years) links with research which suggests that memories from very early childhood, before the age of seven, are sparse. The mean age of the memories of Subject 3 was very young, 5.5 years, but this subject found it very hard to accurately date the memories and so could be way off. A suggested reason for the lack of memories before seven is that the child has not yet developed the general knowledge schemas needed to interpret, organise and stabilise earlier memories. This is not to

say that the remembered emotions are not powerful, even when they lack the words to form. (Smail, 1991)

Neisser's analysis-by-synthesis theory of perception

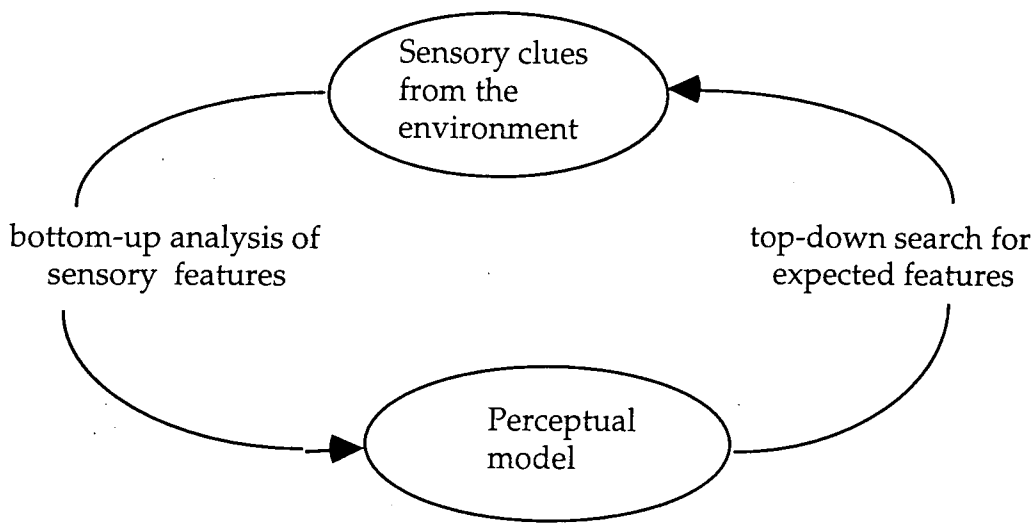


Figure4.7

Model of the possible relationship between episodic and semantic memory in the interpretation of experiences

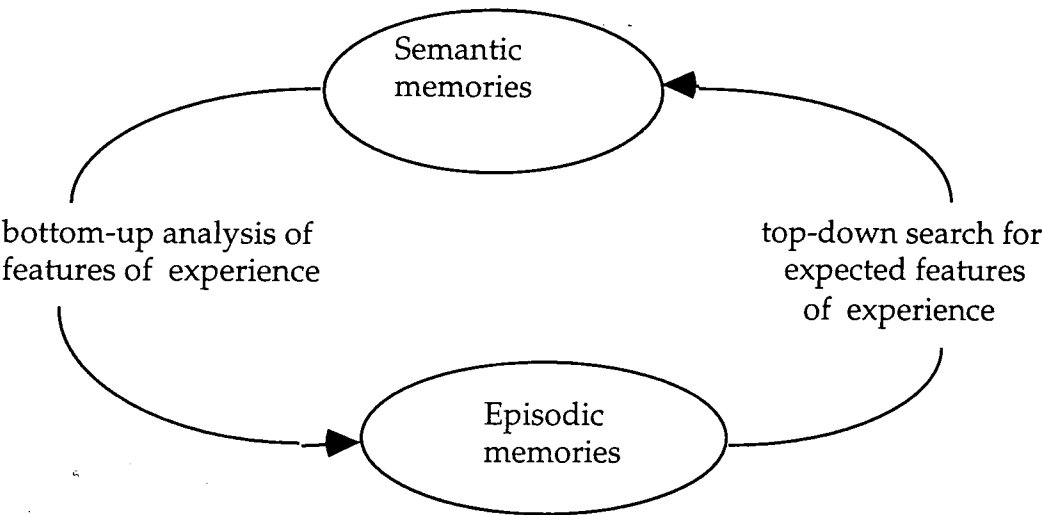


Figure 4.8

- The subjects also felt that the words themselves had an effect, with one subject saying 'perhaps the words themselves didn't hook into my very early experiences'. This effect was not tested but I felt that the construction of the list of nouns may be a reflection of my childhood, and as such, not access the childhood of the subjects. Mine was a rural childhood, as was one of the other subjects and he felt more comfortable with the words. The third subject had a childhood mainly spent abroad. It would be very interesting to repeat the study with subjects generating their own words and rating for vividness and emotionality rather than age.
- One subject felt that some of the memories were composite rather than distinct. This again has links with previous research which argues that particular episodes may be absorbed into the semantic memory and contribute to the formation of a new schema in a generalised version which has lost specific details. This would affect perception in general and have an impact upon the perception of stress.

The application of cognitive theory to a model of stress seems useful. The notion that knowledge is represented in schemas which can be accessed in the cyclical way described by Neisser seems to offer an explanation of how stress is perceived.

The third element in the Lazarus and Folkman model is the integration of psychoanalytic or psychodynamic theories. Psychodynamic theory is a theory of psychology that emphasises motives and drives in its explanation of behaviour, and it encompasses psychoanalytic theory and extends from it. Jacobs argues:

"'Psychodynamic' refers to the way in which the psyche (as mind/emotions/spirit/self) is seen as active, not static. This does not simply mean being active in the sense that thinking and feeling are personal activities; nor does it simply mean forces within the psyche which actively seek expression or satisfaction. The weaknesses of such terms as 'instincts' or 'drives', which were a major part of Freud's theory, is that they describe activity but do not appear to give sufficient weight to the relationships between people, or to the dynamic between them."

What particularly distinguishes the term 'psychodynamic' is that the activity of the psyche is not confined to relating to people or objects outside of the self.....Activity also takes place within the psyche , in relation to itself the psyche or the personality seems to consist of a number of 'selves' " (Pges 4 & 5)

Psychodynamic theories are commonly associated with Freud, and indeed, in the hundred years or so since he began his work, almost every therapeutic method has evolved from his work. The major figures in the psychodynamic school are Freud himself, Jung, Adler and more modern successors such as Klein, Bowlby and Winnicott. Rogers phenomenological approach also has its historical roots in psychodynamic and existential writings.

In order to understand psychodynamic theory it is important to have a grasp of the major Freudian ideas. Freud believed that man is irrational and unsocialized and saw clients as blind victims of impulse acting in a mechanistic and deterministic fashion. He stressed the importance of the clients life history (psychosexual development), influence of genetic impulses (instincts), a life energy (libido). He was also convinced of the profound effect that early influences had on the resulting personality of the individual. He described three levels of awareness:

- a) *the conscious level* - the thoughts of which a person is aware.
- b) *preconscious level* - the thoughts that the person can recall but is not aware of at the time.
- c) *unconscious level* - the ideas and memories the person has forgotten and cannot recall to memory.

He puts forward the 'iceberg concept' where he sees the bulk of the personality as unconscious and having a powerful influence on behaviour.

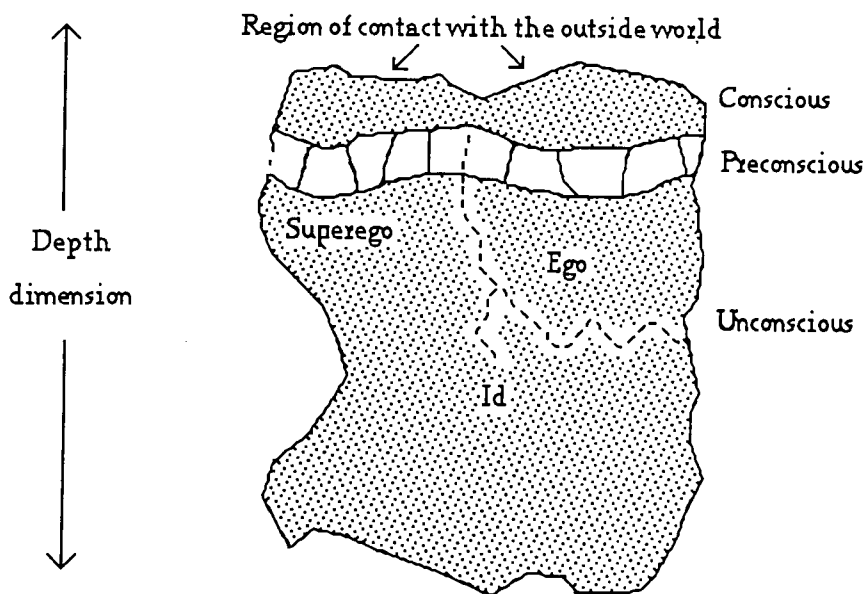


Figure 4.9

This illustrates the psychoanalytic concept of personality structure (Brammer L, Abrego P and Shostrom E, (1993)

As can be seen from the above illustration, the Id forms the largest element. This is characterised as being unconscious, irrational, unorganised, pleasure oriented, primitive and the source of the libido, drives and basic wishes for life and death. The Ego is a controlling mechanism which is reality oriented. It mediates between the Superego, Id and reality demands. It controls the Id and keeps impulses and feelings (such as anxiety) out of consciousness. This control is accomplished through defences of which the main type is repression. The Id impulse, thus thwarted, penetrates the Ego barrier in a disguised and usually safer form. The Superego is a concept similar to a conscience and is also controlling. It is seen as made up of parental moral attitudes and social mores learned in early years.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory consists of three parts; two warring factions - the id and superego and a mediator - the ego. The id wants its needs satisfied and is in a constant state of tension and seeks to reduce this tension by the gratification of its needs. The superego attempts to control the selfish demands of the id and imposes 'rules' that it has learnt from parents and replaces the need for real punishment by guilt. The ego tries to mediate between these two forces and maintain a balance. Freud sees life as a continual attempt to maximise instinctual gratification and minimise punishment and guilt. The

way this is achieved is through defence mechanisms, which ideally stay within the bounds of reality. These are developed by the ego.

Defence mechanisms are ways of keeping unwanted thoughts and feelings from our conscious minds, while at the same time trying to give them some outlet. If no outlet is possible, then the build up of tension becomes unbearable and leads to a release of undiluted id.

Examples of these defence mechanisms are projection, denial, regression, repression, rationalisation, displacement and sublimation.

Projection is when you project unacceptable impulses of your own onto other people. For instance, a child may criticise someone else for not being able to cope with school, because unconsciously, they fear that they cannot cope.

Repression is when thoughts, feelings or memories are blocked from the conscious. An example of this could be a child that was abused blocking the memory. It would perhaps filter through in the way she related to men, but she may not know why she is afraid of men.

Denial is when the ego wards off reality. A child may be afraid of its father, but unable to admit this. It may invent a fantasy lion to accompany it everywhere. This lion is its father but by making it into an imaginary friend, the child is able to cope with his unconscious fear of the father.

Regression is when the individual resorts to an earlier form of behaviour. Children often do this with the arrival of another sibling. The child fears the loss of the parents love and so 'regresses'. Perhaps they start needing nappies again, or need to be spoon-fed.

Rationalisation is when the individual fails to accept the real significance of their thoughts and puts forward a fictitious reason that puts themselves in a better light. An example of this could be a mother who goes out to work. Her unconscious may feel guilty but she rationalises it to herself by saying that she has not got the patience to stay at home and working makes her a better mother.

Sublimation is when we channel our unacceptable feelings into something positive. We may wish to possess someone sexually, but sublimate this into friendship and use the energy released for creative purposes.

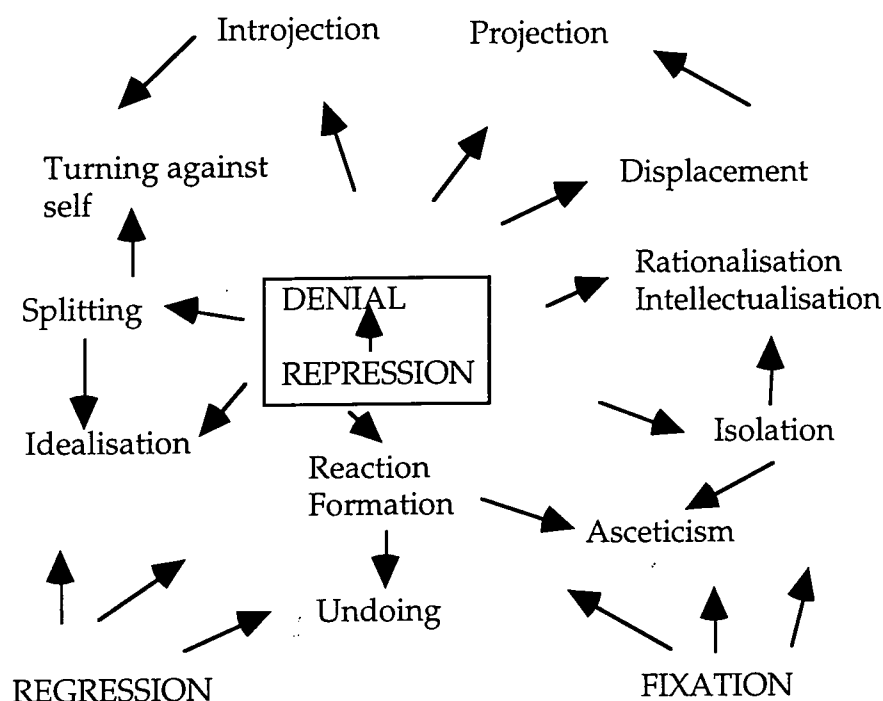
All defence mechanisms were thought to be unconscious although there is now some debate. It was argued originally that if we were aware of what was being repressed and the mechanisms we were using then they would not be effective in stopping us feeling guilty, so defence mechanisms are a way of lying to ourselves as well as others. However, it seems that we may be conscious of some of our defence mechanisms e.g. sublimation - going for a run which will leave us gasping for breath in order, consciously, to stop thinking about unpleasant memories. Defences are a necessary part of living and if they break down, they must be reinstated. However, defences vary in the amount that they distort reality. If they distort reality too much then they defeat the aim of keeping as close to reality as possible while seeking gratification of the instincts. Stress could be viewed from this position as an attack upon the defence system or as a hooking into unconscious material.

Freud's psychosexual theory of development stresses the importance of the first five years of a child's life and Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation stemmed directly from this. Freud believed that we pass through five stages of development - oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital and he placed emphasis upon the first three stages which happened during the first five years of life. He believed that our experiences during the first five years of life had a permanent effect on the development of the personality. Later students of Freud modified and abandoned some of his basic postulates, and the present position is an emphasis upon the relationships between internal and external worlds and uses the basic developmental ideas to try and illuminate what the client (or in some cases, patient) says. Because of the significance given to unconscious material, the psychodynamic theorist is interested in how it was formed, and so, interested in the client's past history. They emphasise the interrelationship of the external and internal worlds and of associated memories, some of which are hidden in the unconscious and are released through fantasies and dreams, and possibly through the feelings evoked during a stressful experience. Defences are erected to try and control the stress and Jacobs (1988) argues:

"Understanding the range of defences which a person experiences under stress, or in the face of unacceptable feelings, is only part of the

psychodynamic counsellor's task. It is equally necessary to become aware of the way resistance is shown ..., to enquire what the defence or resistance means, to ascertain what feelings and thoughts are being kept at bay, and to explore with the clients what makes those feelings so difficult to acknowledge as a valid and indeed healthy part of themselves." (Pge 87)

He also suggests a possible pattern for the interweaving of the defences.



(Regression and Fixation may involve any of the above defences as part of their expression) (Pge 82)

Figure 4.10

Psychodynamic theory has under gone major revisions since its inception and Brammer *et al* (1993) summarise directions and theory as follows:

- " 1. greater recognition of the cultural determinants of behaviour
2. more concern with the client's present circumstances, especially people close to them, and less preoccupation with infantile development and traumata
3. more emphasis upon the quality of the therapeutic relationship and how the client perceives it

4. a de-emphasis of sexual needs and aberrations, and increasing stress on other needs and feelings such as love, hostility, and ambivalence and
5. a greater emphasis on rational ego functions in solving life problems" (Pge 33)

It is also not without its critics. One of the major criticisms is the way that Freud insisted that the first five years of life are all important for development. As with Bowlby, evidence, such as that of Rutter, (1979, 1981, 1983) shows that children damaged early in their lives, can recover and lead relatively 'normal' lives. Many people have tried to show irreparable damage, but none have shown it. Clarke (1968) concluded that all years of childhood are important - someone may be damaged later on in childhood, while one damaged early may recover if put in a better environment.

Other criticisms of Freud's work are summed up by Thomas (1990) who suggests that his:

"...theories have been especially criticised on the grounds of: the narrow sample; claims that the processes are universal and culture free; his views on women and female sexuality." (Pge 179)

However, he goes on to suggest that:

"Since Freud, some of the problematic areas in his work have been reworked or changed by other theorists. In Britain especially, psychodynamic theory is moving away from the centrality of instincts (with its focus on sexuality) towards object relations more generally." (Pge 179)

Despite these criticisms, the operation and function of defence mechanisms seems to offer another insight into how children might perceive stress, and as Passon's (1975) argues:

" The real worth of a theory is its usefulness" (Pge 2)

The explanation offered by psychodynamic theory seems useful as it takes into account unconscious elements and suggests how these elements might have been formed. Links can also be made here with the Grovian theory discussed

in Chapter Eight. In terms of the healing metaphor suggested by Grove (1989), memories from the past can be stored as familiar feelings or thoughts or in bodily sensations. The child may be aware of these 'symptoms', or partially aware of them in the form of an image or metaphor such as a 'block of ice in my stomach'. Grove suggests that these metaphors have the power to carry meaning from the past to the present and thus provides another explanation of stress which seems to have no apparent cause.

The idea of an 'unconscious' is not new one invented by Freud. It had been around since the 18th century. In 1867, twenty-five years before Freud wrote of it, Maudsley wrote:

" The most important part of mental action, the essential process on which thinking depends, is unconscious activity." (Maudsley, 1867, quoted in Whyte, 1978, Pge 162)

In Spinelli's (1994) view Freud extended the then current view and then subverted the basic idea. Spinelli (1994) offers a radical re-interpretation or explanation of the unconscious. He proposes a *dissociated consciousness* which stresses the notion of :

" *consciously unreflected dissociation* rather than repression." (Pge 157)

In other words, we do not repress material that represents a conflict to our view of self. Rather we dissociate from it. It goes into our unconscious but is not locked away behind a barrier which can only be breached indirectly, but it stored where the individual may avoid reflecting on them.

Spinelli's (1994) argues:

".... this view argues that whatever the presenting conflict, its meaning lies in the conflict itself (rather than in what may be supposed to exist behind or beneath it) such that it is a direct expression of the conflict rather than a disguised or distorted expression of unconscious processes. Further, it suggests that the exploration of this meaning can be achieved through the clarification and challenging of conscious views and assumptions rather than by interpreting these as obscured 'eruptions' from the unconscious. Finally, it suggests that what has been tended to be understood as

'making the unconscious conscious' may be more adequately described as a movement 'from disownership towards ownership' in that it does not involve the uncovering of lost or forgotten material, but, rather, the acknowledgement of thoughts, affects, memories and the like as not being somehow alien but, more properly, 'belonging to one's self.

Put in another way, this view points to the possibility that many, if not all, such dissociations reveal that awareness at a phenomenological level has somehow dissociated from the epistemological knowledge or beliefs contained in the awareness such that the experiences are not 'owned' or acknowledged as 'belonging to' the experiencer." (Page 157)

This idea certainly equates with my own experience. I can remember an experience as a child, that I found so distressing that I consciously decided to 'put it from my mind' so I could believe it had never happened. I did this very successfully and it was only quite recently that I 'remembered'. When I remembered, it was a familiar memory, not one that had been disguised, but one that had always been there but 'separate'. This also accords with my experience with counselling clients. Often they 'remember' something they have not thought of for years, but which suddenly helps them make sense of their situations.

So, this all suggests that the perception of stress does not only occur in the parts of our consciousness that we can access. Often feelings of stress become focused upon an event without the individual knowing why this event is stressful. An example may be of a gifted student becoming so stressed by the prospect of sitting examinations that they become paralysed with fear and unable to perform. They might have always performed well in similar situations but this time be convinced that a poor B grade will ensue. After exploration, the meaning of the event (the examination) to that individual may be to confirm the uniqueness of the candidate. It may be that they feel that they have always been considered academically special and the examination is the event that will confirm this. The underlying fear may be that it has all been a terrible mistake and that the candidate has never been special. The risk involved in taking the examination is therefore tremendous. The candidate will be exposed as they always feared, and panic ensues. Without access to the meaning, the stress from which people suffer, may seem irrational. Lazarus

and Folkman (1984) support the view that the meaning events have for individuals may be not be fully conscious and assert that:

"Appraisal is often taken to be a conscious, rationale and deliberate process. We have argued, however, that an individual may be unaware of any or all of the basic elements of an appraisal. A threat appraisal can arise without the person . clearly knowing the values and goals that are evaluated as endangered, the internal or environmental factors that contribute to a sense of danger, or even that the threat has been appraised. This lack of awareness can result from the operation of defence mechanisms, or can be based on none defensive attentional processes." (Pge 52)

David Smail (1991) echoes this lack of awareness and explains it in the following terms

"Because such 'decisions' and 'attitudes' really are basic, and formed at a time when language is still a mystery to us, they are formed uncritically. We cannot hold them up to ourselves and examine them; they become the rather inarticulate foundations on which we build the rest of our lives and to which we have a passionate and inexpressible commitment. The world announces itself to us as we open our eyes, and what it says we *know* from that day forth." (Pge 3)

He goes on to argue that psychological stress may be viewed in terms of features that lie fallow in our emotional repertoire as feelings:

"...laden with inexpressible but extremely powerful meaning" (Pge 4)

Stress is often described as 'feelings' and often the origins of these feelings are lost. As Breznitz (1983) suggests:

" In contrast to physiological stress, psychological stress never acts purely in the present. The psychological processes relate either to a distressing event in the past, or an anticipated one in the future." (Pge 225)

Because of the power these feelings have, it is imperative for the meaning of a stressful event to be explored. When the meaning is clear, it may open the way for the individual to be empowered to change or modify the way they operate in the world. Without the meaning being known, stress management programmes risk putting metaphoric sticking plasters upon knees when the client is having a coronary.

Lazarus *et al* (1980) acknowledge the part played by emotions:

"The relations between cognition and emotion are, no doubt, exceedingly complex two-way streets, with emotion often redirecting or interfering with cognitive activity, as well as vice versa." (Pge 191)

Thus stressors may be located either within the individual or external to him/her or both and are not locked in the environment as suggested in the stimulus-response models.

Lazarus and his colleagues believe that if you change the way a person thinks and believes, then you can also change the pattern of emotional reactions to ordinary social transactions. Lazarus *et al* (1980) argue that:

"A cognitive theory of emotion, at its bottom line assumes that emotion arises from how a person construes the outcome, actual or anticipated, of a transaction or bit of commerce with the environment" (Pge 192)

This does not assume, as ICPS does, that once we become aware of any incongruence or incomplete or unsubstantiated belief or attitude, we will then be able to change them, but is, rather, tied into the meaning that individuals make.

The second cognitive-phenomenological model to be discussed is that of the psychological experience of trauma, developed by McCann *et al* (1988). This model also acknowledges a phenomenological perception and places it within a cognitive framework. They suggest that the model is built upon the following hypotheses:

"1. Persons develop schemas, or beliefs and expectancies, about self and others within these five areas of psychological and interpersonal functioning (safety, trust, power, esteem and intimacy). These schemas develop in response to life experiences and are also shaped by one's gender and socio-cultural background.

2. Schemas within the five areas develop sequentially, as Erikson (1963) and Piaget (1970; 1971) would suggest. The predicted order in which schemas develop is first in the area of safety, followed by trust, power, esteem, and intimacy.

3. Persons may develop positive or negative schemas within these five areas. Various feelings are attached to these beliefs and expectancies.

4. Persons who have been victimised may experience negative schemas about self or others within one or more of these five areas.

5. Different psychological response patterns are associated with positive and negative schemas about self and others within the five areas.

6. Finally the adaptive or nonadaptive nature of these schemas must be understood within the context of the person's unique psychological situation. " (Pge 558)

They suggest that:

"...life experiences shape, solidify, or alter existing schemas about self and others. Likewise, schemas colour the way in which life experiences will be appraised, interpreted, and integrated.....Finally,...the person's psychological adaptation has an impact on and shapes subsequent life experiences." (Pge 560)

The model of the relationship between these elements may be seen below:

The Relation among Life Experiences, Schemas, and Psychological Adaptation

(McCann *et al* (1988) (Pge 559)

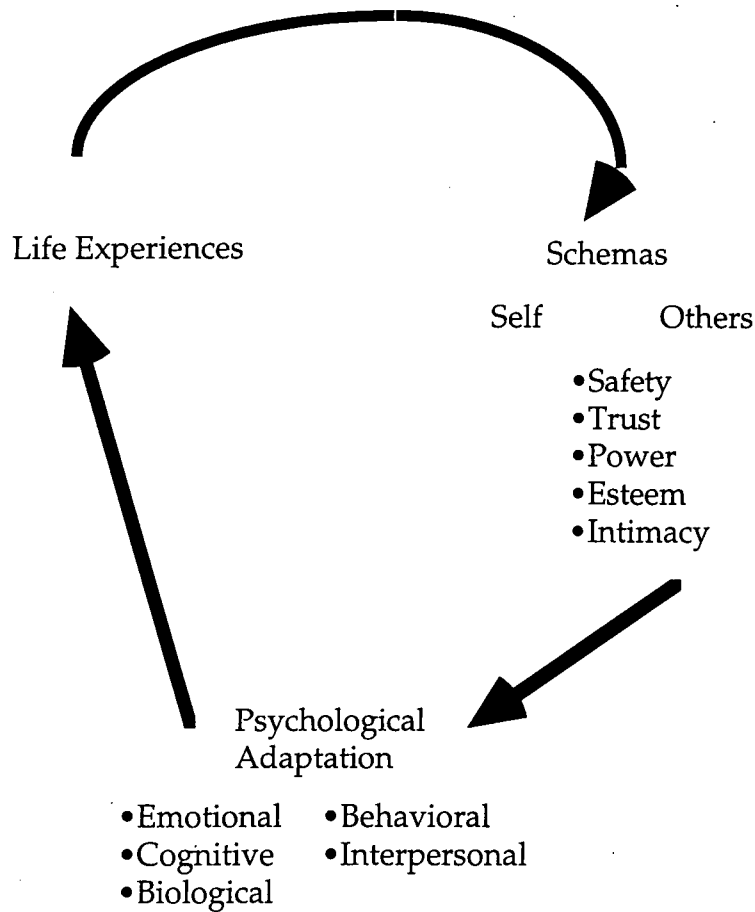


Figure 4.11

This model is similar to the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) view of stress, but differs in their emphasis upon individual phenomenology. In later work, McCann and Pearlman (1990) emphasise this point by suggesting:

"Thus an essential part of what determines whether an individual experience is traumatic is the individual's sense it is so." (Pge 12)

4.5 Mediating Factors

Mediating factors may be described as those factors which moderate the effect of stress (used in this sense as a stimulus) upon the individual. These factors are many and various and include such things as personality, problem solving

techniques, coping methods and social support. The majority of these concepts have been discussed elsewhere in this chapter but social support has not and is considered in this section.

Social support is seen as a mediating factor in the perception and control of stress. It may be seen in terms of two models; the main effects model and the buffering model. The 'main effects' model is based upon the hypothesis that the web of social networks in which an individual is involved provides beneficial effects with or without stress and the main benefits of this seem to stem from a sense of well-being due to the groups acceptance, offers of aid and a stable predictable environment. The last of these benefits seems to be at odds with the findings of Greenberg *et al* (1983). The 'buffering' model is based upon the hypothesis that the impact of stress on health is mitigated by conditions of high support. These beneficial effects appear to arise from the individual's enhanced sense of mastery and the avoidance of feelings of helplessness.

Flannery and Wieman (1989) report that up to the time of their study, two studies had assessed both types of social support and one study found the main effect and both found the buffering effects. Their study extended this enquiry with, in their words:

"...a more comprehensive assessment of both social support resources that addressed previous methodological limitations." (Page 867)

They found buffering effects but no main network effect. A possible explanation for this may be that the simple checklist of networks did not prompt the respondent to recall significant helpful interchanges so that the quality of the support was not reflected.

Compas *et al* (1986) also investigated the mediating effects of social support. They assessed the relationship between major life events, perceived social support and psychological disorder. They found that negative life events and satisfaction with social supports were significantly related to a range of psychological symptoms and that the relationship between negative life events and disorder was moderated by gender, types of event experienced and anticipated change in their psycho-social environment.

In this study, females experienced significantly more negative life events than the males but there was a higher correlation between negative life events and disorder for males. This is supported in a study by Arora *et al* (1988) who found that patterns and expression of psychological stress appeared to vary with sex and age. They found that self-esteem improved with age in girls but not boys and this could be a factor in the correlation between stress and disorder.

Compas *et al* (1986) also found that the type of event was important when considering associations. They found that family problems, troubles at school or with the law, or personal difficulties had a stronger association with psychological problems than did becoming more autonomous, moving to a new school and sexuality. This pattern of association appears to be much more distinct than that reported by Newcomb *et al* (1981).

Disruption or change in the psycho-social environment may also increase the adolescents vulnerability to stress. The study by Compas *et al* (1986) looked at high school students about to leave home to go to college, various distances from home. They found a trend that suggested that the greater the distance of the anticipated move, the stronger the association between disorder and both negative events and lower satisfaction with social support.

Andrews *et al* (1978) investigated the relationship of social factors to physical and psychiatric illness and found that poor social support was related both to physical and psychiatric illness. However, Compas (1987) argues that studies of the interactive effects of support have been mixed in their findings which would prohibit any conclusions being drawn about the differing effects upon an individual of high or low perceived social support. On the whole, however, the majority of studies in this area do seem to acknowledge that social support is a mediating factor in the effects of stress upon individuals.

4.6 Coping Patterns

Coping is defined by Folkman and Lazarus (1980) as:

“...the cognitive and behavioural efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them. Such coping serves two main functions: the management or

alteration of the person-environment relationship that is the source of stress (problem-focused coping) and the regulation of stressful emotions (emotion-focused coping). (Pge 223)

They assert that these coping efforts are made in response to an appraisal of stress, and that appraisal and coping continuously interact with each other throughout an encounter, in a rather chicken and egg way:

"The identification of appraisal as a determinant of coping, or coping as a determinant of appraisal is thus provisional depending upon where one interrupts the ongoing, dynamic relationship between the two." (Pge 224)

Davis and Compas (1986) also accept the role of cognitive appraisal in coping and examine it in relation to adolescents. They argue that it is reasonable to assume that appraisal of a stressful event or circumstance would be affected by the increasing complexity and sophistication with which an adolescent increasingly views his/her world. They assert that the study of cognitive appraisal during adolescence needs to focus upon several appraisal dimensions:

- a) salience of perceived impact and desirability,
- b) perceived frequency of events may be important in distinguishing major life events from daily hassles and pleasures,
- c) attributional analysis of stressful life events in adults has focused on:
perceived locus of control(external/internal),
stability,
generality
and the controllability of causes of events.

and that these need to be examined with regard to adolescents.

Davis and Compas (1986) investigated the above dimensions and concluded that the sample they studied spontaneously appraised the desirability of events, both daily hassles and pleasures and major life events, in a systematic way. The systematic nature of this appraisal seems quite a surprising finding. Grief and transition theories would suggest that the first response to a stressful

event is one of numbing and denial (Adams *et al* ,1976, Worden, 1982, Parkes, 1965) and this does not seem to correlate with these findings. The response they found seems to have an implicit cognitive base - discrete little packages of knowledge that can be tidily packaged in desirable or undesirable schemas. Perhaps the response they noted could be viewed from a symbolic interactionist approach of a desire to make meaningful the world. Thus the meaning of the event was the result of a construction of reality.

" Man does not simply react; he evaluates, criticises and defines, and then acts in the light of his own interpretation and construction of reality" (Tattum and Tattum, 1992, Pge 12)

Davis and Compas (1986) also found that:

- a) Desirability of events was the only salient feature for early adolescents,
- b) Middle and late adolescents also appraised events in terms of desirability, but also in terms of the amount of impact caused and the generality of causes.

They argue that this suggests an increased complexity of appraisal with an increase in age in the adolescents. This appears to be a common finding across a range of child development models.

They also found that perceptions of coping abilities were associated with the desirability of the event and suggest that the amount that the event is seen to tax or exceed the individual's coping resources is reflected in the appraisal of the desirability of the event. An example of this may be seen in a child who is a competent piano player but does not recognise this, finding playing the same piece in school assembly less stressful than playing for a school concert where parents and others are invited to attend. This finding may be seen to relate to Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance. In it he argued that if individuals are faced with a severe conflict between their beliefs and factual evidence, they are in a state of cognitive dissonance . This state is intolerable and therefore individuals are forced to either change their original beliefs or distort the opposing facts. In the example cited, the girl does not believe in her competence and holds to that belief by distorting the opposing fact that the difficulty of the playing is the same for both orchestra and school performance.

Davis and Compas (1986) also found that the perceived ability to cope was related to the frequency of occurrence. The events that occurred more often appeared to be less stressful than rare events and perhaps may be seen to have links with the adage that 'familiarity breeds contempt.' It also suggests that 'major life events' as defined as being infrequent in occurrence and highly undesirable, would stretch the coping resources more than 'daily hassles and pleasures.'

Compas *et al* (1988), Folkman and Lazarus (1980) and Lazarus and Folkman (1984) investigated the types of coping strategies that individuals use and although Folkman and Lazarus's investigations centre on adults, the concepts do seem useful in the study of children and adolescents. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) used a "Ways of Coping" checklist of 68 items which described behavioural and cognitive coping strategies that may be used by individuals in response to a specific stressful episode. The items on the checklist were classified into two categories: problem-focused and emotion-focused. The problem-focused category included items that described cognitive problem-solving efforts and behavioural strategies for altering or managing the source of the problem. An example is:

"Made a plan of action and followed it" (Pge 224)

The emotion-focused category included items that described the cognitive and behavioural efforts that were directed at managing or reducing emotional distress. An example is:

"Looked for the "silver lining," so to speak; tried to look on the bright side of things." (Pge 225)

They found that their sample used problem and emotion-focused coping in virtually every stressful encounter and argued that this dramatically shows the inadequacy of conceptualising the coping process solely in terms of problem-solving (see section on the work of Spivack and Shure (1982), (1985), and ICPS) or defensive processes. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) assert that coping is best seen as a complex process involving both problem-solving and emotion-regulating functions, determined by the relationship between the person and the environment. Although the degree of consistency of coping patterns offers support for this theory, it is possible to argue that defence mechanisms also play a part.

Freud argues that there are certain things that our conscious mind is unable to deal with and thus remain buried in our unconscious defended and blocked by ego defence mechanisms. Spinelli (1993) argues for dissociation. Whatever explanation we accept for the function of the unconscious, it seems too simplistic to argue that we only function on a conscious level although the measurement of these defences is very difficult. As Folkman and Lazarus (1980) argue:

“The placement of an ego process on an evaluative dimension is often made on the basis of information about how well the person functions. This leads to the first major difficulty, namely a confounding between the process and the adaptational outcome.”
(Pge 220)

Also, defence systems may be seen as a method of maintaining equilibrium and releasing tension and although this is seen as an important function of coping, other aspects such as problem-solving cannot be ignored. Selye (1974) argues that the maintenance of homeostasis is one of the major problems of life and says that:

“The laws which regulate the involuntary biochemical responses within our body during stress are virtually identical with those governing voluntary inter-personal behaviour” (Pge 71)

but it would seem incomplete to only consider the maintenance of homeostasis without taking into account cognition and affectivity.

Folkman and Lazarus (1980) found that the middle-aged sample they studied used more problem-focused coping in situations that they perceived as changeable and more emotion-focused coping in situations they perceived as unchangeable. Forsythe and Compas (1987) found a similar pattern and found that psychological symptoms were related to the degree of fit between appraisals of control and the relative amount of problem and emotion-focused coping used. The psychological symptoms seemed to be higher when subjects used more emotion-focused coping with events perceived as controllable and more problem-focused coping with events perceived as uncontrollable. In a study designed to study the generation of alternative coping solutions and the strategies actually used to cope with inter-personal and academic stressors,

Compas *et al* (1988) found that youngsters who were less adept at generating and using problem-focused coping experienced more adjustment problems. They also found that:

- a) emotion-focused and problem-focused types of coping were used by older children and young adolescents.
- b) generation of emotion-focused solutions and use of emotion-focused coping strategies increased from ages 11 years -13 years whereas the generation and use of problem-focused coping was generally consistent across the same age range.
- c) strong gender differences were not found although girls used more emotion-focused strategies than boys in response to academic events.
- d) children and young adolescents seem to display more cross-situational consistency in their coping than do older adolescents and adults. This may perhaps be because a limited range of responses are available at this age.
- e) there seems to be significant correlation between emotional/behavioural problems and coping with social but not academic stressors.
- f) there was a positive relationship between emotion-focused coping alternatives generated and strategies used and emotional/behavioural problems.
- g) there appears to be some support for the hypothesis that youngsters match their coping focus to fit with their appraisal of their control over stressful events. The nature of this match seems to be related to emotional/behavioural problems. Subjects seemed to perceive the causes of academic stressors as more controllable than the causes of social stressors and generated more problem-focused alternatives for coping with academic stress. The number of problem-focused alternative solutions generated for social stressors interacted with the youngsters perception of the controllability of the event. There

seemed to be more problems associated with a mismatch between perceived control and the focus of coping. (See pages 410 -411)

Although Compas *et al* advise caution as to the interpretation of the match between appraisal of control and coping because they were found for only one type of coping in response to one type of stressful event, they appear to confirm much of the adult work in the area and highlight some of the differences between adolescent and adult coping. Whether coping appears in such discrete forms may be open to debate and Study Three of this thesis indicates that both problem and emotion focused coping was used for the same 'stressor'.

Forsythe and Compas (1987) pursued the 'goodness of fit' concept between appraisal of the controllability of events and the use of problem and/or emotion-focused coping to see if psychological distress varied as a function of this 'goodness of fit'. They found that the use of problem-focused coping was associated with lower symptom levels when the stressful event was perceived as controllable, although when events were perceived as uncontrollable, higher distress levels occurred using this focus. The use of emotion-focused strategies displayed the converse pattern. They also found that this pattern was present in major life events but not daily hassles and pleasures. This leads them to suggest that the ramifications of mis-matching cognitive appraisal and coping focus on a single daily hassle may not be as severe as on a major life event. However, accumulations of daily hassles have been found to be important thus mis-matching may become important in regard to daily hassles/pleasures when they occur cumulatively.

In addition to this problem/emotion-focused research, Compas (1987, b) argues that child and adolescent coping is reflected in seven different lines of research. These are:- infants response to maternal separation, social support, interpersonal cognitive problem solving, coping in achievement contexts, Type A behaviour pattern in children, repression-sensitization, and resilience to stress. Social support, interpersonal problem solving and Type A behaviour patterns have already been discussed and a discussion of the four remaining areas follows.

4.6.1 Infants' Responses to Maternal Separation .

It may be argued that a baby's reaction to the separation from their mother or primary care-giver is the first experience they have of coping with a stressful situation. Hock and Clinger (1981) studied this as an interesting example of infant coping. Those babies who were labelled as securely attached, (mild protestations on mother's departure, seeking proximity to her on her return and being easily placated by her) may be seen as representing a reaction to a mildly stressful event. Those babies labelled as insecurely attached children, (serious distress when mother leaves, and not easily soothed on mothers return) may be seen as less effective copers. The third group of babies labelled as avoidant children (don't protest on mothers departure and do not seek her out upon her return) may not perceive the event as stressful and thus do not feel the need to cope. The labelling involved is worrying. It could be argued that the most securely attached children were the ones who made the most fuss on the mothers departure as they felt the mother to be the highlight of their lives and protested violently when she wasn't there. A parallel situation - giving a child a chocolate and then taking it out of his/her mouth halfway through eating- it would produce the opposite supposition. The child who protested loved chocolate, the child who did not protest was not that keen anyway. Similarly the child who showed no emotion at all may have experienced the situation on previous occasions and feel that it was useless to protest. A similar 'freeze' reaction has been documented in babies that have been abused.

Thus, distress displayed seems to be an arguable measure when applied to the amount of stress felt by babies upon separation and thus the effectiveness of their coping strategies is difficult to judge. It may be that the responses recorded show a mixture of learned responses mediated by temperament and environment. Hock and Clinger (1981) argue that some children who do not display distress upon separation, may be better able to cope with uncertainty rather than being poorly attached. Kagen (1984) argues that:

".. babies who do not become upset in the Stranger Situation have acquired adaptive coping strategies to cope with stress" (Pge 61)

Compas (1987, b) also argues that children differ in their responsiveness to the environment and that because of this, the more responsive children may need to cope with a greater number of situations than less responsive children.

A study by Cohen-Sandler *et al* (1982) on the determinants of suicidal behaviour in children found that in comparison to both depressed and psychiatric control children, suicidal children experience significantly and increasing amounts of stress as they increased in age including disruptive family events that resulted in the loss and separation from important people.

The nature and importance of attachment relationships of adolescents to parents and to peers has been studied by Greenberg *et al* (1983) The study was based upon Bowlby's theory of attachment and one of the authors, Greenberg, had developed a measure to assess the affective attachments of adolescents towards peers and parents. They found that indices of an adolescents relationship to both peers and parents were related to his/her perceived self-esteem and life satisfaction. The effect of the perceived quality of attachment to parents was considerably greater than that of attachment to peers, and this did not seem to vary with the age of the adolescent. They found that the quality of attachment to parents was significantly more powerful than that to peers in predicting well-being and the quality of attachment to parents showed a moderating effect under conditions of high life stress on measures of self esteem.

It appears, then that family relationships do have a mediating effect upon stress. Williams *et al* (1989) found that there was a negative correlation between levels of distress and a positive attitude towards parents. Boyce *et al* (1977) investigated the influence of life events and family routines upon children with respiratory tract illnesses. They found that family routines and life change were jointly related to the severity of the illness and that in those children with a combination of many life changes and a strongly routinised family, there was a marked increase in the average severity of the illness. The finding that a strongly routinised family contributed to the severity of the illness is contrary to the study's initial hypothesis and may be explained in several ways:

- a) the family routine score did not measure regularity in the family life.
- b) it could, in fact, reflect rigidity of parents or harshness of family rules
- c) the disruptive effects of life change may alter family habits so that the routines of a highly routinised family may be disrupted

- d) children accustomed to a highly routinised life are more stressed than protected by their routines when a major life change is encountered
- e) the adaptation gained from coping with an irregular family routine may be in some ways protective against the effect of subsequent life change.

4.6.2 Coping in Achievement Contexts

A parallel with Spivack and Shure's emphasis on cognitive strategies may be seen in the research on coping in achievement contexts. Dweck *et al* , (1980, 1982 & 1973) investigated 'helpless' and 'mastery-oriented' children and argue that mastery-oriented children may be seen as examples of effective copers in that they sustain high levels of motivation, persist in attempts at problem solving, increase their concentration and display enhanced performance. In contrast, helpless children may be judged to display ineffective coping which is reflected in reduced effort, high levels of discouragement and a deterioration in their performance. They report that the behaviour of the two groups is relatively similar prior to failure, but differs in attribution as to cause after failure. Dweck and Reppucci (1973), and Dweck(1975), in their early research found that mastery oriented children attributed success to their abilities and failure to changeable factors such as effort. Helpless children attributed success to changeable factors and failure to lack of personal ability. Dweck (1975) found that when the helpless children were taught to attribute failure to personal effort they became more persistent and the levels of their performance improved. She also found that helplessness was more often found in girls and could be linked to the socialisation practices observed in the classroom. These findings could be linked to the findings from problem/emotion focused research in that problem focused coping seemed to be more successful in situations which were perceived to be controllable - i.e., personal effort. The socialisation practices in classrooms have also been well researched and although not directly linked to the stress literature, may be seen to have a bearing. Implicit behind this work is the notion that helpless children are stressed and this may be a concept that needs to be challenged.

Dweck and her colleagues later studies (1980,1982) allowed children freely to report their thoughts while working on a task. They found that few mastery children made any causal attributions at all. They seemed to concentrate their efforts on problem solving strategies, task relevant information and generating

alternative solutions. Helpless children, in contrast, did generate attributions of cause for their failure and most 'blamed' uncontrollable factors. Dweck and Wortman (1982) argue that the reactions of the children to success and failure depended upon the meaning of the outcome for each individual. A parallel of this concept may be seen in Lazarus's (1966) assertion that motivation is a strong mediating factor in the perception of stress. It also has links with symbolic interactionism as previously discussed. Lazarus (1966) argues that there are three main classes of factors in an individual's psychological structure that influence threat appraisal. These are:

- a) the motivational characteristics of the individual.
- b) their belief systems concerning transactions with the environment.
- c) their intellectual resources, education and sophistication.

Lazarus (1966) argues that the individual motivational characteristics and their relative strengths determine what the individual will perceive as harmful and what beneficial. He cites a study of eight college students undertaken by Mahl (1949) in which he measured the secretion of hydrochloric acid on the assumption that its secretion was a causal factor in the development of gastric ulcers. Six of the eight subjects showed an increase in the secretion of HCL before a major examination and two did not. Subsequent interviews revealed that one of the two students who did not secrete HCL did not appraise the exam as a threat as he had already been accepted into medical school and the second was described by Mahl as being content with :

"the gentleman's grade of C." (Pge 121)

and thus had a weak academic achievement motivation.

Lazarus's second category of general belief systems concurs with the beliefs of Dweck and Wortman (1982) in that the individual learns the personal significance of particular events from past experience.

His third class of factors - those of intellectual resources, education and sophistication may be incorporated in Dweck and Wortman's (1982) notion of the role of learning and previous experience. However, Lazarus extends this category to cover the range of options open to an individual.

The absence of causal attributions in mastery oriented children is seen by Compas (1987 (b)) as having two advantages. Firstly, it avoids the negative associations associated with failure as the children do not focus on the fact that they have failed, and secondly, it leaves the children free to invest more cognitive activity in the generation of more coping strategies and increases the likelihood that they will do so.

4.6.3 Repression-Sensitization

Another area of research into childhood coping is that of repression-sensitization and is open to similar criticisms as the study of Type A/B in that it focuses on personality traits or styles. Researchers such as Byrne (1964), Krohne (1979) and Krohne and Rogner (1982) argue that coping behaviour can be assigned to a point upon the bipolar personality characteristic of repression -sensitization. Individuals who score at either end of the continuum are considered to be coping maladaptively and those in the middle are considered to be coping adaptively. Compas (1987 (b)) reports that empirical examinations of this concept have been rare and that no data is available on the behavioural outcomes of repression or sensitization in children. Because of this and the criticisms already implied by its similarity to Type A/B research, its usefulness as a concept remains questionable.

4.7 Resilience to Stress

Rutter (1979) along with others looking at disadvantage, highlighted the fact that not all children who have been exposed to disadvantaged environments suffer emotional or psychological problems. This led to an interest in 'protective factors' which are defined by Garmezy (1983) as:

"...those attributes of persons, environments, situations, and events that appear to temper predictions of psychopathy based upon an individual's at-risk status" (Pge 73)

Compas (1987,b) reports that three broad factors have been identified by Garmezy (1983) as being consistently found to be characteristic of 'invulnerable' children across various studies:

- "a) dispositional and constitutional characteristics of the child, including temperament, high self-esteem, internal locus of control, and autonomy;
- b) the presence of a supportive family environment, including parental warmth, cohesiveness, closeness, and order and organisation; and
- c) a supportive individual or agency in the environment that provides the child with a support system to aid in coping and positive models for identification." (Pges 398-399)

These seem to be very important areas to address in any attempt to understand the nature of an individual child's perception of stress. The implications of this literature review for this study will be discussed in the next section along with a discussion of some of the recent major theoretical frameworks.

4.8 Interventions

Unfortunately, not all interventions make the model of the stress process upon which they are based explicit, which leaves practitioners without a conceptual framework on which to base their interventions. In order to establish a foundation for intervention, an understanding of the stress process is required. The relationship between the model of the stress process, the philosophy upon which it is based, and interventions may be seen in Figure 4.12. The pyramid structure has been borrowed and adapted from Gilmore's structure of a theory for helping relationships (Gilmore, 1980)

As can be seen from Figure 4.12, the model of the stress process comes from and feeds into philosophical assumptions and the model of the person. The general theories of human behaviour that seem useful in understanding the process and the related models of stress and their perceived usefulness have been discussed in this chapter and what follows is a survey and evaluation of the literature in this field.

A survey of the literature shows that interventions are based upon either a problem-solving model such as those devised by Spivack and Shure ((1982), (1985)) with Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving, a transactional model such as that of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and implemented by Compas *et al*

(unpublished manuscript), a psychodynamic model as described by Johnson (1989) or on no clear model at all.

Adaption of Gilmore's Structure of a Theory for Helping Relationships

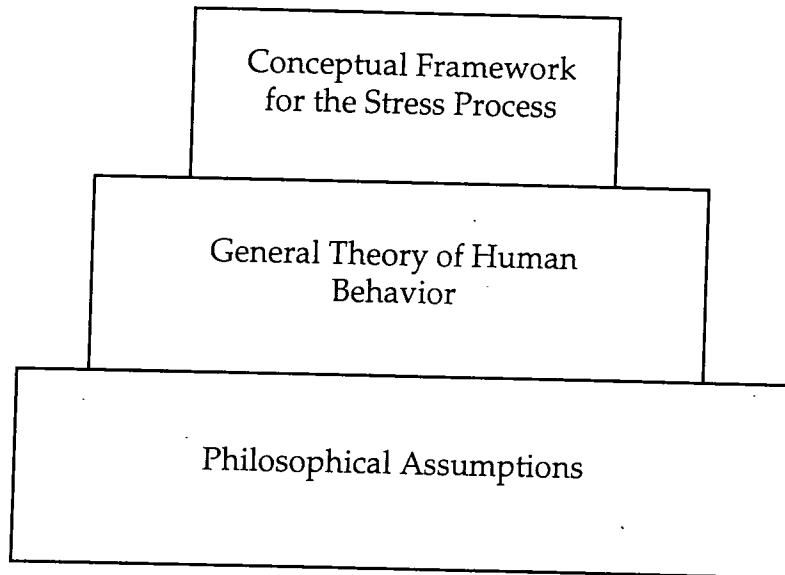


Figure 4.12

As has been discussed previously, interventions based upon interpersonal cognitive problem solving (ICPS), remain controversial, despite being recommended as among the most promising formats for preventive intervention by the President's Commission on Mental Health (1978).

Spivack and Shure's (1982,1985) approach relies upon a model of stress which is accessible to logical and rational resolution. It also assumes that individuals can recognise the cause of their stress. This may be so in certain cases, but not for all. The stress faced by a child who is facing an examination may be of fear of failure and a loss of self esteem. A cognitive problem solving approach may be to generate an alternative solution - to plan a revision programme, give strategies for coping in the examination and to remember past successes. The child may fail in this attempt and plunge even lower into feelings of panic and low self worth. Spivack and Shure recognise the interaction of emotional and cognitive factors on a conscious level but not at an unconscious level. Suppose the child in question was desperate for the love of their father and felt that success in the examinations might mean that the father would love them. However, they might not do well and so risk rejection by the father,. Perhaps they would then, unconsciously sabotage their chances, by producing an

inability to work e.g. sitting for hours revising with nothing going in and having panic attacks in the library. By producing a 'reason' for not being able to sit the exams, they establish a protection against another rejection from the father, as well as being a way of not being responsible for the outcome. No amount of cognitive skill will resolve the stress because the perception and response are triggered in the unconscious. Until the meaning of the stressor is understood by the individual, interventions will be useless. Spivack and Shure's model has, and is designed to have, a limited application. It only considers one type of stressor, interpersonal, and one strategy, problem solving. As such, it may have a value as a component in an intervention, but is not proposed as complete model of the stress process.

Interventions such as those suggested by Fanshawe & Burnett (1991) again only address limited dimensions. The interventions they propose extend the teaching of problem solving and decision making skills to the teaching of relaxation and anger reduction techniques, the emphasis being on the need to communicate effectively with significant others and an encouragement of the students to 'face their problems and stressors' and actively do something about them, rather than avoid them by ineffectual means. This type of intervention rests upon a very conscious, 'pull your socks up' view of stress and lacks the depth that a more complex model can offer. It also appears to assume that all stressors are within our control. Adams *et al* (1976) argue that is not possible to say that proactive strategies are always the best. Although proactive people seem to have more control over their lives, they may become dysfunctional if they do not take reality factors into account. For a change to be made successfully, the mover must have an effective coping style and a proactive orientation is beneficial. Work with bereaved children has shown that uncontrollable stressors such as death can be even more distressing when attempts are made to control.

Compas *et al* (unpublished manuscript), based their interventions upon Folkman and Lazarus's transactional model of stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that:

"...the transactional model that underlies our cognitive theory of stress views the person and the environment in a mutually reciprocal, bidirectional relationship....Further, in traditional models variables retain their separate identities. In a transactional model separate person and environment elements join together to form

new meanings via appraisal; threat, for example, does not refer to separate person and environment factors, but to the integration of both in a given transaction. The transactional model is concerned with process and change ..." (Pge 325-326)

This model does allow for individual meaning to be incorporated into the individual's perception of stress. Also, it allows the person, the environment and the event to join together to form new meanings. This model formed the bases of the intervention described by Compas *et al* (unpublished manuscript),.

They reported two studies undertaken to evaluate the efficacy of a coping skills and stress management preventive intervention for elementary and middle school children in the United States. The program had four aims. These were:

- 1) to reduce the degree to which major and daily events were perceived as stressful,
- 2) to increase the number and range of problem and emotion-focused strategies generated and used in response to stressors,
- 3) to enhance the feeling of self-worth and personal competence of the participants,
- 4) to prevent behavioural and emotional problems.

The interventions used were intended to reduce stressful experiences and perceptions of stress as well as enhancing coping strategies. In this way they attempted to intervene in all three areas suggested by the Folkman and Lazarus model - the event, the environment and the person. The program consisted of eight weekly class sessions which dealt with a number of topics including the nature of stress, stress management as a matter of life style, decision-making, assertiveness, resisting peer pressure and relaxation training. It is not clear from the paper how the package was designed and how much, if any, control the participants had in identifying their own needs. It is also not clear if the environment in terms of the school was identified as a stressful experience and thus involved in any change. The studies involved 269 children from Vermont, U.S.A. and were predominantly white (98%) with 65%

of parents occupying level III and level IV in the Hollingshead (1975) five factor index of socio-economic status.

Within its own limitations, it appears to have been a successful program in that the participants seemed to experience lower levels of emotional distress. This was judged in terms of repeated measures of analysis of variance which addressed the following: adolescents' coping, stressful events, self-perceptions of competence and self-worth, and adolescents' and parents' reports of adolescents' emotional and behavioural problems.

The study seems to be a useful starting point for intervention as it begins to address the issues raised by the acceptance of a model of stress such as that proposed by Folkman and Lazarus. However, it seems not to address issues in the school environment or to be directed towards the individuals needs. If the phenomenological aspect of the Folkman Lazarus model is to be taken seriously, then individual differences in the perception and reaction to stress must be identified and form part of the intervention program.

Unique responses are contained in the psychodynamic model described by Johnson (1989) with reference to trauma in children. He uses the work of Horowitz and Solomon (1975) who build upon two of Freuds' major dynamics, the completion tendency and the denial/numbing tendency. The completion tendency is the tendency to assimilate memories, associated information and implications through a gradual process of integration in order to accommodate a traumatic experience. This process is primarily cognitive but also includes the intrusion of recurrent nightmares, daytime images, re experiences, unpleasant moods, heightened emotions and compulsive behavioural repetitions. This process may not begin until several years after the incident/incidents, as has been documented by studies of the Vietnam veterans' stress response. (e.g. Figley (1978) and Horowitz & Solomon (1975))

The denial/numbing tendency is viewed as a defence against the intrusion of intolerable thoughts and emotions. It consists of the denial, numbing, alienation, compartmentalisation and isolation of the traumatic experience from everyday life and can last for several years. It is thought to protect the individual from having to assimilate too much too soon and to precede the completion tendency.

Johnson also describes the learned helplessness model described by Seligman and Garber (1980) as a post-traumatic reaction. They describe traumatic conditions in terms of circumstances where adverse consequences follow situations where the victim has little or no control or predictability. From this experience, the victim assigns control externally and so learns helplessness. This may lead to withdrawal, isolation and depression.

Johnson accepts these models as useful in making sense of the diverse phenomena observed after trauma but prefers a diagnostic tool - diagnostic criteria for 309.89: Post-traumatic stress disorder (American Psychiatric Association (1987)) to provide a more cohesive description of the trauma reaction.

The majority of the interventions he describes are designed to be applied after a trauma has occurred, but he does have a section on the prevention of trauma. There he suggests that children need to learn a set of generic skills useful in coping with traumatic experience and also that they need to know what their own reactions to crisis might be and what reactions are normal. The criteria he uses for judging which generic skills are appropriate to teach is that of children's need shortly after and during a crisis. He has identified five areas that need to be addressed:

- 1) understanding of crisis reactions
- 2) stress management
- 3) communication
- 4) support system building
- 5) decision making/problem solving

Although these interventions are designed for children facing trauma, it may be relevant to an intervention system based upon the Folkman/Lazarus model. The individual needs are addressed in two ways. Firstly, by the examination of individuals reaction to stress where it would seem possible to develop an individually designed programme. Secondly, by teaching generic skills to empower and encourage mastery-orientated behaviour, the individuals perception of the stressor and themselves may be changed. The environment is addressed by actively searching out support and, for a school based intervention, this could be extended into examining the system and looking for

ways of offering more support and less stress. The event is not addressed but this is impossible, since, in this instance, the definition of trauma is that it is an event outside the range of usual human experience.

Johnson's approach is virtually mirrored by Aylon (1987). Again the emphasis is upon coping after the event, but she does have a chapter on preparation. She identifies much the same areas as Johnson and advocates the use of imagery as a way of accessing individual reactions.

4.9 Conclusions and Links to Other Studies

From the literature and the previous studies, much has been learned about stress. It now seems much more likely that the third definition of the meaning of the word stress, as described by Carpenter (1992)

"stress is best used as a general term of the total process linking demands to reactions and other outcomes." (Pge 2)

is the one which more adequately captures the complexity of the concept. Both the initial studies raised questions about the adequacy of a stimulus response mode. The 'total process' definition is contained within the Lazarus Folkman (1984) model and thus, forms the basis of the new model which is beginning to emerge at this point.

The second study demonstrated starkly the importance of individual reality and led to a phenomenological stance. Again, the Lazarus Folkman (1984) model incorporates this notion.

This phenomenological stance raised the question of 'conscious' and 'unconscious' factors within the 'total process' and again, the Lazarus Folkman (1984) model incorporates a psychodynamic element. However, although their model is dynamic, phenomenological and incorporates elements of the psychoanalytic along with the cognitive and, as such, it seems to be very useful in understanding the stress process, it does appear to have limits. These limits are discussed below.

4.9.1 Limits of the Cognitive-Phenomenological Model

Two limits appear in connection with this model and my developing understanding of the 'total process'. These are the 'phenomenology' of the model and the idea of 'unconscious'. Both these concepts are linked to the 'reality' issue. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that:

"...although personality factors such as needs, commitments, and preferred styles of attention influence perception, *appraisals are generally correlated with reality*" (my italics) (Page 53)

Within a phenomenological framework 'reality' is not objective but defined by the meaning of the event for the individual. Although Lazarus and Folkman (1984) acknowledge this disparity:

"Our phenomenology does not state that thinking something necessarily makes it so, or that every appraisal is subjective and private. Rather, people are normally constrained in what they perceive and appraise by what is actually the case, although their cognitions are not perfectly correlated with objective reality " (Page 48)

they place an important emphasis on an 'objective reality' that appears to be seldom present in a stressful encounter. The argument that reality is normally subjective and private, especially when seen in relation to the stress process, is very persuasive.

David Smail (1991) argues from this perspective:

"It is the relative obscurity of the historical origins of people's experience which makes their subsequent difficulties often initially so puzzling. Problems which seem at face value to permit of quite simple solutions - perhaps through the almost minimal application of a bit of 'will power' - may seem almost maddeningly resistant to 'treatment' until one begins to see that they have foundations back at a time when the person was in no position to understand or grasp critically what was happening to him or her. Almost none of our experiences are defined just by the present, and, more than naive, it is simply false to assume that knowledge of the dimensions of the

present alone is sufficient to spell out a rational account of our conduct." (Pge 10)

This view of an 'objective reality' seems to contract the phenomenological view that Lazarus and Folkman purport to hold. If we only differ in our appraisals and styles of responding, this implies that there is an objective reality and makes our meaning making less important. This view seems to be called into question when we consider individuals' experience of stress. A child may become distressed because he cannot find his pen to go to school. The 'objective' reality may be that he can borrow one from the teacher. The meaning the loss of the pen may have for the child could be that it symbolises his perception of loss of control over his life and confirm his internalised view of himself as useless. His experiences of being powerful and 'in control' are denied.

Thus, although the model described by Folkman and Lazarus (1984) seems the most useful, consideration seems to need to be given to the reality issue. However, it does combine a cognitive model with one that has depth and is, to an extent, phenomenological. It seems an appropriate theoretical underpinning to the understanding of the stress process, especially if it is modified to encompass the reality issue.

The McCann *et al's* (1988) model does seem to encompass the phenomenological view more directly. They argue that the meaning we attach to events is all important. The philosophical basis of this idea of the creation of meaning may be found in the work of Kant (1724-1804) and termed 'critical philosophy'. It is described by McCann *et al* (1988) as a philosophy which :

" recognises individuals as actively organising experience by making judgements and interpretations. In essence, Kant believed that the mind possesses a pro forma capacity to create order and meaning through developing categories of understanding" (Pge 551)

McCann and Pearlman (1990) extended their original model of the relationship between life experiences, schemas and psychological adaptation to produce a model of the psychological experience of trauma. This model may be seen below:

The Psychological Experience of Trauma

McCann & Pearlman (1990) (Pge 11)

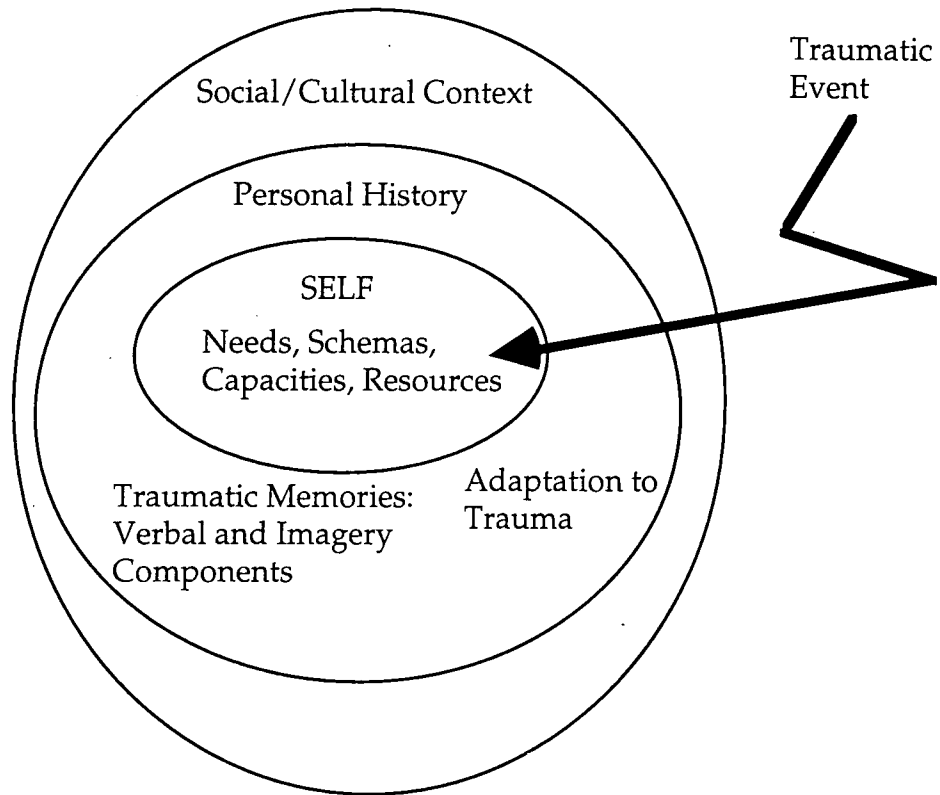


Figure 4.13

They explain the theory upon which this is based as:

"...interactive - that is, it focuses on the complex interaction between person and environment" (Pge 11)

and, as such is very similar to the transactional view of Lazarus and Folkman. However, both these models rest upon a very cognitive view of the person -schema building- built on the assumption that:

".... cognitions are the major determinants of how we feel and act"
(Corey 1991, Pge 345)

Lazarus and Folkman have come to this view as the result of academic psychology and laboratory research illustrated by their own position, and the therapeutic work of behaviour therapists such as Ellis and Beck. They believe

that if you change the way a person thinks and believes, then you can also change the pattern of emotional reactions to ordinary social transactions. This is where I have my doubts. I can accept that for misconstructions that have a rational but illogical foundation that this view is true. However, I believe that much of our perception is not governed by rational, conscious thought. To illustrate my point, take someone who is claustrophobic for no known reason. Behaviour therapy can be very helpful in building up different behavioural reactions to the fear, but what it cannot do is to dispel the fear altogether. It is not a rational fear - claustrophobics do not really believe that the roof of the cave is going to come down, but the fear that is there prevents proper breathing. Therapy may enable them to tolerate that fear and thus change their behaviour, but it will never eradicate it. A less anecdotal example is that of the women documented on QED some years ago. "Jean. A battle with obsession." She developed various obsessive behaviours that left her unable to live a normal life. She undertook a course of behaviour therapy which successfully de-sensitised her so she could resume a normal life. Despite the apparent 'cure' she herself says the compulsion is still there although she has now been empowered by methods of controlling it.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) do recognise that unconscious processing is important but say very little to explain their position other than:

"Our position allows the concept of appraisal to be integrated with depth or psychoanalytic-type theories." (Pge 52)

Similarly, the McCann model makes sparse reference to the unconscious processing. Both these models seem to lack an explanation of the way unconscious mechanisms may affect the 'total process'. An explanation may be found if we consider a Rogerian view of the process.

An explanation of the process by which stress is perceived may be found in Rogers' suggestions of how we make sense of the world. Rogers' (1951) model of personality may be seen below:

**Rogers Model of
Personality (1951)
(Pges 526-527)**

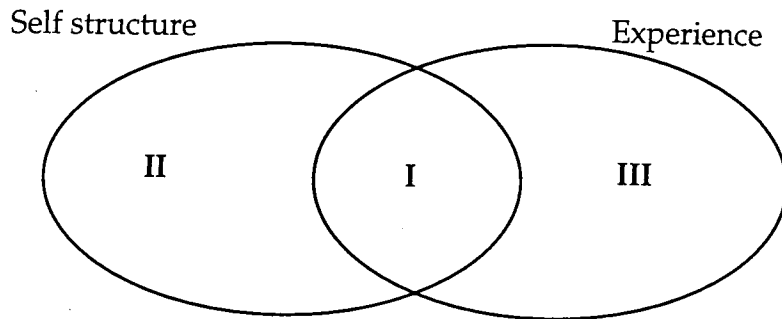


Figure 4.14

Rogers theory of personality is phenomenological and based in the individual's own reality:

"...the best vantage point for understanding behaviour is from the internal frame of reference of the individual himself" (Pge 494)

He goes onto argue that:

"Behaviour is a reaction to the field as perceived. It would therefore appear that behaviour might best be understood by gaining, in so far as possible, the internal frame of reference of the person himself, and seeing the world of experience as nearly as possible through his eyes." (Pge 494)

He suggests that personality is developed from the transactions between **experience** and the **self structure**. Experience is described as everything that is experienced by the individual through all modes of experiencing and is viewed as fluid. The self structure contains the concept of self and includes:

"...the patterned perceptions of the individual's characteristics and relationships, together with the values associated with these. It is available to awareness" (Pge 525)

In the diagram above, Area I represents the congruent concept of self which incorporates the individual's concept of self which is reinforced by their experience. Area II represents the individual's distorted self concept which has

introjected percepts, concepts and values from significant others and the individual accepts these as their own and allows in sensory evidence which supports this view. Area III contains the experiences of the individual which have to be denied as they contradict the perceived structure of self. Clarke (1994) suggests that:

" Stress clients - those that are experiencing some perceived disturbance or difficulty in their life with which they feel they cannot cope - may well be suffering from some imbalance between their organismic self (real self) and their self concept" (Pge 32)

So, in relation to Figure 4.14., the perception of stress could be explained as experiences which the individual cannot incorporate into their congruent self concept (Area I) as they challenge the self concept that has been internalised in Area II. This leads to a perception of the event as one which is not solely reliant upon cognitive processes as the ICPS model was. It also links with Spinelli's (1994) re-interpretation of the unconscious. Spinelli's idea of dissociated consciousness is phenomenological and is therefore compatible with Rogers. Rogers suggests that the client is trying to fulfil two basic needs - to self actualise, and to be loved/valued by others (organismic valuing). Experiences which challenge these needs may need to be dissociated from the consciousness. If an experience is felt to be stressful, in the terms described above, it could be dissociated from and unavailable, at that time, to conscious processing. This process can be represented diagrammatically thus:

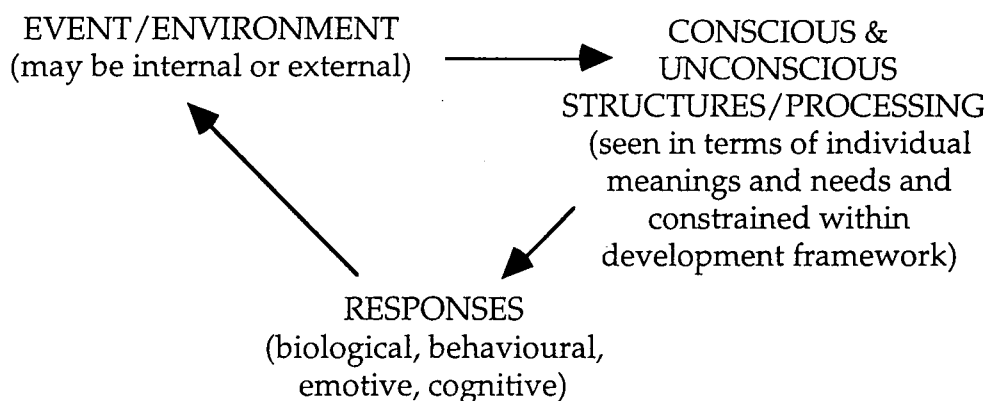


Figure 4.15

The nature of the event becomes less important than the individuals perception of it and that 'reality' is dependent upon this perception.

What the McCann and the Lazarus Folkman model seems to lack is the Rogerian idea that not all of our experience is available to us. As has been previously described, experience that does not match the self concept is denied or dissociated from. McCann *et al* (1988), espouse the cognitive view that all experience is incorporated into schemas through reshaping and reworking. If this were true, all experience would be available to us, be it in a reshaped or reworked form, and does not explain how trauma can be denied. The recent 'False Memory' debate has offered evidence that traumatic memories can be denied, despite evidence such as hospital admission, that supports the reality of the trauma.

If we link the three concepts presented in this section - Lazarus and Folkman, Rogers and McCann *et al*, we can create a synthesis and modify the Lazarus Folkman definition of stress into a working definition for the purposes of this thesis. The synthesis would be:

" Stress is a general concept organised by transactions between the adolescent and the environment. The perception of stress is dependent upon the perceived meaning that a transaction has for the individual. Meaning is formed by experience but not all experience can be incorporated into the individuals idea of self and may be denied. All experience is part of the perceptive process, whether it is denied or admitted to conscious processing."

At this point in the study, the above definition is tentative and the future work of the thesis is to develop theory and to test this theory empirically.

4.9.2 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been, through the literature and the experience of the first two studies, to find a working definition of the term 'stress' and theoretical underpinning of the stress process. As has been described in this chapter, there is no single 'theory of stress'. Each researcher or group of researchers have developed a theory which complements their philosophical base.

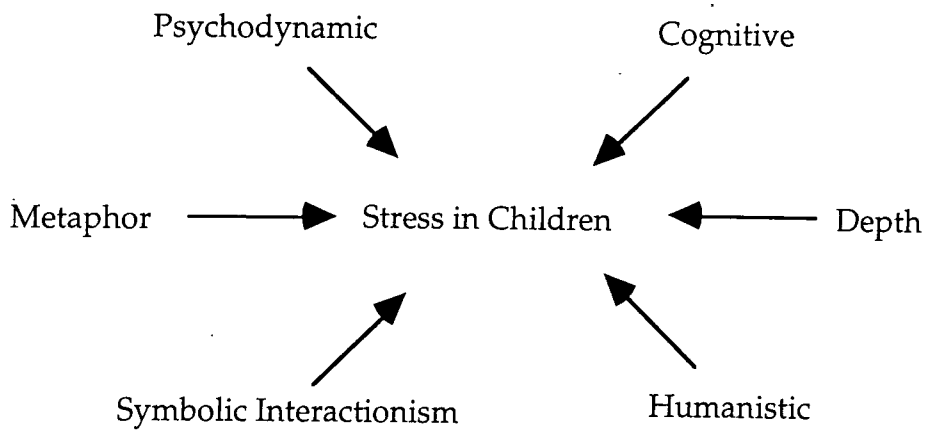


Figure 4.16

An argument has been made for a tentative acceptance of the modified Lazarus/Folkman model, pending empirical evidence. The 'new' theory can be expressed using the adapted Gilmore (1980) pyramid as a framework.

The basic philosophy at the base of this pyramid is one that views human behaviour as resting upon the individual's subjective interpretation of his/her transactions with the environment, and as such is phenomenological.

The second level of the pyramid integrates this with a depth model of behaviour which includes both conscious and unconscious processes and gives a conceptual framework for the stress process. This leads, in turn, to interventions which intercede at several levels.

Although not the primary thrust of this study, the notion of being able to offer a theoretical base for interventions is important to me. Traditionally, some teachers, with the best of motives, tell children how to manage their stress. If the 'advice' is not useful to the child, more stress may ensue. Gilmore (1980) argues, it is not an adequate framework for intervention just to have helpful motives and sound advice. We need to know about the three dimensions which she shows diagrammatically thus:

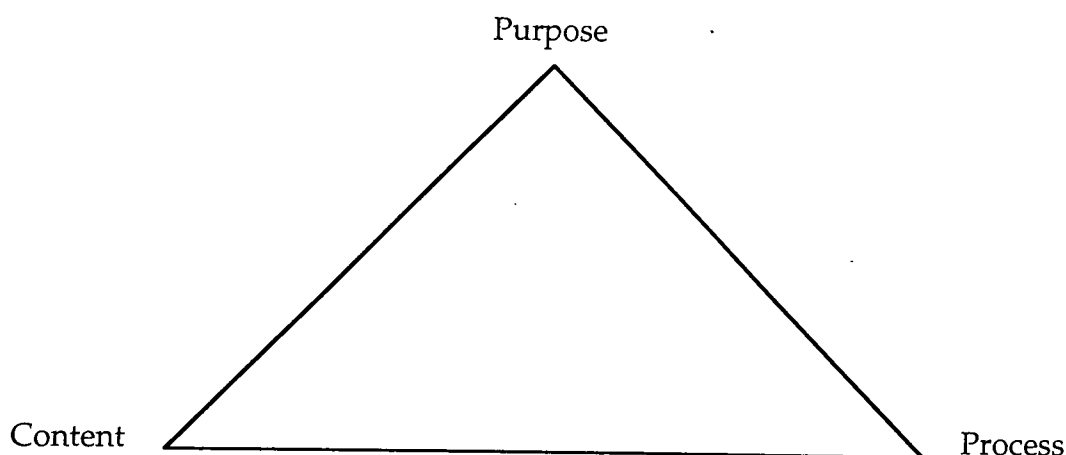


Figure 4.17

We need to have a purpose for our interventions, and an idea of what is appropriate content. Both of these dimensions need to be driven by an understanding of process. The adoption of the 'new' model gives us this.

Continual reference to the literature led to a re-evaluation of the first model upon which the first two studies rested. The first model was a relatively straightforward stimulus-response model which had as an implicit assumption that there was something about a 'stressor' which was inherently stressful. From the first two studies and a review of the literature, it emerged that there were several concurrent issues to address. These were:

- a) What did children understand by the term 'stress'?
- b) Why was one child affected and not another,
- c) Why were there individual differences in the depth of the stress felt and why were some children seemingly impervious to stress?

This led to an examination of individual differences.

Anthony, in Monat and Lazarus ((Eds) (1991)) suggests that several theoretical constructs have been offered to understand a child's response to stress. He says:

"1. A model of self-induced pathology has been developed according to which individuals are prone to a helpless or hopeless response as

part of a giving up or given up complex operating in the presence of environmental pathogens or constitutional vulnerabilities (Schmale (1972))

2. A second model, bearing on individual differences in vulnerability to stress-induced conditions, has been related to the general expectation of individuals that disturbing events are controllable from the inside or the outside along an internal-external dimension (Rotter (1966)). The internal locus of control expectancy has been equated with competence, coping ability, and relative invulnerability to stress (Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976)).

3. A third model has been derived from laboratory research on physiological and psychological responses to stressful stimuli. The thesis stemming from it postulated that individuals differ in vulnerability to the degree that they suppress awareness of threatening stimuli or, contrariwise, are hyper alert to them. Studies of response styles of threatening illness suggest that repression may lead to a better recovery (Cohen and Lazarus (1973)). The mechanism involved in this denial (or as Freud would term it, "disavowal"), and it constitutes an unconscious defence against overwhelming *external* stimuli and a refusal to recognise the reality of a traumatic perception (Goldberger (1983)). This is probably an element in all outer-directed defences such as projection, displacement and so on, and is viewed psychodynamically as a primitive process at work in the pre-stage of defence. The "turning away from reality" may be adaptive or maladaptive from the view point of safety. Some deniers may give a history of risk-taking or recklessness pursued with a sense of invulnerability, so-called field-dependent individuals respond to threatening situations by narrowing their perception, as if they were wearing blinders (Sandman (1972)).

4. Since children are often exposed to dangerous conditions in the company of adults, a comprehensive model must also include the presence of social supports such as the family, formal helping agencies, friendship networks, and so on (Caplan (1976)). The results of studies to date indicate that a full understanding of individual

differences in response to stressful events cannot be achieved without examining the interpersonal context. " Pges 308-309)

The underlying philosophical base of all the models described above has been included in the discussion and evaluation in this chapter and the journey recommences by an engagement in more practical work. The third study in this journey was an exploration into how children themselves understood the term stress and an exploration of individual differences in terms of coping and how they viewed their world. The literature review, coupled with the results from the first two studies suggested that there was a need to understand how children understood the term 'stress' and a need to explore the effect upon this concept of individual differences.

Chapter 5 - Study Three - Stress Exploration with Sixth Formers

5.1 Introduction

The rationale behind this third study will be described in relation to the work of Kelly (1955, 1991), (See Section 5.2.1) It has been argued that how a child perceives and copes with stress will depend upon:

- a) their view of the world
- b) their view of self including:
 - i) self esteem
 - ii) locus of control
 - iii) learned helplessness vs. mastery orientation
 - iv) general belief system
 - v) motivation
- c) frequency and type of event - major life event, daily hassle and including transitions and loss of 'love objects'
- d) age and stage of development of individual
- e) relationship to peers and parents
- f) social support - including 'main effects' and 'buffering effects'

It was decided therefore, that practical work should be undertaken in order to elicit these factors. In keeping with the journey metaphor, it was decided to see what 'modes of transport' i.e. research methods, others had used and to see if this would be useful in my investigation, or to see if another 'mode' was necessary. Other studies were explored to see what methodology and philosophical framework they were based upon.

5.1.1 Relationship to Methodologies used in Other Studies

Previous studies, as discussed in Chapter 6, had used a variety of methodology. Davis and Compas (1986) used multidimensional scaling analysis to attempt to examine adolescents' cognitive appraisal of major and daily stressful events. They selected 20 items from a list of 210 major and daily events generated from a previous study (Compas *et al* (1985)) and asked 36 subjects between the ages of 12 - 20 to rate the degree of similarity of experience between each event paired with every other event. Then each event was rated on 10 scales .

Folkman and Lazarus (1980) elicited information about recently stressful encounters through monthly interviews and through self-report questionnaires completed between interviews. At the end of each interview and questionnaire the subjects indicated their coping thoughts and actions on a 68 item 'Ways of Coping ' checklist. The checklist consisted of descriptions of a broad range of both behavioural and cognitive coping strategies which were derived from the framework suggested by Lazarus and his colleagues (Lazarus (1966), Lazarus and Launier (1978)) and also from the coping literature. The theoretical framework underpinning this work is Lazarus's cognitive-phenomenological analysis of psychological stress which has been described in Chapter Four.

Compas *et al* (1988) used an open-ended instrument devised for use in their study in which subjects were asked to describe a particularly stressful interpersonal event and a stressful academic event that had occurred in the past three months, and to explain why they found the events so upsetting. They were then asked to rate the degree of control they had over the cause of the event on a five point scale. The responses were then coded as in the Folkman and Lazarus study, into emotion-focused coping or problem-focused coping. The difference here from the Folkman and Lazarus study is in the open-ended format of the measure of coping. This was introduced for two reasons. Firstly the aim of the study was to assess the subjects' ability to generate alternative solutions to stressful situations and the authors felt that a pre-determined list of ways of coping would not allow for accurate assessment of this skill. Secondly, they argued that no surveys of coping strategies used by this age group had been reported in the literature and therefore it would be impossible to formulate a

representative list of coping strategies for them to endorse. The study also assessed the emotional and behavioural problems of the sample by using two measures - the Child Behaviour Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock (1983)) completed by the mothers of the subjects, and the Youth Self Report version of the same checklist (YSR; Achenbach & Edelbrock (1987)) completed by the subjects.

Forsythe and Compas (1987) asked their subjects to report on the most distressing major life event and most distressing daily hassle in the recent past. To help the subjects do this they were presented with a list of 104 daily events and 71 major life events identified in a previous study by Compas, Davis & Forsythe (1985). Participants then indicated all daily events that had occurred during the past two weeks and major events during the past six months and rated them on a seven-point scale for desirability. They then identified the single most distressing daily event and the single most distressing major event. The subjects were then asked to complete a self report measure of their cognitive appraisal of these events and dichotomously rate the amount of control they felt they had over the event. They also rated the cause of each event as either internal (caused by something about me) or external (caused by something outside myself). Coping was assessed with a revised version of the Ways of Coping Checklist (Folkman & Lazarus (1980,1985)). Symptomology was assessed with the Hopkins Symptom Checklist (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi (1974))

Greenberg *et al* (1983) assessed the nature and quality of adolescents' attachment to peers and parents using the Inventory of Adolescent Attachments developed by Greenberg. This inventory had two sections. The first was to assess the felt security of the adolescents' relationship with peers and parents. The second section used a matrix completion format and the subjects were asked to note on a three point scale how often they would talk to various persons e.g. mother, father, serious boy/girl friend etc. in five different situations. The questions were selected from an original pool of 50 items by evaluation by 17 persons. Subjects were also asked to complete The Life Events Checklist (Johnson and McCutcheon (1980)) and the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) (Fitts (1965)) to measure self-esteem. A global measure of life satisfaction was obtained by asking respondents about how they feel about their life in general.

Flannery and Wieman (1989) assessed network and buffering effects of social support by using broadly based measures. They assessed life stress by completion of the Hassles Scale (Kanner, Coyne, Schafer and Lazarus (1981) and social support by using two self-report measures: one structural measure for networks and one functional measure for buffers. They report that:

"These measures were guided by Wilcox's definition of social support as the perceived support domains of emotional, belonging and tangible aid (Wilcox (1981); Wilcox & Bickel (1983))" (Pge 868)

The network measure had the 15 major types of potential networks cited by Cohen and Wills (1985) and Kessler and McLeod (1985) and included such things as being married, attending a church, being employed. The subjects scored 1 for each network they ticked off and so the scores ranged from 0-15.

The measure of support used for the functional buffer was the revised Social Support Index (SSI; Wilcox and Bickel (1983)) which is a thirty item questionnaire. The subjects respond to each item as true or false. Psychological distress was assessed by two self-report measures- the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale (TMAS; Taylor (1953)), a 28-item measure of anxiety, and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck (1979)), a 21-item scale of symptoms thought to be related to depression.

Compass *et al* (1986), in their study of the relationship between Life Events and social support with Psychological dysfunction among adolescents, used The Life Events Questionnaire (LEQ) (Newcomb *et al* (1981)) to assess the emotional impact of life events and the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) (Sarason *et al* (1983)) to assess the average number of support persons listed for each item and the average satisfaction with support for each item. The Hopkins Symptom Checklist (Derogatis *et al* (1974)) was used to measure a wide variety of physical and psychological symptoms.

All these methodologies have the use of a scale or checklist in common. These scales and checklist seem to have a number of disadvantages. Firstly, they limit the responses to the specific items on the tool and therefore may miss important material and also shape the responses.

Secondly, there seems to be a tension between the phenomenological approach which underpins the work of Lazarus *et al* and Compass *et al* and the use of check-lists and scales. If a phenomenological focus is on individuals perception of reality, then it will be individual and no checklist or scale could capture the essential essence of this.

Thirdly, in the work of Flannery and Wieman (1989) the assumption is made that because you fit certain criteria e.g. married or employed, that you have a network of support. It is possible to be married and not have a supportive partner and to be employed and be an isolate.

A fourth tension appears in that several of these checklists and scales ask for dichotomous responses. This has the advantage of being easy to code but would appear to lose a lot of the richness of human responses.

With these tensions in mind, it was decided to use a different methodology which would combine the phenomenological perspective, by not using scales or checklists but ask for open ended responses, with the cognitive.

The study aimed to:

- 1) Find out what adolescents mean by stress and what words they use to describe it,
- 2) How they cope with stress
- 3) How they view the world

The objectives of this study were fivefold:

- to examine what adolescents mean by stress
- to discover what words they use to describe it,
- to have a subjective insight into how stressors felt,
- to find out how these adolescents cope,
- to see how they construe their world

These were achieved by a mixture of methods including brainstorming, individual and group responses and by using a repertory grid.

5.2 Methodology

In the third study, another vehicle for the phenomenological method was used in the form of a repertory grid. The theory behind this tool is described below.

5.2.1 Kelly and Construct Theory

Kelly argued that the important thing to study is the person's own individual conscious experiences, without breaking them down into component parts or seeing where they came from. He believed that all humans are interested in the future and use the present to test a theory's ability to anticipate events.

"Anticipation is not merely carried on for its own sake; it is carried on so that future reality may be better represented. It is the future which tantalises man, not the past. Always he reaches out to the future through the window of the present."(Kelly, 1955, Pge 5)

He argued that the major tool a person uses in anticipating events is that of *personal constructs*. These are used by individuals to construe or make sense of their worlds. A construct is an idea or thought that a person uses when attempting to interpret his or her own experiences. This could be important to an individuals view of stress as the construction they put upon the experience determines their reaction. Kelly (1955) emphasised the fact that each person creates his or her own constructs for dealing with the world, and argues that these are open to change. He says :

"We take the stand that there are always some alternative constructions available to choose among in dealing with the world. No one needs to paint himself into a corner; no one needs to be completely hemmed in by circumstances; no one needs to be a victim of his biography" (Pge 15)

This would seem to suggest that stress would only affect individuals if they construed the situation as stressful and that it could perhaps be better managed by using *constructive alternativism*, or re-construing the event in a less stressful way. He believes that :

"A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events"(1955, Page 46)

In other words a person's behaviour and thoughts are determined by the personal constructs they use to predict future events.

Kelly also identifies a CPC cycle which he suggested characterises our actions. This cycle is made up of three phases:

Circumspection

This is when the individual tries out a number of *propositional constructs*. This would include 'if-then' thinking, or trial and error interpretations of the event.

Preemption

Here the person chooses from all the constructs tried in the previous stage the ones most relevant to the situation. The strategy is chosen.

Control

Here the choice is made and if these are the correct constructs, then the 'theory' will be confirmed and thus strengthened. If the choice is incorrect, then the 'theory' will need revision. Kelly believed that individuals seek validation of their construct system and the primary purpose of life is to reduce uncertainty.

We can view stress from this perspective. Upon a stressor being perceived, the individual enters the circumspection phase of the CPC cycle and ponders a number of constructs that seem to be pertinent to the situation. S/he chooses from the constructs pondered in the preemption stage. Then a decision is made and in the control phase s/he will choose that pole of the chosen construct that seems most useful in the circumstances and will then act upon it. If the outcome of the chosen construct is validated, then it would be chosen again when faced with a similar stressor. If it was not validated, then alternatives would be generated the next time.

Hergenhahn (1984) asserts that it is possible to classify Kelly's theory as phenomenological, cognitive and existential, which would enable it to be compatible with the 'new' adapted Lazarus and Folkman model.

These principles were the rationale for using the tool Kelly devised for seeing how individuals view their world in Study Three.

It was decided to further explore and evaluate techniques in a local school to see if it was possible to fulfil the fivefold objectives described in section 5.1.2.

5.2.2 Method

The subjects were a self-selected group of boys (8) and girls (5) from a local Catholic comprehensive school. They were all aged 17 years except for one boy who was 16 years. One girl had to leave before completion of the last task - a Repertory grid test.

Full details of the tasks may be found in Appendix B but, briefly, the tasks were as follows.

The group was given several tasks to do by the researcher, both working in a small group (two groups of 4 and one of 5), pairs, and individually.

The first task was to brainstorm the word "stress" in groups of five and then to work in pairs and think of things that they find stressful, the ways in which they deal with them, and then to try and generate as many alternative ways of coping with stress as possible. These tasks were designed to find out what they meant by the term 'stress' and the words they use to describe it, and also to see how they cope with stress.

In the second hour of the session, the subjects were asked to take all the words generated by the whole group and to group them in any way that felt appropriate to them. This was an attempt to gain insight into how they viewed their world. To further this, they were then asked to complete a Repertory grid test.

5.3 Results

The number of words/phrases generated by the group in association with the word 'stress' was 81. 18 of these words/phrases were common between two of the groups and 5 words/phrases appeared in all three. This can be seen in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Words/phrases generated by the word "stress"			
Words/Phrases	Group	Words/Phrases	Group
Boredom	A & B & C	Calculus	A
Time	A & B & C	Mr. 'X'	A
Revision	A & B & C	Mr. 'Y'	A
Parents	A & B & C	Depression	B
Overwork	A & B & C	Homework	B
Deadlines	A & B & C	School	B
Travel	A & B	Brother	B
Tension	A & B	Arguments	B
Exams	A & B	Heat	B
Pressure	A & B	Light	B
Headache	A & B	Sick	B
Success	A & C	Disaster	B
Money	A & C	Nervous	B
Relationships	B & C	Shaky	B
Future	B & C	Essays	B
Teachers	B & C	Career	B
Traffic/Driving	A & C	'A' levels	B
Hassle	A & C	Work	B
Illness	A	Mondays	B
Business	A	Fridays	B
Responsibility	A	Fatigue	C
Alcohol	A	Treated like Kids	C
Death	A	Bullying	C
Moving House	A	Clothes	C
Smoking	A	Grades	C
Heart problems	A	Competition	C
Problems	A	Popularity	C
Expectations	A	Physics	C
Monotony	A	Law	C

The subjects were then asked to identify things that they personally found stressful, and to identify ways they had of coping with these stresses. The responses to the task were separated. The individual stresses reported by the group totalled 123 and were divided into 28 categories as seen in Table

5.2 below. 16 of the stresses were common to one or more of the group and 7 of these were described by over half the group.

Table 5.2
Individual Stresses by category

Individual Stresses	Occurrences throughout the sample
School work/homework	16
Exams	12
Future/Career plans	12
Pressure to do well from family and others	10
Family relationships/parents/siblings	10
Deadlines	9
Money	8
Relationships/pressure from friends	6
Driving	6
Travelling/Holidays	5
Managing time	4
Parents Evening	3
Heat	3
Arguments	2
Physical attack	2
Headaches	2
Shopping	2
Light	1
Death	1
Boredom	1
Feelings of being bad at everything	1
Jealousy	1
Competition with a relative	1
Depression	1
Decisions	1
Waiting for the bus	1
Standing in long queues	1
Starting something new	1

The table below, Table 5.3, shows coping strategies identified by the individuals to help them to cope with the stresses they perceived. These coping strategies were divided into 23 categories and generated 101 responses. 21 responses were common to one or more of the group and 5 of these were described by over half the group.

Table 5.3
Individual Coping Strategies by category

Coping Strategy	Commonality of Responses
Physical activity	21
Organising time	13
Ignoring the person/situation	12
Going out with friends	8
Sleep	7
Things for me, e.g. bath, smoke, drink, read, betting	6
Resignation	6
Plan ahead, get information/asses outcomes	6
Seeking solitude	4
Positive thought	4
Ask for help/talk to teachers	3
Try to see others point of view/compromise	2
Trying harder	2
Fight back	2
Going on holiday	2
Work	2
Rush it off	1
Think of excuses	1
Scrounge	1
Stay in	1
Have a good cry	1
Take it out on someone	1
Talk to someone	1

The subjects were then asked to generate extra ways of coping that might be possible and Table 5.4, below shows these ideas. They were divided into 15 categories. The total number of responses when asked to think of extra ways of coping either from within themselves or set up by others was 27. Two members of the group did not make any suggestions. 4 responses were shared by more than one member of the group and one was shared by more than half the respondents. The results may be seen in Table 5.4

The results of the coping tasks were then classified into emotion-focused responses and problem-focused responses. The definitions of these terms are those used by Folkman and Lazarus (1984) and are described as:

"managing or altering the problem with the environment causing distress (problem-focused coping), and regulating the emotional response to the problem (emotion-focused coping)"

Table 5.4
Extra ways of coping either by yourself or set up by others by category

Extra Ways of Coping	Frequency
Someone to talk to	8
Walking	3
Getting away from home situation/school work	3
Somewhere to be quiet	2
Watching films	1
Listening to music	1
Going out on the town	1
Having somewhere to relax	1
See Doctor	1
Seek help from teachers	1
Cope by oneself	1
To be able to be honest with teachers & it be OK.	1
Use of a punch bag	1
A form of material reward for work done	1
Become more organised	1

The problem-focused category included items that described cognitive problem-solving efforts and behavioural strategies for altering or managing the source of the problem. An example is:

“Try not to leave things to the last minute”

The emotion-focused category included items that described the cognitive and behavioural efforts that were directed at managing or reducing emotional distress. An example is:

“Going out with friends at the weekend.”

If we examine the types of coping as a percentage of all the coping strategies suggested, girls seemed to use more problem-focused coping than boys - 13% for boys and 53% for girls. Boys used 76% emotion-focused and the girls used 22% emotion focused. 11% of the boys used both emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping compared with 25% for the girls.

The results are set out in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5
Types of coping categorised into emotion-focused (EF) and problem-focused (PF)

	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	8	5	13
EMOTION - FOCUSED	59	15	74
PROBLEM - FOCUSED	10	36	46
BOTH	9	17	26
TOTAL RESPONSES	78	68	146
EF%	76%	22%	51%
PF%	13%	53%	31%
BOTH%	11%	25%	18%

Repertory Grids

The respondents were then asked to complete a repertory grid (Kelly, 1955). Eleven of the subjects completed this task, two of the subjects had to leave at this point to go to lessons.

The grids were subjected to elementary linkage analysis to show how the constructs of each subject were related with each other to form what Thompson (1975) calls 'meaning structures'. This technique compares each construct with every other construct through the use of correlation coefficients and results in the identification of clusters of constructs which are related to each other. Table 5.6, below, shows the number of clusters found for each subject and the number of stressful things identified by each subject.

Table 5.6

One Cluster	No. of things found stressful	Two Clusters	No. of things found stressful	Three Clusters	No. of things found stressful	Four Clusters	No. of things found stressful
Subject 1 (Male)	7	Subject 4 (Male)	7	Subject 2 (Male)	6	Subject 7 (Female)	17
		Subject 9 (Male)	5	Subject 3 (Male)	6	Subject 13 (Male)	7
		Subject 10 (Male)	7	Subject 5 (Female)	15		
		Subject 12 (Female)	10	Subject 11 (Male)	9		
No. in Cluster	Average for group	No. in Cluster	Average for group	No. in Cluster	Average for group	No. in Cluster	Average for group
1	7	4	7	4	9	2	12

The average number of stressful things identified by the girls was 14, and 7 for the boys.

The clusters, in addition to being compared to the number of stresses reported by each subject, were also compared to the number and type of coping strategies generated. The table below shows this relationship.

Table 5.7

Subject	No. of Clusters	Reported Stresses	No. of Coping Strategies	Difference between stresses & coping	Type of Coping Strategy
1 - Male	1	7	2	-5	1*EF 1*PF
4 - Male	2	7	4	-3	4*EF
9 - Male	2	5	8	+3	8*EF
10 - Male	2	7	7	0	6*EF 1*PF
12 - Female	2	10	10	0	4*EF 6*PF
2 - Male	3	6	4	-2	4*EF
3 - Male	3	6	3	-3	3*EF
5 - Female	3	15	11	-4	2*EF 9*PR
11 - Male	3	9	16	+7	12*EF 4*PF
7 - Female	4	17	5	-12	5*PF
13 - Male	4	7	4	-3	1*EF 3*PF

The range of mismatch between stresses and coping strategies ranges from -12 to +7 with the average for cluster 1 being -5, cluster 2 being 0, cluster 3 being -2, and cluster 4 being -9.

The grids were then subjected to thematic analysis and the responses from the grids were grouped according to the themes described by Gilmore (1980). The same process was also applied to the stresses reported. The results may be seen below. The significance of the themes are discussed in Section 5.5.

Table 5.8

Subject	Grids			Stresses		
	Work	Relation-ships	Aloneness	Work	Relation-ships	Aloneness
1	1	5	0	4	4	0
2	1	7	2	4	2	0
3	0	3	9	5	1	0
4	1	6	2	4	2	1
5	0	4	8	10	3	2
7	2	7	3	15	1	1
9	0	4	3	4	1	0
10	1	5	6	4	3	0
11	0	5	4	4	4	1
12	0	5	2	2	7	0
13	0	3	7	5	2	0
Totals	6	54	46	61	30	5
Difference between grids and stresses	-55	24	41	55	-24	-41
Percentage of number of responses in this category	6%	51%	43%	64%	31%	5%

5.4 Key Findings

This third study found that:

- stress is generally perceived as a negative concept
- the perception of stress is dependant upon the meaning that is constructed around an experience by the individual
- the perception of stress is a transactional process rather than a stimulus or a response to a stimulus
- there is an age-relatedness to many biological and social events which affects a child's perception of stress
- the less differentiated the 'meaning structures' (Thompson, 1975) of individuals, the more rigid their view of the world is and the more threatening and potentially destructive stressors may be perceived to be
- tight construing may be characteristic of teenagers
- a strong gender difference in the number of stresses reported and between themes in the repertory grid

5.5 Discussion of results

A problem of the first two studies had been the 'arm/leg' trap. It had been decided not to use the word 'stress' for fear that it would pressure respondents into feeling that they ought to experience it and thus not establishing it as a valid or separate concept. Instead, emotions associated with stress and situations where stress may be reasonably be expected to exist were used, based on the idea of a syndrome of responses described by Anthony and Thibodeau (1979).

Also, as previously discussed, the term 'stress' has such a multiplicity of meanings and ways of being operationalised by researchers it seemed important to explore the meaning that adolescents attributed to it. This study was designed to explore this issue and to examine individual differences in terms of coping and how they viewed the world. The reworking of the data in Study 2 suggested that individual differences in perception were important. The objectives were fivefold and described in section 5.1.2.

The ease with which words, emotions, situations and behaviours associated with stress were elicited from these adolescents, seem to show that 'stress' is a meaningful concept for the subjects.

The evidence of the previous studies seemed to suggest that the experiences described as a result of the various stimuli offered contained both negative and positive attributes. This would allow us to accept Selye (1974)'s definition of stress as being a:

"..non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it."(Pge 27)

but this definition did not seem to reflect the everyday usage of the word. Stress, in this context, seemed to be a more specific concept than that suggested by Selye and seemed to be perceived as something negative and associated with distress. The results from the study seemed to support this intuitive view. The stress reported in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 all held negative connotations for the respondents. 'Success', for example, was seen as a negative - they were under pressure to achieve success.

Some of the words described emotions, for example 'boredom', others described specific 'stressors' for example 'Mr X, Mr Y, deadlines,, others described conditions associated with stress, for example heat, light, time, Mondays. Also, some of the words evoked seemed to describe stimuli, for example, 'travel' and others seemed to describe responses , for example 'headache', 'tension'. This appears to cast doubt upon the simple stimulus response definition of stress.

If we accept the definition of stress as a stimulus, it implies that something in the nature of the stimulus is stressful and that it would therefore be stressful for all. If we assume stress can be defined by a response, and this has its base in biology and medicine, then stimuli are defined as stressful only in terms of a stress response. The inadequacy of this as an explanation of the process is in the lack of explanation about the conditions under which some stimuli become stressors, and the same stimuli, under other conditions, do not become stressors. The answer seems to lie in the meaning that is constructed from the stimuli for the individual. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) emphasise the relationship as the key and say:

"The definition of stress here (Lazarus and Folkman (1984)) emphasises the *relationship* between the person and the environment, which takes into account characteristics of the person on one hand, and the nature of the environmental event on the other.....Psychological stress, therefore, is a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being"(Page 21)

This definition seems to incorporate individual differences in meaning and to emphasise the complex nature of the perception of stress. It acknowledges the relationship between the external and internal environment and the necessity of something being appraised as stressful. However, we may find situations that tax our resources exciting. An example of this may be an adolescent that goes climbing. They may feel that their resources are being taxed and their well-being threatened, and find the experience exhilarating. This seems to support the view that stressful experiences are seldom wholly negative but contain positive elements. Also, the meaning we ascribe to an event can change rapidly and is therefore temporally located. Perhaps the emphasis here needs to be on a

relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as having the capacity to exceed his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.

This definition of stress as a relationship between the individual and the environment has implications for the study of the stress process. As has been discussed in Chapter Four, much of the research on stress, both in relation to adults and to children, has concentrated upon the type of stressor and the results have been divided into those researchers who believe that 'life events' are the best indicators of stress, and those that believe that 'daily pleasures and hassles' are a more reliable indicator.

For example, Johnson (1982) describes a stressful life event as:

"life experiences or events that may result in changes in their lives and that necessitate varying degrees of coping and adaptation"(Pge 219)

However, Wolchik *et al* (1984) expand this view so than an event (in this case divorce of parents) is viewed:

"...not as *an* event but as a life transition requiring adaptation to a series of environmental changes, and mastery of new tasks that occur as a result of these changes" (Pges 90 - 91)

If we accept the Lazarus Folkman (1984) definition of stress, these demands may not only be present in external sources in the environment, but also may be the result of internal demands relating to psychological change or development.

As has been described in Chapter Four, researchers also differentiate between acute and chronic demands. Acute demands are seen as those which involve changes in existing conditions and as Compas (1987) argues, have been the focus of the majority of the research concerning child/adolescent stress. They also involve the cumulative effects of numerous life events over a specific time period or a specific event whose effect is felt independently of other life events.

Study 3 found that out of the 81 words/phrases generated by the word 'stress' and displayed in Table 7.1, only 8 could be defined as 'life events', and of those 8, all were acute demands, not chronic. Table 5.2 shows things individuals found stressful and shows a similar pattern to Table 5.1. A total of 123 stresses were reported, and although the stresses are generalised, it seems that few could be described as 'life events'. This last finding could be explained by the socio-economic position of the subjects, but is perhaps more likely to be associated with the difficulty of subjectively labelling an environment that we are familiar with and consider 'normal' as one which contains chronic stress. A similar process can be found in children who have been abused and only recognise the abuse after exposure to a different environment which responds to different 'norms'. Again it seems that the very act of isolating variables, in this case 'life events' and 'hassles', causes the complexity and richness of the process to be hidden. This has implications for further studies in that it suggests a need to try and examine the process as a whole, rather than isolate particular variables, and to view this process from a phenomenological perspective.

There appeared not to be any 'daily pleasures' reported in either Table 5.1 or Table 5.2. This seems to suggest that the sample in this study regard stress as "distress" rather than 'eustress'. This seems in keeping with the everyday usage of the term. However, the part played by uplifts in our coping seems not to be negligible. Lazarus *et al* (1980) described three ways in which 'uplifts' could contribute to coping. Firstly, they could act as 'breathers' from regular stressful encounters. Secondly, they may act as 'sustainers' of coping activity and thirdly, they may act as 'restorers' that help the replenishment of depleted resources when recovering from harm or loss.

This is related to the exploration of resilience to stress and has been discussed in Chapter Four. A further study could include investigation into the part played by uplifts although not all researchers agree as to the value of this approach (Delongis *et al* (1982))

To follow this path in a future study for this thesis was felt not to be appropriate as it would change the direction of the study and focus upon a discrete area rather than investigate the process as a whole. However, this may be a useful line of further research.

The fact that 'hassles' appear to be reported in both Table 5.1 and 5.2 more than 'life events' in this study seems to suggest that they are a better indicator of the common view of stress. Compas (1987) points out that although the research seems to indicate a relationship between life events and dysfunction, this correlation is usually modest.

Again, caution in interpreting these results seems indicated as both 'life events', 'hassles' and 'daily uplifts' can be viewed as stimuli and the results from this study suggested a greater degree of complexity in the perception of stress than this view suggests. However, in their study, Kanner *et al* (1981) found that the Hassles Scale was a better predictor of concurrent and subsequent psychological symptoms than were life events scores. They also found that uplifts were positively related to symptoms for women but not for men.

In another study by Kanner *et al* (1991) of uplifts, hassles and adaptational outcomes in early adolescents, it was found that uplifts and hassles are associated with adaptational outcomes and that uplifts contribute to adaptational outcomes independent of hassles. They also found gender differences which they related to a developmental framework. They postulated that boys and girls at this age (12 years) were in different developmental stages and that the girls are typically in the early stages of adolescence, beginning to focus on peer relationships, bodily changes and needs for autonomy, whilst boys are still in the latency period described by Freud, and involved more in concepts of fairness, mastery of the physical environment and rules. They use this framework to explain the gender differences in their results. They also note that although boys and girls reported the same number of hassles and uplifts, the girls reported hassles as 'bad' more often than boys. They argue that this is consistent with the widely held belief that girls perceive and/or are more willing to report more negative or vulnerable feelings than boys. They also note that the relationship between bad hassles and social-emotional adjustment was stronger for boys than girls. This contradicts the findings in adults (Billings and Moos (1981), Kanner *et al* (1981), Manthey and Cupp (1983)). They suggest that at some point between twelve and being an adult, the significance of positive and negative experiences for males and females, reverses.

In common with other research in the area of life events, hassles and daily uplifts, the above studies limit the area of study to certain variables. They use measures which are in some way seen to identify the chosen concept, sometimes derived from 'expert' adult perceptions, and sometimes from the perceptions of a smaller group of children. They generalise these measures from the source to encompass the 'normal' and measure on this basis. This can have the effect of losing much meaningful individual data and to 'push' respondents into a certain way of responding. My personal experience of participating in this type of measure is that some of the measures are meaningful to me but others are not. The pressure to respond, however, may give a false validity to the tests. The implications of this for my future research mean that a 'general' measure will not be devised and an attempt will be made to capture the richness of individual responses.

Many of the stresses described in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 in this study reflect the social situation of the children. They are Sixth Formers waiting to take examinations and soon to leave school and go forth into the adult world. Their social situation is connected to their developmental stage, and, as children are developmentally different from adults another perspective on the results obtained may come through the work of another group of researchers on the role of life events with regard to development and, although the same problems as those described above exist, the overview of the area described in Chapter Four, could inform the study.

In this context, life events are viewed as agents of disequilibrium that make positive development possible. They have identified several characteristics of life events that seem to be important in the study of adolescent stress but appear to have been neglected in the research. These characteristics, reported by Compas (1987, a, Pge 278), are discussed below in relation to the findings of the three studies so far undertaken for this thesis.:

- a) the age-relatedness of many biological and social events, with a high frequency of these events occurring during childhood/adolescence. For example, physical growth, changes in the endocrine system, development in the brain and central nervous system, changes in social roles and family and school transitions. This study reflects this age

relatedness, both in terms of life events and daily hassles. Many of the stresses indicated in Table 5.1. and Table 5.2, can be seen as reflecting changes in social roles, and as part of the struggle to establish their own identity, e.g. family relationships and also age related events such as driving, examinations, transitions from school to work etc.

- b) emphasis upon the social distribution of events. An example of one affecting an entire culture may be that of economic depression. Another example may be that of the children's preoccupation and identification with 'football' in Study One .
- c) a highlighting of historical or cohort effects upon events. For example, an adolescents experience of life events during the second world war would be different than that of an adolescent during the 'swinging sixties'. This study, perhaps, can be seen to reflect the "Thatchers' Children" syndrome of money and career success.

From this focus, the importance of life events and daily hassles found in this investigation, seems very relevant, but needs to be viewed from an individual perspective, without losing the relationship we all have to the environment we live in. An explanation of both Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 may be found in the meaning that has been ascribed to events by the subjects and could be understood in terms of social interactionism. The 'I' may, in some situations, be at variance with the 'me' and thus cause the individual to feel stressed. Similarly, the process could be understood in Rogerian terms as the incongruence between the self and experience which does not 'fit' with the idea of self.

It is interesting to note that there are quite significant differences between Table 5.1 and Table 5.2. Table 5.1 was generated as a general 'What is Stress' whilst Table 5.2 was generated by a more particular 'What do you find stressful?'. I expected quite an overlap of responses, but this did not happen. It appears from these results that even when the stresses are identified by a group, they do not have the same amount of significance for each member. It suggests, again, that the important area to be concerned

with is the individual's perception of stress rather than stressors per se. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) trace the history of interest in individual differences to the interest which grew out of the effect of stress on performance during World War II and the Korean War. The Yerkes-Dodson Law (1978) which was discussed in the introduction to this thesis, was much used by psychologists at the time but it became increasingly apparent that optimum performance was not uniform. A growing realisation of the importance of personal factors sparked off further research in this area for example Lazarus & Eriksen (1952), Lazarus, Deese & Osler (1952). As Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest:

" This (Lazarus & Eriksen (1952)) and other studies made it clear that one could not predict performance simply by reference to stressful stimuli, and that to predict performance outcomes required attention to the psychological processes that created individual differences in reaction." (Page 7)

This results provided in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 are commensurate with this conclusion.

In Study Three, the subjects were asked to say how they coped with stress. Table 5.3 shows these coping strategies reduced into 23 categories. There were 101 responses and the most popular way of coping was to be involved in some form of physical activity. The subjects were then asked if they felt that anything else that either they did not do or have could be helpful. The results of this can be seen in Table 5.4. More than half the respondents identified 'someone to talk to' as something which would help which could be good news for those who believe in providing schools with a counsellor!

In order to see if the results from this study supported the studies described in Chapter Four, the responses were categorised into emotion-focused or problem- focused responses. No attempt was made to identify evidence of denial as this had not been in the original design of this study. However, there does seem a very strong link between some of the emotion-focused responses such as 'ignoring the person/situation' and 'sleep' and the Freudian concept of denial and Spinelli's dissociation. This seems to be an interesting area for future discussion.

This study found the responses could be reduced to emotion-focused and problem-focused coping and found, in common with Folkman and Lazarus (1987) that the respondents used both styles of coping, although, in this study specific stressors were not linked to specific coping responses.

Although it was outside the scope of this study to match individual stressors to modes of coping, it is interesting to note that several studies have found that 'goodness of fit' is connected to psychological symptoms. These have been described in Chapter Four, and the findings of Compas *et al* (1988) are used as a framework for the findings of this study. They found youngsters who were less adept at generating and using problem-focused coping experienced more adjustment problems. They also found that:

- a) **"emotion-focused and problem-focused types of coping are used by older children and young adolescents" (Pge 410)**

The subjects in Study Three were older adolescents than those studied by Compas *et al*, and Table 5.5 shows that of the boys, 11% of the responses used both problem- focused and emotion-focused coping, and of the girls, 25% of the responses used both. In total, 18% of the responses used both types of coping. As has been previously stated, the design of this study did not link specific coping to specific stressors and so some of the richness of response has perhaps been sacrificed in favour of an overview. However, the results in Table 5.5 show the use of both problem- focused and emotion-focused coping and in that sense supports the findings of Compas *et al*(1988).

- b) **"generation of emotion-focused solutions and use of emotion-focused coping strategies increased from sixth to eighth grade (ages 11 years -13 years) whereas the generation and use of problem-focused coping was generally consistent." (pge 410)**

If we project this result forward, we would expect to find in an older age group the increased generation of emotion-focused coping. In Study Three, Table 5.5 shows that of the responses 51% were emotion-focused and 31% were problem-focused. This overall figure hides the gender difference in that only 22% of the emotion-focused coping was generated by the girls compared to 76% by the boys. Girls responses were

53% problem-focused and the boys 13%. This shows an interesting contradiction to another of the findings of Compas *et al* (1988) which was that:

- c) **"strong gender differences were not found although girls used more emotion-focused strategies than boys in response to academic events. "** (Pge 410)

This finding was not supported in Study 3 with Table 5.5 showing a very strong gender bias in the opposite direction. This could be because the sample was relatively small and individual styles dominated the data. In a larger sample this may not have happened and again, the richness of individual data lost. It seems likely from both my results and those of Compas *et al*, that the style of coping is very individual and a result of previous experience.

- d) **"children and young adolescents seem to display more cross-situational consistency in their coping than do older adolescents and adults."** (Pge 410)

This finding lay outside the scope of Study 3 and so comparison of results was not possible.

- e) **"there seems to be significant correlation between emotional/behavioural problems and coping with social but not academic stressors. "** (Pge 410)

Again, this lay outside the scope of Study 3.

- f) **"there was a positive relationship between emotion-focused coping alternatives generated and strategies used and emotional/behavioural problems. "** (Pge 405)

Again, this lay outside the scope of Study 3.

- g) **"there appears to be some support for the hypothesis that youngsters match their coping focus to fit with their appraisal of their control over stressful events. The nature of this match seems to be related to emotional/behavioural problems. Subjects seemed to perceive the**

causes of academic stressors as more controllable than the causes of social stressors and generated more problem-focused alternatives for coping with academic stress. The number of problem-focused alternative solutions generated for social stressors interacted with the youngsters perception of the controllability of the event. There seemed to be more problems associated with a mismatch between perceived control and the focus of coping." (Pges 410 -411)

Again, this lay outside the scope of Study 3, although this links with Bandura's notion (Bandura and Walters (1963)) that the ability to feel in control of the situation is the primary determinant of coping, defensive and anxious behaviours. This links with the focus of this study which seeks to explore the stress process in that it seems that often the results of needing to feel in control of an uncontrollable situation leads children to develop 'symptoms' such as bulimia and compulsive behaviours which are then seen as the problem. An example of this could be of a child who was regularly beaten, who used to creep downstairs in the night and steal food from the 'fridge. She felt completely powerless in the face of the terror she felt towards her father and could not accept that powerlessness. She needed to be in control and so 'defied' by stealing food. As she grew up this need for food grew into something which was labelled 'bulimia'. She stopped needing this control when through exploration and the use of imagery she made sense of it for herself. This ties in with Rutter's (1983) suggestion, discussed in relation to Study Two, that stress in childhood might lead:

"..to directly altered patterns of behaviour which, although changed at the time of the event, take the form of an overt disorder only some years later" (Pge 30)

Although Compas *et al* (1988) advise caution as to the interpretation of the match between appraisal of control and coping because they were found for only one type of coping in response to one type of stressful event, they appear to confirm much of the adult work in the area and highlight some of the differences between adolescent and adult coping. In terms of this thesis, the process of the perception of stress seems increasingly to be partially dependent upon past experience of both stress and coping and thus, although it is not the main thrust of the study, the exploration of coping and the need to control are both relevant areas of exploration.

Table 5.4 shows 'extra' ways of coping that could be utilised by the subjects as individuals and also provided by others. It is interesting to note that 'someone to talk to' is mentioned eight times and actually used as a coping strategy by only one. (See Table 5.3) The aim of counselling is described by The British Association for Counselling (B.A.C., 1984), as giving

"the 'client' an opportunity to explore, discover, and clarify ways of living more satisfyingly and resourcefully."(Pge 2)

This aim seem very relevant to school children and, as has been previously mentioned, the identifying of 'someone to talk to' by over half the respondents does suggest that this may be an important provision to offer in schools. This also seems to link with Bandura's notion of control (Bandura & Walters (1963)). By choosing to talk to someone the children could be seen as taking control and also, by talking, this could help them take further control by exploring, discovering and clarifying.

The third aim of this study was to see how the subjects view the world, and to see if this would aid our exploration of the stress process. From the second study it emerged that individual perception or how individuals see the world may have an impact upon the perception of stress so, in this study, it was decided to follow Kelly's (1955) advice:

"If you don't know what's wrong with a client, ask him; he may tell you" (Pge 201)

and use a Role Construct Repertory Test. The data from this test was then subjected to various forms of analysis and then compared to the subjects' previous responses to stress and coping.

The aim of a repertory grid is explained by Thompson (1975) as an attempt:

"..to understand from each individual the particular terms in which he sees his world"(Pge 19)

The subject is completely free to construe the world as they wish but it assumes several points. Firstly that the roles given by the researcher are important figures in their lives. Secondly, that the constructs used are

indeed the ones used by the subject to construe their world and that they are capable of verbalising these. It also assumes that the subject feels free to report their constructs. It rests upon Kelly's theory that we use our constructs to explain our organisation of the past and the anticipation of our future. However, as Beail (1985) points out:

"It is important to remember that when we look at someone else's grid we are using our own experience, our own constructs to make sense of it. "(Pge 19)

He suggests that our professional training and our theoretical beliefs will both affect how we see a grid and this ties in with the ways of knowing discussed in the methodology chapter. A combination of the 'ways of knowing' were used in the analysis of this data and are described below.

The grids were subjected to elementary linkage analysis, as a more objective 'way of knowing' in that it uses statistical methodology as a way of being 'objective'. The procedure follows the one suggested by Thompson (1975) and seeks to 'screen out' by the use of statistical tests, the bias described by her. She suggests that:

"...a verbal content analysis will always mean that the classification system of the research worker plays a dominant role. In order to correct for this a simple statistical analysis was carried out. "(Pge 28)

The purpose of the elementary linkage analysis is to show how the constructs of each subject were related with each other to form what Thompson (1975) calls 'meaning structures'. This technique compares each construct with every other construct through the use of correlation coefficients and results in the identification of clusters of constructs which are related to each other. The results can be seen in Table 5.6.

The average number of stressful things identified by the girls was 14, and 7 for the boys.

The hypothesis which was being tested through this technique was that there would be a relationship between the number of related clusters and the types of experiences that the subject reported as being stressful. The

hypothesis was that the smaller the number of clusters found, the more stress would be reported, in that a highly differentiated structure could indicate a greater flexibility in viewing the world. The more rigid and interrelated the constructs could indicate a inflexible view of the world, that, when exposed to experiences that did not fit, could easily collapse and become stressed. The less interrelated and flexible the constructs, the more adaptable the individual and less likely to be 'stressed'. Adams-Webber (1981) suggests that:

" It follows that the more highly interrelated all the constructs within a given system or subsystem, the greater will be the impact of any invalidating experience in terms of its range of 'implications' throughout that system or subsystem. "(Pge 180)

The opposite prediction to this hypothesis is that the smaller number of clusters found, the less stress would be reported. This could be because a more controlled view of the world could lead the individual to experience less stress. The relationship between constructs portrays the predictive characteristics of an individual's perceptive system. As Fransella (1981) argues:

" As scientists we seek to predict and hence gain control over as much of our environment as we can, for our psychological processes are indeed channelized by the ways in which we anticipate events."(Pge 152)

As can be seen from Table 5.6 the working hypothesis was not supported. The opposite relationship seemed to occur, with the average number of reported stressors rising in relation to the number of clusters identified. This could be because the more differentiated a structure that individuals have, the more flexible they are and the more open to accepting events as stressful, and, conversely, the less differentiated the structure, the more rigid the view of the world and the more threatening and potential destructive the stressors. Tight construing may also be characteristic of teenagers. It may be necessary for individuals who have less highly differentiated structures to deny the existence of stressors. It has been found that certain types of schizophrenics have very tightly interrelated constructs. Adams-Webber (1981) reports that:

" Radley (1974) indicates that schizophrenics who are free of thought disorder tend to have construct systems in which all psychological constructs are closely interrelated. Thus, their social construing is 'homogeneously tight'. "(Pge 183)

Whilst not suggesting that the subjects in this study were schizophrenics,(!) it seems possible that the 'homogeneously tight' construing could lead to some denial of stress. Adams-Webber (1981) goes on to suggest that in the above case:

"...regardless of the number of constructs constituting the subsystem...., all of an individual's expectations about people must 'fit' the constraints of one fixed pattern of logical possibilities."(Pge 183)

Construct theory does have links with Freud's notion of the unconscious, but instead of using the terms 'conscious', 'unconscious', Kelly (1955) refers to differing levels of cognitive awareness:

"A person is not necessarily articulate about the constructions he places upon his world. Some of his constructions are not symbolised by words; he can express them only in pantomime. Even the elements which are construed may have no verbal handles by which they can be manipulated and the person finds himself responding to them with speechless impulse."(Pge 16)

This seems to accord with Spinelli's (1994) notion of dissociated or divided consciousness. Lazarus *et al* (1974), in discussing the discrepancies found between the many indicators of stress such as the verbal, behavioural and physiological, asked which indicator is the correct one. Do we believe the underlying autonomic arousal or the verbal report of denial or distress?

If we are to accept that it can be both, as Lazarus *et al* (1974) do when they describe stress as a:

" ...multidimensional concept with components of physiological arousal and various organ systems, subjective phenomenology and behavioural reactions",

then we must refute Selye's (1974) assertion that psychological stress is only stressful if recognised as such. In Study Two we touched on the idea of whether we had to know we were stressed in order to be stressed and the notion of unconscious recognition. Perhaps the results from this study could be explained from this perspective. Those subjects who reported less stress and had a less differentiated system of constructs could be equally as stressed or more so but unaware of this. This seems to be a very difficult research question to answer. How do you know something you are unaware of? As I write this I am aware of my fingers moving automatically over the computer keyboard to the letters I need. I also know that consciously I have no idea of where the letters are on a keyboard and if I was asked to fill in the positions of the letters on a blank, I could not. I am also aware that if I let my hands move freely on the key board they go, virtually unerringly to the appropriate letters. Therefore I know how to type without consciously knowing that I do. This seems qualitatively different to seemingly automatic responses like driving somewhere and not being able to remember the drive. Then, you are aware that you know how to change gear, drive the car, know the route, even if you cannot remember engaging in the actions. With my 'automatic typing' I do not, consciously, know where the letters are. I feel there are links here with the perception of stress. I am aware that I can be stressed without being consciously aware of it. I only become aware of it when my neck and shoulders becomes painful and I realise I have been holding myself very stiffly. Then I can begin to make connections and realise I have been stressed. As Lazarus (1983) suggests that:

"...people are constantly seeking a way to comprehend what is happening to them; this ongoing process of construing reality is a constantly changing one, depending on many variables within and outside the person. "(Pge 12)

So, the subjects in this study may be stressed without knowing it and their rigidity of constructs may mean that they need to keep this knowledge out of their conscious mind. As has been previously argued, this is a position that is hard to defend as none of it is observable. In terms of Heppner *et al's* (1992) ways of 'knowing', the proposition seems to satisfy four of the 'ways' - tenacity, authority, intuition and one's own experience of the world, but fails through 'scientific method'. This is an area that needs to be addressed in future studies. An equally plausible explanation of the results in Table

5.6 could be that there is no meaningful relationship at all between the 'meaning structures' and the perception of stress and the differences are due to other factors. It seems likely to assume from the results of the other studies that other factors do play a part. Who each subject was sitting next to, their relationship with each other and with me, their mood and perception of the situation will all have played a part (see Study Two). However, this does not negate the possibility of the tentative explanation offered above having some validity.

Another variable was the gender differences between the subjects. It is interesting to note that a strong gender difference in the number of stresses reported may be seen, with the average number of stresses reported by the girls as 14, and the boys 7. The three girls involved in the study were evenly distributed among the clusters of 2 - 4, and consistently reported more stresses. Perhaps these differences are not surprising when, as Belle (1991) argues:

"...gender differences in interpersonal behaviour and interpersonal relationships are evident throughout the life cycle.....Throughout life, the norms for appropriate male behaviour tend to promote self-reliance and inhibit emotional expressiveness, self-disclosure, and help-seeking (DePaulo (1982), Jourard (1971), Lowenthal & Haven (1968)), while females are encouraged to value close relationships and even to define themselves in terms of the close relationships in which they participate (Chodorow (1974), Gilligan (1982), Miller 1976))"(Pges 259 - 260)

Given such differences, it is likely that the perception of and description of stress will differ with gender. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) noted a gender difference in the reports of stress. They found that women reported more stressful daily events related to health and family and men reported more stressful work-related episodes. Sorensen (1993) states that:

"Most inductive studies of stress and coping in children have uncovered spontaneous gender role differences or other descriptive differences between boys and girls."(Pge 97)

McCann and Pearlman (1990) in their study of adult survivors of trauma also emphasise the need to be aware of gender differences and suggest that too little attention is paid to the relationship between coping processes and gender socialisation among victims.

The differences in results between gender noted in this study could be explained in terms of differing socialisation for the boys and girls with girls being encouraged to talk about their worries and emotions and boys expected to be 'strong' and silent. Belle (1991) concludes in her review of gender differences as social moderators of stress that:

" This review has suggested that there are persuasive gender differences in the ways men and women construct their networks and utilise them in times of stress, and that these differences have consequences for men's and women's (and girl's and boy's) well-being." (Pge 272)

The success or not of preferred coping has a relevance here in terms of gender difference and the 'goodness of fit' literature is applicable with the effect of gender on perceived control. (Forsythe and Compas (1980), Folkman and Lazarus (1987), and Compas *et al* (1988))

In order to explore the link between coping, meaning structures and reported stresses, the data from the study was then subjected to further analysis. The clusters were compared to the number of stresses reported by each subject and the number and type of coping strategies generated. The working hypothesis here was that there would be a relationship between number of stresses, number of coping strategies and connectedness of clusters. Table 5.7 shows this relationship.

There was a mismatch between the number of stresses reported and the number of coping strategies generated in most subjects. Only one subject matched coping strategies to stresses. There seemed to be a small relationship between the number of stresses, number of coping strategies and the connectedness of the clusters. Those subjects who had two or three clusters seemed to have less of a mismatch between stresses and coping, while the single subject with one cluster and the two subjects with four clusters had a mismatch. This suggests that the subjects with two or three clusters are more balanced in terms of matching stressors to coping and

that the less differentiated and the extensively differentiated meaning structures could lead to a mismatch and possibly greater stress. The sample in this study was quite small and it is also possible that the above results are the result of a statistical quirk. They need to be treated with caution but the idea that individuals who have either a very tight or very loose 'view of the world' being less able to cope with stress is an interesting one.

The grids were also subjected to thematic analysis in order to see if there were any themes to the constructs. The same process was also applied to the stresses reported. The results may be seen in Table 5.8.

In order to decrease the subjectivity of the data reduction, the themes were chosen from those suggested by Gilmore (1980) as the terms in which to truly understand another person. She suggests that:

"...to truly understand another person, a counsellor/therapist (or in this case, a researcher!) needs to understand the person in terms of *Work, Relationship* and *Aloneness*....in terms of the person's patterns of *doing, moving* and *being* in his/her particular context. "(Pge 189)

She defines work as 'purposive activities', and includes remunerated activity and volunteered activity. In the case of the subjects it will include activity directed by others. She concludes:

" What is consistent about work is that it is an organised intended sequence of activity; the person is trying to make something happen."(Pge 188)

She asserts that it is possible to see examples of work of a two year old in these terms.

Relationship is to do with our commerce with others. Gilmore argues that we are all social beings and that everyone regardless of age, race or sex, has to come to terms with other human beings. She says:

" Learning the skills and discriminations to move skilfully and satisfyingly with others is a basic issue at any age."(Pge 189)

Aloneness in Gilmore's terms is not about feeling lonely. It is about the aloneness of our uniqueness. She says:

" Our uniqueness, the fact of choice and of making one's own meaning are very attractive and frightening at the same time. Who you are becoming, your *being* , is the third basic life issue that faces each of us."(Pge 189)

It was considered that by analysing the data using these categories it would be possible to combine several ways of knowing . Firstly, by the 'method of tenacity' - truth we know to be true because we have always known it to be true. Secondly, the 'method of authority' - we know because someone who is deemed to be an authority tells us it is so, - in this case Gilmore . Thirdly, the 'method of intuition' - if it makes sense, it is true, and the finally, the method of learning through one's own experience of the world.

As Table 5.8 shows, there is considerable differences between the themes which predominated in the grids and those which predominate in the reported stresses. In the stresses reported, work dominated (64% of the themes identified from the stresses) but hardly appeared in the repertory grid (6%) . Relationships were the most reported in the grid (51%) compared to 31% in the grid. Aloneness figured 43% in the grid and a meagre 5% in the reported stresses. This seems to indicate a richness of data from the grids which is different than that obtained from the self report of stressors. There may be several explanations for this.

Firstly it may be that to admit to, in public, work stressors, is less threatening than to admit to being concerned about who we are. According to Erikson, adolescence is a time of search for identity, and most developmental theories regard adolescence as a time when children are developing an identity which is separate from their family. As Hendren (1990) suggests:

" Psychoanalytic theorists characterise adolescence as a period of internal intra-psychic struggle between the dependency needs of childhood and the drive for independence and autonomy (Blos (1972), Freud (1958))"(Pge 251)

This would lead us to expect more concerns about aloneness, as reflected in the grids, rather than less, as reflected in the stresses reported. The relative absence of 'aloneness' concerns in the stresses reported could be because of the difficulty of admitting something that could be very personal in front of peers and an unknown adult, but may also be the result of defence mechanism. The presence of 'aloneness' concerns in the grids suggests that this is a powerful stressor, and Hendren (1990) suggests that:

" Adolescents attempt to cope with stress through the use of psychological defence mechanisms. Defence mechanisms are automatic and unconscious, and these alter both internal and external reality."(Pge 256)

He identifies denial -

" ...an unconscious mechanism that allows the adolescent to avoid awareness of thoughts, feelings, wishes, needs, or external reality, factors that are consciously intolerable."(Pge 257)

- as a commonly used defence of adolescence and it may be that the idea of revealing stress concerning aloneness in front of a group is intolerable and thus the feelings are denied. It may be that the more sophisticated measure of the grid allowed those feelings to be revealed.

A second explanation for the predominance of work related themes in the stresses reported may be that the data was collected in 'work' i.e. school, and it may be that work stress was uppermost in the subjects mind because of the setting. The grids, although presented in the same setting, were concerned with relationships mainly outside school and thus work may have been less in the forefront of the subjects minds. The fact that 51% of the themes identified in the grids were identified as relationship suggests that this may be the case. Also, as has been suggested earlier, relationships and the search for one's identity are thought to play a major part in adolescent development so it is not surprising that this is a major theme. The importance of relationships both of family and peers to the adolescent's perception of stress has been the focus of much research (e.g. Boyce *et al* (1977), Compas *et al* (1986) Greenburgh *et al* (1983)) and it all suggests that relationships are very important at this time and can act as a buffer or a mediator in the perception of stress.

A third explanation of the differences in the themes identified between the stresses reported and the grids may be in the different forms of data collection. As has been previously discussed, the publicness of gathering stresses may have affected the results as may have the relationship-boundness of the grid. This brings us to a question raised by Bannister (1962) when he asks:

"...to what degree do psychological measures need to be "stimulus bound" i.e. operate in terms of assumed real characteristics in the stimuli ?"(Pge 119)

The grids were not used as measures of the 'assumed real characteristics' of stress in adolescence, but as a way of trying to understand individual differences. It does seem, however, that they did reveal, from another perspective i.e. that of identifying themes which it is suggested are basic issues to all individuals, real insights into the process of the perception of stress. It does seem, as Bannister (1962) argues, that:

"... it is theoretically and experimentally meaningful to talk of construct systems as independent of the particular elements construed."(Pge 115)

However, it would be interesting in further studies to examine the effect of using stresses as elements instead of people.

5.6 Conclusions and Links to Other Studies

In conclusion, I feel that this study achieved its objectives, and that although some important insights were gained, many questions seem to need to be addressed.

The first objective of this study was to see if 'stress' was a meaningful concept to the adolescence . The answer seems to be that it is, but that the stress they identify is that of 'distress' rather than 'eustress' This seems to be an important insight and needs to be considered in the light of research by Lazarus *et al* (1980), Kanner *et al* (1981), DeLongis *et al* (1982) and Compas (1987) where they argue that 'daily pleasures' are as important as 'hassles' and 'life events' in the prediction of psychological symptoms. It

again raises the question of the amount we need to be aware we are stressed in order to be stressed.

The second objective was to see how the subjects coped with stress and again this offered some useful insights. It supported the theory of other researchers such as Lazarus and Compas, that hassles must be considered as potentially stressful as well as major life events. However, as the stressors were not matched to specific coping strategies, it was not possible to comment upon the 'goodness of fit' or locus of control.

The third objective was to see how the adolescents viewed their world. This again provided some very useful insights, both into the construction of individual meanings and the perception of stress. It highlighted the complexity of the stressors and has confirmed for me that it is the process that must be explored rather than the individual stressors.

The study has supported many of my 'hunches'. Hassles are confirmed as important and individual differences seem extremely relevant. The type of stressor seems less important than an understanding of how the process works and then to suggest ways in which children can be best equipped to turn the negative of stress to the positive of successful coping.

As well as offering insights, this study has also suggested even more questions to answer during this journey. For example, Aylon (1991) proposes a 'near miss' theory. She suggests that individuals can suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), if they have things in common with the victims and that often the resultant stress is worse because the individuals concerned feel they have 'no right' to be affected. She quoted an illustration from Morris Fraser ("Children in Conflict" (1973)) where one is asked to imagine a pool of frogs and a stone drops and hits some on the head and hurts/kills them. What happens to those hit by the ripple - no scar, no help? The relevance of near miss stress can be illustrated by my children's experience. In the summer of 1990, a little girl was snatched from inside a caravan whilst her parents were inside. We were camping at the time and this occurrence so affected my son that he would not go anywhere alone and had nightmares. On our return home he stopped wanting to play on his own in a nearby, and hitherto considered safe, field. It seemed that the near miss had given him a sudden realisation that the world was not a safe place. Perhaps our perception of stress is coloured not

only by our first hand experiences, but also by 'near miss' and reported experiences of others. For example, the stress felt by my daughter at the prospect of a spelling test at school may be a result of seeing others 'told off' and feeling 'there but the grace of God go I'. This would be an interesting avenue to explore in future studies - to see if we can identify our 'history of stress'.

General conclusions from this study were that the perception of what constituted a stressor was complex and that 'stress' was seen as negative 'distress' rather than positive 'eustress'. Coping was varied and seemingly included elements of both problem and emotion focused coping. The subjects identified a need for some form of intervention system. The study highlighted the complexity of how stress is perceived and suggested that the linear stimulus response model of stress previously accepted was too simple to capture this complexity. The 'new' model described in Chapter 6, which reflected the transactional nature of the perception of stress, was supported by the findings of this study and supported my now current view that it was the process of perception that needed to be explored rather than the nature of the stressors.

Until the middle of the 1980's, most work on children's trauma had used 'significant' adults perceptions of how children were effected, i.e. parents, teachers, (Harris Hendricks (1996)). Whilst this type of methodology is limited as it does not address the children's own perceptions, it can be viewed as a useful method of triangulation (McLeod, (1994)) It was in order to explore whether the results from Study Three could be supported by 'significant' others, in the form of teachers, that the fourth study was undertaken.

This study has suggested further questions which seem to be worthwhile attempting to answer but it also seems to be important to try and consolidate the evidence collected to date and to shine the flashlight from another angle. In order to do this, teachers perceptions of children's stress were elicited.

Chapter 6 - Study Four - Teachers' Perception of Children's Stress

6.1 Introduction

The fourth study was, in some senses, a partial recreation of the third study but using teachers to define what they meant by stress, what causes stress in secondary pupils and how pupils showed they were stressed. The aim of this study was to look at teachers' perceptions of children's stress, and compare this with the adolescent's view to see if there was common ground. The objective was to see if 'wise others' in Goffman's terms, had a similar perception of children's stress. Goffman (1963) argued that there are those who understand issues because they have experienced them and those who have not experienced them but because of their shared humanity, can understand the issues. He calls those 'wise others'. In this study, teachers were considered 'wise others' as they have an understanding (hopefully) of the experiences of the children with whom they are in day to day contact.

6.2 Methodology

This group of 15 secondary school teachers agreed to take part in several exercises as part of a workshop exploring stress in children, and agreed that their material could be used. It was another 'opportunity' sample but one which came from a cross-section of schools in the county and contained a great amount of experience. All of the teachers concerned had been teaching for at least four years and most for longer. They were all concerned with the children in their care in a pastoral role as well as academic. Most were Heads of Year with several deputy heads present. Therefore, although not a large or random sample, I feel that the knowledge and experience they had collectively of children allowed them to be thought of as 'wise other'.

This group were asked to engage in three tasks:

1. To brainstorm the term 'stress'
2. To postulate upon the causes of stress in secondary school children
3. To describe how children show they are stressed.

The teachers worked in a whole group for task one and in self-selected groups for tasks two and three. There were four groups for each of the second and third tasks and for task two, two groups chose to focus on general 'causes' of stress while another group focused on 'causes' for year nine, and the last group on 'causes' for year eleven. For the third task, two groups focused upon 'general' ways children show they are stressed, one group on year eleven, and one group on year nine.

6.3 Results

The first task was to complete the phrase ' Stress is....'. This was brainstormed by the whole group. The number of words/phrases generated by the group in association with this task was 16. This can be seen in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1

Stress is.....	
Pressure	Loss of reality
Anxiety	Too realistic
Healthy in small doses	Can cause disease
Inability to cope	Peoples expectations of you
Changes	Own expectations of self
Knot in my stomach	Acceleration
Time -lack of/too much	Overwhelmed
Head down	Avoidance, running away from

The results from this study were then compared to the words/phrases generated in Study Three. We can see that three words are common to both lists - 'Time', 'Pressure', and 'Expectations'. The responses from both studies were categorised into five groups and again compared. The results may be seen in Table 6.2.

The next task, which was completed in four self-selected small groups, was to identify what caused stress in children. Two groups choose to answer this in general, secondary school-age terms, one group specifically about Year 9, and the last group specifically about Year 11. The results may be seen in Table 6.3.

Table 6.2

Emotional States/ Feelings	External Factors	Physical	Behavioural	Relationships
Study 3				
Boredom	Time	Headache	Alcohol	Parents
Depression	Revision	Illness	Smoking	Mr 'X'
Tension	Travel	Heart problems		Mr 'Y'
Pressure	Calculus	Heat		Relationships
Future	Overwork	Light		Teachers
Hassle	Deadlines	Sick		Expectations
Responsibility	Success	Nervous		Brother
Problems	Money	Shaky		Treated like kids
Monotony	Traffic/ Driving	Fatigue		Popularity
Arguments	Exams			
	Business			
	Death			
	Moving house			
	Homework			
	School			
	Disaster			
	Essays			
	Career			
	'A' levels			
	Work			
	Mondays			
	Fridays			
	Bullying			
	Clothes			
	Grades			
	Competition			
	Physics			
	Law			
Total = 10	Total =28	Total =9	Total =2	Total =9
% = 17	% = 48	% = 16	% = 3	% = 16
Study 4				
Pressure	Changes	Knot in my stomach	Head down	Peoples expectations of you
Anxiety	Time - lack of, too much	Can cause disease	Avoidance - running away from	
Inability to cope		Healthy in small doses		
Loss of reality				
Too realistic				
Own expectation of self				
Acceleration				
Overwhelmed				
Total = 8	Total = 2	Total = 3	Total = 2	Total =1
% = 50	% = 12.5	% = 19	% = 12.5	% = 6

Table 6.3

Causes of stress in children are.....			
General 1	General 2	Year 9	Year 11
Hormones	Divorce	Teachers	Personal appearance - "bits and bobs"
No money	Unreasonable demands (their view)	Demands of the curriculum	Not being popular
Divorce	Illness in the family	Options	Parental bondage
Separation	Bereavement	Lack of achievement	Volume of course work
Abuse	Moving house	Lack of relevance re subjects	Width of skills required
N.C. Technology	Peer pressure	Workload - homework as well	Post 16 options
Feeling the future	Realisation of actual limitations - I want to be a vet.....	Home responsibilities - employment, death, divorce etc.	Teacher approval
What the school offers is no good	Increase in workload	Consumer society - materialistic (unemployment/poverty)	Boyfriends/girlfriends
Peer group pressure	Continuous feelings of failure	Lack of friends/support	To do or not to do ?? (have sex)
Desire to be liked/admired	Teachers	Impending doom of upper school!	Peer group identity
Family responsibilities/ part-time work	Pace of change - National Curriculum	Peer pressure	
Conflicting expectations	Inspection	Illness - absence - can't catch up	
Too high parental expectations	Environmental issues		
Fear of teachers/pupils	Media - encouraged to dramatise		
Inability to cope with the work load	Unemployment		
Inappropriate/ boring curricular			
Lack of praise			
Mismatch between teaching and learning styles			
Media messages about young people			

The final task was to identify how children showed they were stressed. Again this was done in self-selected small groups. Two groups choose to answer this in general, secondary school-age terms, one group specifically

about Year 9, and the last group specifically about Year 11. The results may be seen below in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4

Children show they are stressed....			
General 1	General 2	Year 9	Year 11
Foul language	Opt out - school, individual lessons	Truancy - internal / external	Avoidance through lack of concentration
Change of character	Graffiti - gender based, directed at teachers	Lateness	Avoidance through can not do
Truancing - internal and external	Vandalism	Graffiti	Avoidance through will not do
Illness - attention seeking behaviour	Self abuse	Tiredness	Avoidance through late to lessons
Avoiding / not coping with peers	Change of personality	Bad behaviour	Absence
Bullying	Change of friendship groups	Failure to do homework	Outbursts - tears / verbal/ physical
Smoking/ drugs / self abuse	Change of appearance	Bullying - taking it out on other people	Challenge - questioning / confrontation / aggression
Withdrawn - truancing - condoned	Drugs	Excuses	Inability to manage time
Coping with adolescence/ changes	Suicide / attempt	Feigning illness	Succumb to illness - period
Child doesn't return home	Seeking confrontation / attention seeking	Day dreaming	School refusal
Extremes of emotion	No homework, poor concentration	Refusal to do certain tasks	Eating disorder
Simple routines /rules ignored	Reveal within work - art, written work	Becoming introvert/ extrovert	Uncharacteristic behaviour
Year 10 Coping with choices made/ options	Signs of fear - aggression	Wanting to escape from school	Withdrawn
Year 10 Coping with workload	Bullying	Blaming others	Criminal activity / anti-social behaviour
	Anorexia / Bulimia	Don't want to communicate - poor eye contact	Changes in peer company

6.4 Key Findings

This study found that:

- stress was a meaningful concept to this group and mainly associated with distress
- stress can be conceptualised as a relationship between the individual and their environment that is appraised as endangering their well-being
- a conceptual difference exists between the way adults and children perceive stress
- confirmation of the effect upon the perception of stress of the developmental stage of the child
- the environment that a child is part of is a crucial factor in the perception of stress

6.5 Discussion of Results

As was found in Study Three, stress did seem to be a meaningful concept to this group and, again as in the previous study, one that is mainly associated with 'distress'. The exception to this was 'healthy in small doses' which seems to agree with the Yerkes - Dodson Law (1978) which suggests an optimum level of stress for individuals at which they will perform at their best.

Again, as in Study Three, the words and phrases used to describe stress fell into several categories - some seemed to be stimuli, some response, some external, some internal, some emotional, some behavioural. This again highlights the difficulties in explaining stress just as a stimulus, just as a response, just as an external event or just as an internal event and leads us back to the definition suggested by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) of:

" Psychological stress, therefore, is a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being."(Pge 21)

The 'healthy in small doses' suggests that taxing our resources can be a good thing, and the other responses showed what a mixed bag stress is perceived to be.

In comparing the responses of Study Three and Study Four, we note that three responses were common to both lists - time, pressure and expectations. These could be understood in the environment that schools are currently experiencing with pressure to achieve, to test and to record and to enter the market place. These pressures may be there for both staff and pupils. These common responses and the fact that most of the responses were not in fact common, again supports the idea of individual differences in the perception of stress and the shared ones perhaps suggest that environment - school, in this case - is an important factor.

The responses from both Study Three and Study Four, were categorised into five groups, and compared. These categories were chosen as they seemed to describe the responses, but this was not a simple process. The first problem is deciding upon the categories. This has to be a subjective response and another person looking at the same responses may well use different categories. However, the categories chosen do equate well with the 'mediating' variable often cited in trying to understand why individuals responses are different from each other. These usually comprise of personal factors, both physical and emotional, the type and frequency of the event, behaviour and the relationships available to the individual. The second problem, once the categories had suggested themselves, was placing the responses in discrete categories. Many would have gone into several and again, this suggests that manipulating the data so comparisons can be made can result in the loss of much of its richness. However, the categorisation of the data did provide some interesting comparisons.

The comparison produced quite a disparity of results between the teachers' idea of stress and the children's. 48% of the responses from Study Three were categorised as 'external factors' compared to 12.5% in Study Four. 17% of the responses from Study Three were classified as 'emotional states or feelings', compared to 50% in Study Four. 16% of the responses in Study Three were classified as 'physical' and 'relationship', compared to 19% 'physical' and 6% 'relationship' in Study Four. Finally, 3% of the responses in Study Three were classified as 'behavioural', compared to 12.5% in Study Four.

This seems to suggest a difference in the perception of stress between the two groups. It may be that individuals within the group 'swayed' the results, but it does suggest that there may be a conceptual difference in the

way adolescents and adults view stress. As was discussed in Study Three, the developmental level of the child seems to affect the perception of events and the meaning that is ascribed to them, and thus their perception of stress. In various studies of illness in childhood, (Lazarus & Launier (1978), Lipowski (1970), Moos & Tsu (1977), O'Dougherty & Brown (1990)) it was found that the stress may not be inherent in the illness itself, but the meaning that is ascribed to it. Similarly, Arnold (1990) argues for the differences in children's ability to cope with stress being dependent upon developmental level:

" There is a hierarchical logical dependency in which coping ability depends upon emotional maturity, which depends upon cognitive and psychomotor abilities, which depend upon neurophysiological maturation. "(Pge 8)

The finding that 48% of responses in Study Three were categorised into 'external factors' could reflect the relative powerlessness and lack of control over life that might be felt by adolescents. This dependency on others could also be reflected in the differences in responses categorised as 'relationships'. The awareness of physical sensations associated with stress seemed well matched in both groups whereas behavioural responses were less acknowledged by the subjects in Study Three (although numerically the same).

17% of the responses from Study Three were classified as 'emotional states or feelings', compared to 50% in Study Four. The differences here are again very interesting and, perhaps, again highlight the differences in developmental stage. Lazarus *et al* (1980) argue that:

" Since few meaningful encounters, actions and thoughts occur without emotion, or at least the potential for it, the presence of emotion provides an important cue to the significance of a person's ongoing adaptational encounter with the environment. "(Pge 190)

Given that we accept this idea, we would expect any definition of stress to contain a high proportion of emotional description. In Study Four this happens, but not in Study Three. It could be that the group of children interviewed did not feel any emotions but it seems more likely that they

were unwilling to report them. It could be that because of their developmental stage they were concerned about peer group opinion. Peer and social pressure is highlighted in several studies of adolescent stress (Hendren (1990), van der Kolk (1985), Greenberg *et al* (1983)) and seems a more likely explanation for the considerable discrepancy in the results than one which suggests that adolescents feel less. They may have been unwilling to voice their experiences of emotions through fear of ridicule or appearing different. Arnold (1990) suggests that a prevalent fear for peer-conforming adolescents is one of being different from their peers.

The second task of this group of subjects was to identify what caused stress in children. It is interesting that in both this task and the following - to identify how children showed they were stressed - the respondents felt able to differentiate by year group. Even the two groups who answered the tasks in general terms acknowledged the developmental differences. As has been previously discussed, most work in this area has concentrated on the effect upon development of stress rather than the effect upon the perception of stress of the developmental stage of the child. Some studies are beginning to address this (Marcia (1981), Montremayor (1982)) and Compas and Phares (1991) through describing work done by others and themselves, focus on five possible factors associated with vulnerability to stress in children and adolescents. One of these factors is age or developmental level. The others are:

2. Coping styles and strategies
3. Gender and gender related personality characteristics
4. Social -cognitive factors including perceptions of personal competence
5. Stress and symptoms experienced by family members.

With reference to age and development they describe two studies of stress in children. One by members of their group (Wagner and Compas (in press)) and the other by Towbes, Cohen, and Glyshaw (1988). They conclude:

"Although research on the roles of gender and developmental level as sources of vulnerability to stress is at an early stage, the results of the two studies suggest that the number, intensity, and effects of stressful events may vary with age...."(Pge 118)

This view is supported in this study as teachers felt it to be meaningful to differentiate between age groups.

It is interesting to note that all the causes of stress identified by the teachers are 'out there', and not linked to the meaning that experiences have for the children or to their internal responses. This concurs with the stimulus response view of stress - that it is something inherent in the event which makes it stressful. As has been previously discussed, this approach does not seem to explain why different events are stressful for different children and the same event has a differing effect on different children. Perhaps the differences in individual meaning are acknowledged by the teachers but that in answering a general question they gave a general answer and again lost some of the richness of individual experience. If we compare this table (Table 6.3) with Table 6.1 where teachers were talking about their own stress, we can see that when particularising both external and internal 'events' are recognised and reported.

Some of the responses of the teachers seem to be linked to their own perceptions of stress than to the children's. Whilst it is very possible that children are stressed by 'N.C. Technology', 'Inspection', 'Pace of Change, National Curriculum', it seems possible that these are projections of the teachers own anxiety. A similar phenomena was found by Banez and Compas (1990) in their study of parents' and children's' daily stress and psychological symptoms. They found that the reports by the parents of children's internalising emotional/behavioural problems were correlated with the parents daily stressors and symptoms. The degree to which these variables related varied when children's self reports as opposed to the parent reports were used. This sets an interesting question, 'Are the parents/teachers projecting their stress onto the children and interpreting the children's response through this filter, or do the children respond with stress to their parents/teachers stress?' Which ever supposition is accepted, it does suggest that the environment that the child is part of is very important in the perception of stress.

The effect of teachers stress upon pupil's stress is not to be underestimated. Lowenstein (1991) shows how teacher stress can have a knock on effect upon the children:

" It is thought that some sources of stress affecting teachers are due to pressure placed on schools by social and political forces in the community.....This leads to emotional exhaustion, negative attitudes towards children and a loss of feeling of accomplishment on the job."(Pge 13)

John (1991) emphasises the importance of the relationship between teachers and pupils:

" We need to make teachers realise how significant they can be to the children, and how much influence they can have."(Pge 9)

This suggests that as well as the perception of the event being important, the environment in which the child operates must also be important. This links to Aylon's (1991) idea of the stone and the pond. The environment and other peoples experiences seem to have an effect upon a child's perception of stress. Several studies have investigated parental stress and its effect upon children (e.g. Caplan, 1976, Krohne and Rogner, 1982, Compas and Phares, 1991) .

Compas and Phares (1991) found that the children's response was dependant upon that of the adult. If the stress encountered by the adult was responded to by little or no apparent distress by the parent, the child perceived the event or events as relatively benign. If, however, the parent responded with symptoms of depression, anxiety or other signs of psychological distress, this seemed to cause the child to perceive a higher level of threat. In another study, Compas *et al* (1989) found that the perception of stress and the existence of emotional and behavioural problems was inter-related between family members. They investigated 211 children between 10 and 14 years of age and their parents (only two parent families were included) and found that:

"Children's emotional and behavioural problems were associated with fathers' psychological symptoms but not with mothers' symptoms. Both mothers' and fathers' symptoms were associated with their sons' daily stressors but girls' daily stressors were related only to their mothers' symptoms. Mothers' symptoms were associated with their husbands' daily hassles in families of young adolescent boys, and both parents' symptoms were

associated with their spouses' hassles in families of adolescent girls. "(Pge 550)

Although the usefulness of some of the measures used in these studies has been questioned in earlier discussions, all these findings suggest that the environment is important as well as the stress processes **between** individuals.

In comparing Table 6.3 with Table 5.1 from the previous study there was significant agreement between the things that teachers thought caused stress in children and things the children perceived as stressors. It is possible to see similar themes emerging despite the differences in ages being contemplated by the teachers and the age of the subjects in Study Three. Work pressure, individual teachers/subjects, relationships with parents, teachers and peers and social pressures all occur in both sets of responses. I feel this again reflects the position or environment that the children inhabit. Their world is made up of these things.

The third task the teachers were asked to complete was to describe how children showed they were suffering from stress. Again, the respondents felt able to differentiate by year group lending support to the arguments presented earlier about the effects of developmental level. The responses of the group also re-enforced the developmental differences with the children being observed to respond in a manner which matched their developmental level and perceived capabilities. An extreme example of this might be if a baby sensed that all was not well between his parents he might cry and be 'clingly'. An adolescent, faced with the same situation may, as suggested in Table 6.3 reveal their feelings within work, become anorexic, start bullying others. It seems that as children develop, the range of responses that are available to them develops with them. The most important suggestion in the perception of stress in children by other people is to notice 'uncharacteristic behaviour', uncharacteristic of the individual child and/or what you would expect at that developmental level.

6.6 Conclusions and Links to Other Studies

From this study that several interesting results have emerged. Firstly, 'stress' as a concept did seem to be meaningful to the teachers and, as in the

previous study, mainly a concept that applied to distress. Secondly, the environment that the children inhabit seems to be very important in their perception of stress. This also seems to be linked to the experiences of others around them. Thirdly, a conceptual difference between adult's perception of stress and adolescent perception seemed to be suggested. This seemed to be associated with both the meaning which was ascribed to the event, which in turn seemed to be dependent upon developmental level, and upon the capacity to be aware of complex emotional and behavioural responses and willingness to share these. These questions suggest further research areas. It seems important to look at stress in terms of environment e.g. do stresses become common to groups in similar environments. It also seems important to try and find out what shapes our perception of stress during our development.

The four preceding studies have produced some very rich material and it seems useful to pause for a moment here and to consider some of the relationships and developmental links which are emerging.

All the practical work in this study has been driven both by a return to the literature and a consideration of the implications from this, and by the results of the previous studies.

From the combination of both these stimuli, the need for a model of stress emerged which combined the transactional, phenomenological and psychodynamic. As has been discussed in Chapter Four, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model comes very close. It was argued that it would be strengthened by the addition of the McCann, Pearlman model (1990) in synthesis with the Rogerian idea of the person and Spinelli's (1994) idea of dissociated consciousness.

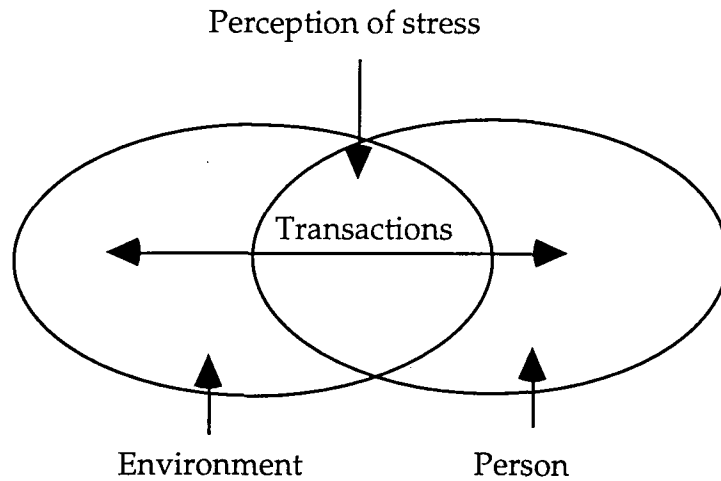


Figure 6.1

In the adapted definition, stress is viewed as a transaction or transactions between an individual and an event and/or environment that are perceived by that individual to have the potential to exceed the resources of that person or the social system. As well as being a transaction when the event occurs, the initial event may cause a change in the environment which feeds back to the original event as another stressful event and continues in a cyclical way. For example, if children's parents separate, the children may have to leave the family home, go to a new school, be denied access to one set of Grandparents. This would mean that the initial event - the separation - had set off a chain of other events perceived as stressful by the child. Also, there may be antecedents. The separation is unlikely to have been the first 'stress' that affected the children in such a situation. Harris-Hendricks *et al* (1993) argue, when writing of the environments of children whose parent has been murdered by the other, that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour.

The meaning that the event or environment has for the individual will be defined by the experiences of the individual that may or may not be available to the conscious mind. Although Lazarus describes his model as a cognitive transactional model, he and Folkman (1984) acknowledge the necessity for unconscious appraisal:

" The issue of lack of awareness or unconsciousness fits with our assertion that cognitive appraisal processes need not be conscious."

They argue that:

" Our position allows the concept of appraisal to be integrated with depth or psychoanalytic-type theories"

This position is one that seems to be supported both by the results of the previous studies, and also by my experience as a counsellor. It seems not always possible for the individual to be aware of an event. Sometimes the unconscious takes over and buries, masks or dissociates from the perception which leads to reactions that are not explicable in cognitive terms. For example a child who has been abused but has buried or dissociated from the memory suddenly being traumatised by being in a room with the same wall paper as the room where the abuse took place. The child could not remember what had happened, buried it, but reacted in an emotional way to a trigger. The complexity of these responses is captured by R. Gabriele S. Silten in "High Tower Crumbling" when she says:

" Images burning their way
out of my unconscious
Into my mind
Are these my memories
Or those of others?
Why can't I remember

They flash in front of me
And follow behind
That accompany me
Wherever I go
Yet there is a wall
Between them and me
And I can't remember"

Therefore the event or the environment may be internal or external, depending upon the 'reality' perceived by the individual. The experiences

of individuals and their unique meanings are stored in the consciousness in both accessible and inaccessible areas. This means that the individual may or may not be aware of the meaning of the event or environment that they have constructed. In terms of coping with stress, this suggests that the meaning that an individual ascribes to an event may need to be uncovered if the individual is to cope successfully. If the meaning can be accessed and explored, it may empower the individual with choice. The assumptions that cling to the meaning may then be accepted or challenged.

Individual construction of meaning is central to the ideas of symbolic interactionism, described in Chapter Three. This has developed from the work of the Chicago School of the 1920's and 1930's. One of the chief exponents of this idea was Mead (1934) and his views were popularised by Blumer. Blumer (1969) described the three central principles of symbolic interactionism as:

1. Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them.
2. This attribution of meaning to objects through symbols is a continuous process
3. Meaning-attribution is a product of social interaction in human society. (Woods, 1992, Pge 338)

The 'self' is viewed as

".... something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in a given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process The self is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience. "(Mead, 1934, Pge 135)

The view of 'self' held by symbolic interactionists is based upon 'social behaviourism' and is concerned with the inner experience of the individual and how the self arises within the social process. Woods (1992) argues that much activity is symbolic and involves the construction and interpretation of meanings, both between self and others and within self.

He also suggests that there is some non-symbolic, unreflective behaviour which is based upon instinct. He asserts that the most important symbols are verbal although they can be non-verbal. This view of the construction of meaning is supported by the results from the studies, especially Study Two.

Although it may be accepted that some of the meanings we construct for ourselves are socially constructed, others seem to arise solely from within the person. As has been argued previously, not all our past experiences are available to our conscious mind. Smail (1991) argues that the meanings we attribute to our 'reality' are formed before language and therefore would not be available to us as verbal symbols - symbols described by Woods (1992) as 'the most important'.

The 'unknowing' of the individual is also highlighted by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). They assert that:

"Appraisal is often taken to be a conscious, rationale and deliberate process. We have argued, however, that an individual may be unaware of any or all of the basic elements of an appraisal. A threat appraisal can arise without the person clearly knowing the values and goals that are evaluated as endangered, the internal or environmental factors that contribute to a sense of danger, or even that the threat has been appraised. This lack of awareness can result from the operation of defence mechanisms, or can be based on none defensive attentional processes." (Pge 52)

The studies in this thesis have also shown that the meaning that we attribute to an event or environment is constrained by our developmental level. For example a young child seems to believe that a toy has ceased to exist if it disappears from sight and another bereaved child believes that her father has nothing on the bottom of his feet when he died because 'his soul (sole) has gone to heaven'.

The results from the studies have also suggested that as well as it being important to consider the special developmental environments in which adolescents operate, it is also important to consider the social environment. This perspective does not deny the individual characteristics of stress perception, but extends the understanding to include factors which may be

shared in part or whole by other individuals. This is not, as Goffman (1959), suggests, to concentrate upon appearances because the individual reality is hidden. Rather it is to celebrate the individual in tandem with his/her humanity.

From the results of the studies, it seems that stress is related to certain needs such as the need to make meaning, the need to feel in control and the need to be loved. Needs are demands, goals, motivations or desires that provoke an individual to take action, and imply a deficit. Needs are both internal and external and are more than a linear causal relationship. Alnajjar (1991) argues for a system relationship between the adolescent and the larger content of nested systems within their environment. This is related to Gilmore's (1980) illustration of the multiple systems within which humans operate. We can view several needs as being nested within a single need. An example of this is the need suggested by Erikson (as described in Gros, 1987) of an adolescent to resolve his/her identity crisis. This need can be seen as being nested within the biological, social and psychological needs of the individual and the needs of the macro and micro society. Data from the previous studies can also be interpreted from this perspective. An example may be seen in the second study. All the negative words/phrases displayed in Table 3.4 that were used more than once may be associated with power or powerlessness, and may reflect both the adolescents' need to find an identity and a reflection of other needs not met. Adolescence is a time when the child is growing into an adult and is, perhaps, expected to behave in an adult, responsible way, without ever having experienced the 'power' to do so. Many schools and some homes, give teenagers no responsibility and yet expect them to respond in a responsible way. We tell them what to do and what we expect of them and punish them for being 'cheeky' if they question what is being asked of them. We allow them very little real power and thus it is to be expected that a lot of the negative words may be associated with struggle and need for identity.

Bored/boring was used the second most frequently in Study Two. Again, because this is a time of transition, perhaps boredom is to be expected. The pastimes of childhood are losing their appeal and the ones of adulthood not quite available. Also, being 'bored' can be seen as a way of regaining power. If you can be bored with what has been given to you, you can stamp your own individuality upon it by rejecting it. Also, adolescence may be

viewed as a time of ambivalent attitudes and boredom may be viewed as a silent rebellion and rejection of a world imposed upon us .

'Tired' may again be associated with the transition that takes place during this time. Huge mental, physical and emotional changes are taking place and this will undoubtedly take its toll. Equally, it may also be a reflection of a change in lifestyle - the need to indulge in 'adult' activities, late nights, parties etc.

Alnajjar (1990) argues that the term 'need' implies a deficit and suggests a system relationship between the adolescent and the larger environment of nested systems within which they live. He asserts that at each of these levels have deficits and capabilities and that each of the systems strive to achieve adaptation through reciprocal relationships. The model he describes seems essentially homeostatic. He proposes that balance is achieved when there is minimum discrepancy between demand and capabilities for meeting these demands. This would also seem to suggest some sort of hierarchy of needs.

The homeostatic approach suggests that individuals strive for balance - strive to balance the need with the resource. This concept is in contrast to Yerkes - Dodson law which states that individuals need an optimum level of arousal in order to function at their best. Below this is harmful as well as above this. This seems to suggest that an organism deliberately strives to be a little out of balance. Study Four reflected the different levels of arousal deemed 'good for us' by suggesting 'healthy in small doses'.

Hierarchical relationship between needs is described by Alnajjar (1990) as being dependent upon two basic personal factors. The 'ontological factor' beliefs held by the individual about reality, and the value or 'attitudinal' factor. The power or urgency of the need is dependent upon these factors. This view encapsulates the notion of perception being dependent upon individual meaning and reality and also can be incorporated into the concept of that individual also being a member of various systems which have realities and attitudes and values ascribed to and by them.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that certain needs must be met (to a greater or lesser extent) before the individual can move to meet the next level of needs. This does not incorporate the notion of personal factors

described above. The need at the base of Maslow's pyramid is the need to meet physical needs such as hunger and thirst. The experience of an anorexic does not support this as the first need to be satisfied. Perhaps his/her experience describes the need to self-actualise which Maslow would place at the top of the pyramid.

Masserman (1955) condenses what he considers the universal and ultimate needs of men and women everywhere into three:

Universal Physiological Needs; somatic health and manipulative skills necessary for survival

Universal Social Needs; interpersonal alliances essential to communal security

Universal Meta-Psychological Needs; transcendent faiths that mitigate existential concerns.

The notion that as humans we may share some universal needs and that those needs do not form a universal hierarchy but a personal one is supported by the data from the studies.

In conclusion, the data from the studies and the literature both combine to suggest a process of stress perception which may be seen in the Figure 6.2. Within this model which had been adapted from the Lazarus model, we see the person perceiving stress (which can be events or environment which need not have an external 'reality') through conscious and unconscious processes which shape the meaning the 'stress' has for the individual and constrained by developmental level. This results in responses which may be biological, behavioural, emotional or cognitive, or perhaps a combination of some or all. As has been suggested earlier, stress may not just be a single transaction but may be cyclical.

However, individuals are also engaged in transactions between themselves and their social systems, their families, their schools, their work, and also within the broader social framework of politics at national and universal levels. This suggests that it is important to view stress in a social context.

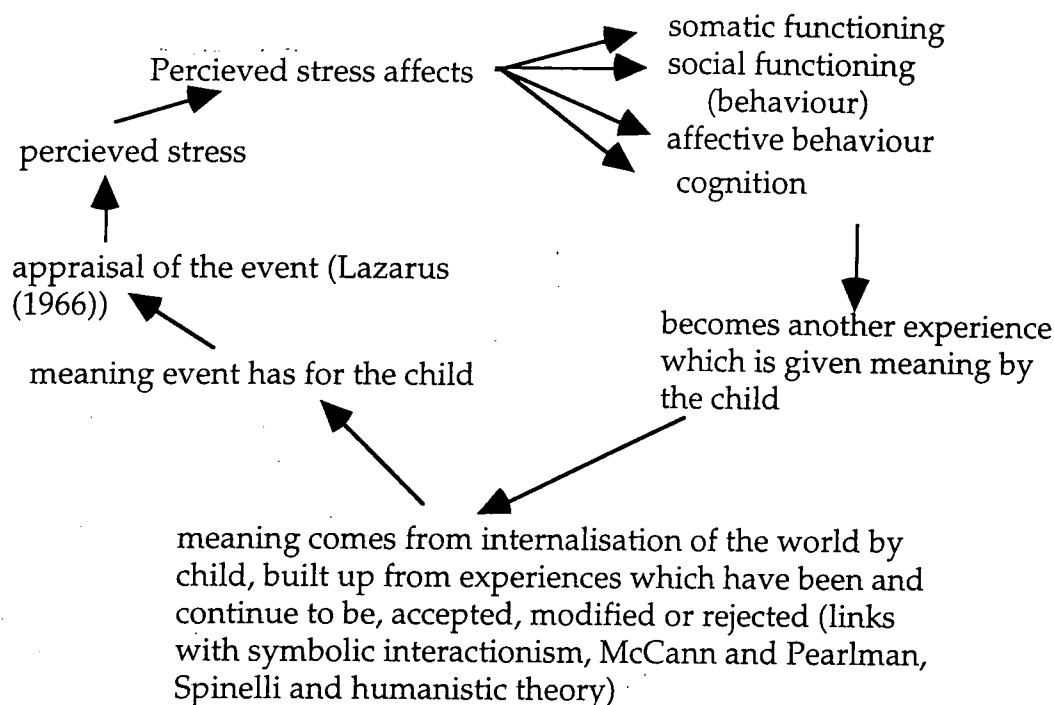


Figure 6.2

and in a way which attends to the multiple systems within which humans operate. Gilmore (1980) illustrates these systems thus:

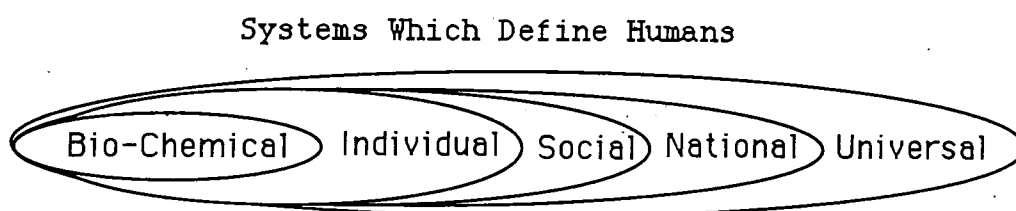


Figure 6.3

As Woods (1992) argues, it would seem necessary in a social system for individuals to:

"....imaginatively share each other's responses. This sharing and the mutual imbuing with meaning makes the behaviour truly social, as it would not be if it were a mere response." (Pge 342)

Thus, an individual operates within the constraints of both an internal and external environment. Lewin (1935) describes this as our "Assumptive World". It is made up of all we know or think we know and contains our interpretations of past experiences and projections for the future. It is the individuals 'reality'. The perception of stress for an individual results from transactions between the elements, within the parameters set by the conscious and unconscious internal processes.

Although each individual is special and their perceptions and assumptive worlds are uniquely theirs, as members of a cohort, some perceptions of 'reality' are shared. As members of the human race we share similar experiences - things such as birth, love, grief and death. As members of a society we share similar experiences - political history, societal myths and legends and, perhaps, broad educational experience. As members of a family we share similar experiences - family joys and sorrows, expectations and disappointments. Thus, although our assumptive words are uniquely ours, we can share some common 'knowledge'. Because of this, it is important to examine stress in adolescents in the light of historical and societal events e.g. the recession.

This could be incorporated in the transactional model of stress and be described thus:

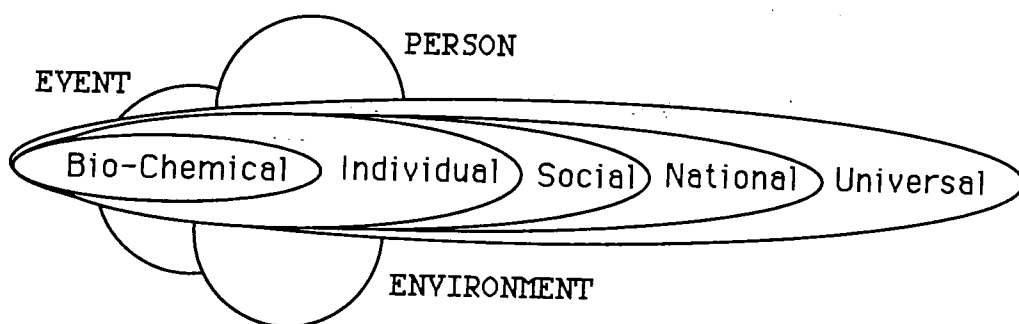


Figure 6.4

To conclude, the four studies that have been undertaken so far as part of this thesis, in combination with the literature, have allowed an adapted model to develop. This model has at its foundation a transactional view of stress similar to that described by Lazarus (1966) but extended to incorporate various social systems, developmental factors and a greater emphasis upon

unconscious processing. The following two studies seek to further inform the model.

The results from these previous studies led to a belief that this was only a partial picture and the 'knowledge' that these children had about stress was only being accessed at a conscious level and lost much richness because of this. This belief came initially from the methods of tenacity, intuition and personal direct experience of the world and led to the seeking of a way of knowing, first of all from authority in the form of literature, and secondly by scientific method.

The first three studies had shown that stress was a phenomena which was recognised by children, and that they had a vocabulary to describe it. The third study appeared to support Kelly's view of the individual as a scientist but that this had not captured the whole picture. From these results, combined with the literature, my view of the process of perception of stress had changed. At the start of the study it seemed as if stress came from 'outside', from an event which happened which provoked a response from the individual. Increasingly this did not seem to explain the results I was obtaining in the studies and gradually, through the practical work and the literature, came to accept the synthesised transactional model as argued by Lazarus and Folkman, (1984), McCann and Pearlman (1990), Rogers (1951) and Spinelli (1994).

The combination of the literature search and the studies led me to reform the model and to accept Lazarus's view that stress needs to be used as a generic term, rather than as a stimulus or response.

"It seems wise to use "stress" as a generic term for the whole area of problems that includes the stimuli producing stress reactions, the reactions themselves, and the various intervening processes. Thus we can speak of the field of stress, and mean the physiological, sociological, and psychological phenomena and their respective concepts. It could then include research and theory on group or individual disaster, physiological assault on tissues and the effects of this assault, disturbances or facilitation of adaptive functioning produced by conditions of deprivation, thwarting or the prospect of this, and the field of negatively toned emotions such as fear, anger, depression, despair, hopelessness,

and guilt. *Stress is not any one of these things; nor is it stimulus, response, or intervening variable, but rather a collective term for an area of study.*" (Lazarus (1966), Pge. 27)

Monat and Lazarus (1991) reinforce this by saying:

"....the stress arena refers to any event in which environmental demands, internal demands, or both *tax* or *exceed* the adaptive resources of an individual, social system, or tissue system." (Pge 3)

The results from the preceding studies do seem to support this view with the exception that stress is viewed as something negative and so perhaps *exceed* is the word that best describes these subjects view.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) emphasise the importance of appraisal. They see this appraisal as including two component processes - primary and secondary appraisal. Through primary appraisal the individual assesses the relevance of an encounter and whether it is benign -positive or stressful. In secondary appraisal the individual assesses their coping recourse and options and evaluates what they can do.

Folkman and Lazarus (1985) do recognise an affective element in their cognitive transactional model of the individuals perception of and reaction to stress . They view emotions as the products of the appraisal of the transactions with the environment and, as such, of tremendous diagnostic value. They argue that as appraisal changes, so do emotions.

This view suggests that emotions follow from cognition but this does not explain why some people find situations stressful without knowing why. An example of this could be a child who suddenly is covered in sweat whilst talking to a group of people. The child does not know what they are responding to but do feel 'stressed' An explanation of this experience may be found in the psychodynamic and Grovian literature.

The psychodynamic explanation of an experience such as that described above would be that it is not always possible for the individual to assimilate an event. Sometimes the unconscious takes over and buries or

masks the perception which leads reactions that are not explicable in cognitive terms.

So far, the model developed is one that is transactional, phenomenological but not yet incorporating practically any exploration of the psychodynamic or metaphor. Study Five was designed to explore 'unconscious' possibilities and some of the issues raised in the previous studies and in particular examined the 'history of stress'.

Chapter 7 - Study Five - Stress Exploration with University Students

7.1 Introduction

This practical work was driven both by a return to the literature and a consideration of the implications from this and by the results of the previous studies. The ideas and tenuous model building, discussed in the previous section, were the starting point for this next study. Several questions had been raised from previous studies and the aim of this practical work was to inform and evaluate the developing model. The purpose of this practical work was to see if there was evidence to support an extension of the Folkman Lazarus model to include elements of 'unconscious' knowing about stress and to test the 'new' model of stress that has been refined from the previous studies and the literature review.

The activities in this study were designed to examine relationships between the transactional view of stress described above, individual's perception of stress, whether the perception of stress had a history, and whether all perception was available to conscious awareness.

7.2 Method

Volunteers were asked for from a group of Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students (4) who were in my cross-curricular issues group and from a Bachelor of Arts fourth year (BA 4) group (5) who were completely unknown to me. These students were selected as they were available and represented a group of students with proven exam success and a group just about to take their finals. Both groups had their final Teaching Practice - a possible source of stress - looming.

The activities in this study were designed to examine relationships between the individual's perception of stress and the meanings they had developed over time. The first activity was designed both to elicit individual definitions of stress and a working definition for the practical work. In this, it was similar to the first tasks offered to the subjects in Studies Three and Four. The later exercises were an attempt to go beyond the completely conscious mind of the subjects and to see if it was possible to observe the contradictions suggested by

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as ways clinicians may infer the unconscious. These contradictions are:

"...between what is said and what is done, between what is said one moment and another, and between what is said and what is felt"(Pge 152)

The subjects were invited to fill in a questionnaire about stress experienced as if they were of school age. I did not specify the age, feeling that the subjects would then engage with a stressful memory that was appropriate to them in this situation. In order to aid them in this task I facilitated a relaxation and focusing exercise. It was hoped that by using this method it may be possible to uncover some of the 'images burning their way out of my unconscious'.

The third exercise was to complete a repertory grid but this time, another method of data gathering was introduced as another way of 'shining the flashlight'. Instead of using relationships as the elements, I split the subjects into two groups and asked one group to think of as many stressful experiences as they could (up to 12) that they had had over the last year and write them down as elements. The second group were asked to write as elements, specific situations which related to the following experiences:

1. glad, 2. sad, 3. threatened, 4. valued, 5. useless, 6. frustrated, 7. not valued
8. interested, 9. frightened, 10. in control, 11. happy, 12. anxious.

It was hoped by using this method of producing elements that clusters of meanings may emerge and to see, by using 'non stressful' situations in some of the elements, whether as Bannister (1962) suggests:

" ...psychological measures need to be "stimulus bound" i.e. operate in terms of assumed real characteristics in the stimuli?"(Pge 119)

The final exercise was designed to give the participants an opportunity to 'recover' themselves before rejoining the world, and was not included as part of the research.

Not all of the participants could stay to complete all of the tasks .

7.3 Ethical Issues

Increasingly I had been concerned by the ethical issues of using children as subjects in a study of this kind. I had concerns about the ethics of asking children because of the perceived danger of re-traumatising them by getting them to reflect on stressful incidents, re-experiencing painful events when they may be less able than adults to 'protect' themselves and also wondered if they would be in a position to ask for help if they felt they needed it. I also felt that the difference in perceived power may mean that children felt unable to refuse to take part in the study, I decided to use adult subjects. I had also become interested in the 'unconscious' aspects of the perception of stress and felt that adults, reflecting on childhood stressors may shed some light in this area. This was a different approach to the methodology and enabled me to inquire into 'history' which would, from a psychodynamic perspective, provide useful data. It enabled me to point the 'flashlight' into another previously dark area. Because of this, and weighing the fundamental ethical principles against each other, when the next study was planned, I used adult volunteers.

7.4 Results

The first task was to brainstorm in small groups ' Stress is.....'. The results can be seen in Table 7.1

Table 7.1

BA Ed - Group 1	BA Ed - Group 2	PGCE - Group
Inappropriate behaviour	Worry	Being out of control
Dissertation	Bad news	Being pressured
Feeling in chest and stomach	Problems	Having too much to do
Hysterics	Panic	A motivator
Response	Regression	Panic
Phoning	Exams	Inability to act due to having too many things to do
Equilibrium	Pressure	Accumulation of problems leading to the last straw!
Tension	Tension	Personal
Ill health	Not having enough time	e.g. a room full of people
Fear		e.g. being irritated by other people
Adrenaline		
Subconscious		
Destroys the balance		
Time		
Keeps you going		
Positive		
Awful		
Pressure		
Meeting expectations		

The results for each group were compared with each other and four 'definitions' were common to at least two of the groups. These are:

- Time/ Not having enough time
- Pressure/Pressure/Being pressured
- Problems/Accumulation of problems
- Panic/Panic

These 'definitions' were then compared Table 5.5 from Study Three. Three 'definitions' , time, pressure and problems, were common to both groups. It was also found that certain words matched with certain groups. These are :

- Overwork/too much to do (PGCE's)
- Tension (B.A. gp. 2)
- Exams (B.A. gp. 2)

The words from Study Five were then divided into the four groups of responses that are commonly linked with stress reactions. These are somatic, behavioural, affective and cognitive responses. These may be seen below in Table 7.2

Table 7.2

Somatic	Behavioural	Affective	Cognitive
Feeling in chest and stomach Ill health Adrenaline	Inappropriate behaviour Phoning Regression Inability to act due to having too many things to do	Hysterics Fear Worry Panic Pressure Tension Being out of control	Problems A motivator

The responses were organised into groups which described the person and the environment. These may be seen in Table 7.3 below.

Table 7.3

Environment	Person
Dissertation	Inappropriate behaviour
Phoning	Feeling in chest and stomach
Time	Hysterics
Pressure	Response
Meeting expectations	Equilibrium
Bad news	Tension
Problems	Ill health
Exams	Fear
Not having enough time	Adrenaline
Being pressured	Subconscious
Having too much to do	Destroys the balance
Accumulation of problems leading to the last straw!	Keeps you going
Personal e.g. a room full of people e.g. being irritated by other people	Positive
	Awful
	Worry
	Panic
	Regression
	Pressure
	Tension
	Being out of control
	A motivator
	Panic
	Inability to act due to having too many things to do

The second task that the groups were asked to engage in was to arrive at a group definition of stress. The results were as follows.

Group Definitions of Stress

BA Ed - Group 1

"Stress is a reaction/response to internal/external expectations [which may result in positive or negative]"

BA Ed - Group 2

"Stress is being under pressure"

PGCE - Group

"It is mental conflict"

The third task was in two parts. Firstly, the group were asked to work as a whole group to explain how stress is different from things like anxiety, fear, panic etc. The results may be seen in Table 7.4

Table 7.4

Stress is different because it's:		
Exhilarated	Anxiety	Irritable
Fear Pressured	Panic	grrable
Tension	Depressed	Hysterical
Confusion	Physical symptoms of nausea, lack of sleep, sleeping badly	Normal
Out of control		

The second task was to agree some statements about stress. These may be seen in Table 7.5 below.

Table 7.5

Feeling but no apparent cause	Sudden, instant reaction	Accumulation	Conflicting feelings
Lots of feelings	Stress is out of control, internal, but fear, anxiety is external	No boundaries	Moments of stress which pass
Can come out of blue	Vicious circle	Can be a motivator	Can be a minor trigger e.g. leaving a hat on the train

The group was then asked to split into two groups - BA (Ed) and PGCE, and asked to brainstorm 'Stress is caused by.....' The results may be seen in Table 7.6 below.

Table 7.6

BA Ed - Group 1 + Group 2	PGCE - Group
Work	Pretending, Posing
Exams	Future
Deadlines	Money
Frustration	Conflict of loyalties
Relationships	Loneliness
Families	Feeling inadequate
Too many things at once	Exams
Lack of chocolate, cigarettes, money, caffeine, alcohol	Interviews
Demands	Job hunting
Not understanding	Travel, esp. when it goes wrong
Unfamiliar situations	Blood
Tests	Injury
Wedding Plans	Accident
Choice	Being lost or losing someone
Decisions	Driving
Jobs	Parking
Priorities	Humiliation
Feeling Stupid	Relations
Meeting new people	Responsibilities
Meeting Expectations	
Time	
Lack of Empathy	

These causes were then compared to the words generated in Study Three (Table 5.1). Table 7.7 shows the words that are common to both samples.

Table 7.7

BA's and subjects from Study 3	PGCE's and subjects from Study 3
Work (homework)	Future
Exams	Money
Deadlines	Exams
Relationships	Job Hunting (Career)
Families(Parents)	Travel
Demands(expectations)	Blood} (Illness)
Jobs (Career)	Injury} (Sick, Heart problems)
Meeting Expectations (Expectations)	Driving
Time	Relations (Parents, brother)
	Responsibilities (Responsibility)

* () indicates what seems to be a close but not exact match

The group were then asked to fill in a questionnaire entitled "Personal History of Stress". The entire questionnaires may be found in Appendix C and will be discussed in the following section.

The next task was to describe a stressful experience from the point of view of an onlooker. These accounts may be found in Appendix C and will be discussed in the following section.

The final task was to complete a repertory grid. The subjects were divided into two groups. One group to think of as many stressful experiences as they could (up to 12) that they had had over the last year and write them down as elements. The second group were asked to write as elements specific situations which related to the following experiences:

1. glad, 2. sad, 3. threatened, 4. valued, 5. useless, 6. frustrated, 7. not valued
8. interested, 9. frightened, 10. in control, 11. happy, 12. anxious.

The three later tasks were designed to examine the relationships between how the individuals viewed their world and their perception of stress and to see if past experiences of stress was a meaningful contributory factor in the perception of stress. In order to do this, themes were pulled out from the rep grids, personal histories and third person accounts. These can be found in Table 7.8 below, and are discussed in the next chapter.

Table 7.8

Rep Grid	Personal History	3rd Person
KL		
1. Tension between the long and the short term 2. Concerns about others view of her 3. Feels as if she's in a state of transition at the moment 4. Very conscious of how other people see her 5. Not confident in making her own decisions	Gym competitions: 1. On show, 2. Judged on performance 3. For gymnastics, you have to be in control or you can't do it, equates to her fear of being out of control	1. Split between fear of failure and hope she will do well 2. Tension between fear of loosing control and exhilaration
CH		
1. Tensions between feeling she should be able to cope and feelings of inadequacy 2. Positive feelings of personal satisfaction, happiness and self worth 3. Issues of control (own locus) and dependency on others 4. Feelings of inadequacy and not being good at anything	1. Torn between love for family and peer acceptance 2. Close relationship with Mum destroyed by peers and CH's need for acceptance 3. Feels accepted and valued by family and compromised by what she feels she has to do/say to others for acceptance	1. Loss of assumptive world, fear, panic

J1		
1. Gets a lot of who she is from relationships with others 2. Reliant on others for sense of self - external locus of control	1. Friendship suddenly taken away for no reason 2. Fear of being deserted and left 3. Feels it inside her - could it be related to a desertion/loss before she had words to describe it? 4. Went to family and friends for reassurance	1. Upset, alone, no-one to help 2. Can't trust friends 3. Feels it's her fault 4. Cutting herself off (friendships don't last for ever)
B1		
1. Need to be in control but can only trust self 2. Reliant on views of others and expecting disapproval 3. Issues of trust 4. Poor self image - I'm bad	1. History of things over which she has no control and didn't understand e.g. friend's mum's death, change of school, Dad's illness 2. Feelings of guilt and being judged because she wanted a 'normal' Dad - at nine, her very normal feelings not accepted 3. Needs the approval of others but expects disapproval	1. Feels different, wants to be 'normal', unsure of 'right' way to feel 2. Needs acceptance but feels unacceptable
W1		
Not done	1. Vulnerable, small, exposed, not good enough 2. Moved house at five and felt similar emotions - tiny 3. Looks into those feelings of being exposed and found to be wanting - not good enough / accepted 3. Felt very small, unable to cope and seen not to cope	1. Appearance just right, eager to please, keen to get it right and inside a failure 2. Failed her parents and yet shiny and new
R1		
Not done	1. Anxious about disappointing someone/not living up to expectations 2. Pretends it's not important - opts out 3. Low self-image 4. Disappoint me/others	Not done

MS		
1. Issues of depth and superficiality - deep hurt and deep praise 2. Locus of control - imposition of others / having to conform v lack of direction 3. Issues of responsibility - others fault- my control / my fault - out of control 4. Skills v relationships 5. Seems to need others acceptance and yet angry she needs it	1. Felt exposed, powerless, isolated 2. Abandoned at boarding school at eight 3. Anger, loss, hurt, confusion	1. Feels excluded and different and proud and hurt and angry
CC		
1. Issues of control - seems stressful if it feels in control and out of her control 2. Connection between pain and loss of control - some things happen to you/some things you can choose 3. Period of transition - concerns for the future, nostalgia for the past, learning and growing from negative experiences 4. Fear of not doing well enough 5. Sense of loss - long term as compared to imminent trauma 6. Feeling of needing to take risks e.g. moving on, but the cost is hurting people 7. Issues of decisiveness	1. Felt happy and unworried until 7th form and found completion of the task difficult	1. Shame - covers it up
M1		
1. Control very important - no fear, feels adequate 2. Personal relationships - responsibility towards others/nothing to do with anyone else	1. Feels she lets people down - didn't do as well as expected 2. Lose control of situations e.g. doing wrong exam 3. Ultimate failure - dying - having to tell parents - let them down - totally responsible, even for own death	1. Hiding feelings 2. Fear of loss of control and panic

7.5 Key Findings

This study found that:

- there are some commonly perceived 'causes' of stress; the cohort effect, as well as individual 'causes'
- stress affects somatic and social functioning, affective behaviour and cognition
- stress exists as the result of a transaction between the person and the environment
- the stress is a construction generated from the meaning of the experience for the individual and the meaning is built up from previous experience

7.6 Discussion of Results

Discussion of the results from Study Four suggested that it seemed important to look at stress in terms of environment e.g. do stresses become common to groups in similar environments. Because of this, the subjects selected for Study Five were in a similar environment. They were students on a teacher training course at a local University. One group was from the final year of a four year Bachelor of Arts in Education (BA (Ed)) course and the other group were from a one year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course. They were seen to be similar in that they were both approaching their final teaching practice upon the successful completion of which depended the award of qualified teacher status. They were seen to be different in that the PGCE students had been shown to be successful academically - they were all graduates before taking the PGCE. The BA (Ed.)'s were seen to be still unproven academically at degree level as their final examination was still to come.

Data from the previous studies also suggested that an investigation of what shapes our perception of stress during our development would aid the exploration of adolescents' perception of stress. From the previous studies it seemed that adults subjects may be better able to share insights into their childhood stress than children. Partly, perhaps, as was discussed in Study Four, because they seemed unwilling to report emotional responses but also because adults have the advantage of being able to look back on their childhood and make connections whilst not being required to live it at the same time.

Adult subjects were also used for the ethical reasons and, far from weakening the study, seemed to offer insights from a different perspective and so added strength.

Table 7.1 shows the results of the first task - "Stress is...." and we can note that if we compare the tables, we find four 'definitions' common to at least two of the groups. These are:

Time/ Not having enough time
Pressure/Pressure/Being pressured
Problems/Accumulation of problems
Panic/Panic

If we compare these 'definitions' to the words elicited in a brainstorm of stress in Study Three, we find that time, pressure and problems are common to both samples as well as :

Overwork/too much to do (PGCE's)
Tension (B.A. gp. 2)
Exams (B.A. gp. 2)

This suggests that there are some commonly perceived 'causes' of stress as well as individual 'causes'. All the subjects in Study Three and Study Five had some form of external criteria to fulfil - Study Three subjects had 'A' levels coming up, BA (Ed)'s had teaching practice and examinations and the PGCE's had final teaching practice. This seems to be reflected in the common themes. It also supports the idea that the environment in which individuals see themselves also has an effect upon the perception of stress and endorses the idea from Study Four - that stresses become common to groups in similar environments. It is also interesting to note how many differences there are as well as similarities which confirms the view of stress being dependent upon individual meaning. Whilst there are commonly perceived stresses, individual meaning making seems a more important element in the perception of stress. This suggests that stress inventories which give scores to a variety of life events, have a limited usefulness. It also suggests that while the study of life events may be important, they cannot be reliable predictors of stress as individual perception is coloured by meaning making. Both these findings support two of the central principles of symbolic interactionism described by Blumer (1969):

1. Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them.
- and
2. Meaning attribution is a product of social interaction in human society (Woods, 1990, Pge 338)

The emerging model from this thesis suggests that stress affects somatic and social functioning, affective behaviour and cognition. As may be seen from Table 7.2, some of the 'definitions' very readily fit into these the four headings. This suggests that all these responses are an appropriate part of the process of perceiving stress, and that stress does indeed lead to these responses. An alternative explanation is that the responses fit into these categories because I want them to and that my subjective selecting of the data leads to a self-fulfilling prophesy. This may be the case but by trying to 'know' from a variety of 'ways of knowing', this may create the necessary objectivity.

One of the aims of this study was to begin to evaluate the 'emerging model'. As has been described earlier, this model is based upon the transactional model of stress described by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). They suggest that:

" In contrast to the unidirectional, static, antecedent-consequence model, the *transactional model* views the person and the environment in a dynamic, mutually reciprocal, bi-directional relationship. What is a consequence at Time 1 can become an antecedent at Time 2; and the cause can be either in the person or in the environment. "(Pge 293)

This means that the perception of stress exists as the result of the transaction of the individual with the environment but does not exist only in one element i.e. stress is not the environment nor the person but a result of the interaction and 'meaning making ' of the individual. Perception takes place in a moment of time and this 'meaning making' changes from moment to moment as a result of the transaction. As we have seen previously, this can be shown pictorially:

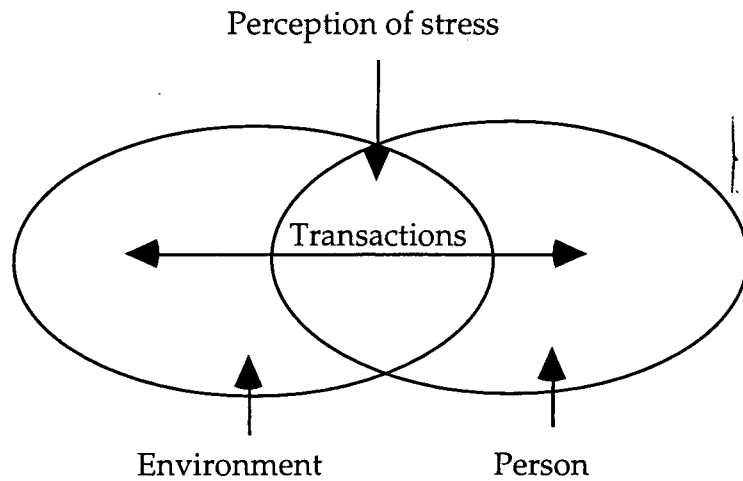


Figure 7.1

Stress is only perceived in the area where the transaction between the person and the environment makes the meaning. This can be illustrated if we consider a one year old child confronted by a man with a gun. Unless the child construes the situation as stressful, it is not perceived to be. This goes some way to explain why some events such as examinations are stressful for some and not for others. This also poses the question of whether a 'thing' is stressful because it exists and not because it is perceived as stressful. An example of this may be incest. On the face of it incest is always perceived as stressful - that something about the nature of the event makes it so. However, in certain cases it seems not to be perceived as such. Several articles in the popular press explore this (Kirsta, A. (1989) Strickland, S. (1993) Moore, A. (1992) Also, although sexual abuse of children is a crime in all countries, Fraser (1981) points out that in the USA:

" Like the child protection system, however, there is no common agreement among the states concerning what constitutes criminal sexual abuse. At a minimum it might be said that sexual intercourse between children and adults is a crime in every state. Beyond this point, the lines of demarcation between acceptable and non-acceptable sexual behaviour are often not clear. "(Pge 63)

This is not to deny the stressfulness of experiences like abuse and incest, but to challenge the view that it is something inherent in the event which makes it stressful. Perhaps there are no universal stressors, just as there may be no

moral absolutes. This does not suggest that we need to live in a state of disregard about the effect of events, rather, we may need to become more attuned to the effects that *any* event may have on us. It does not preclude us trying to manage our societies, both macro and micro, in a way that offers individuals opportunities to flourish.

In order to examine the Folkman/Lazarus premise from the data collected in this study, it should be possible to organise the data in terms of person and environment and the key to the stressfulness of the event should be in the meaning making. If we examine Table 7.3 we can see that it is possible to do this in a way that does not violate the nature of the phenomena and thus is a useful organiser (Miles and Hubberman (1984)). The elements can be divided between environment and person but in order to understand the stressful nature of the perception this has to be filtered through 'meaning making'. For example, 'meeting expectations' which appears in 'the environment' cannot exist as an entity unless some meaning is ascribed to it.

The second task of the group was to devise a definition of stress from the three groups. Each definition refutes 'the unidirectional, static antecedent-consequence model' dismissed by Folkman and Lazarus (1984) and suggests a more complex interplay between environment (external and internal) and person. The definitions were described in the results section of this chapter.

The first definition includes the positive element that may be present in stress as described in the Yerkes Dobson Law (1908) which is dependent upon the reaction or response of the individual.

The second definition is more vague and reflects the ambiguous nature of the stress phenomena while the third definition locates stress firmly in the perception.

The ambiguous nature of the stress phenomena has been an issue all through the study, both in terms of definition and the nature of stress. Several definitions have considered stress as a generic term (Lazarus (1966), Monet and Lazarus (1991)) while others have indicated a syndrome of responses (Anthony and Thibodeau (1979)). The third task that the subjects in this study were asked to undertake was to see if stress was a discrete concept or whether it was just another way of talking about related concepts such as anxiety, fear, panic. The subjects were able to see and express differences (see Table 7.4) which suggests

that both Lazarus's idea of a generic term, and Anthony and Thibodeau's idea of a syndrome of responses are valid. Stress does seem to be different from other concepts and to be a meaningful expression. It appears to be made up of a multitude of related concepts but to have its own identity. The complexity is captured by the description offered by the subjects in this study and shown in Table 7.4. Table 7.5, which depicts the groups agreed statements, also shows this. Stress to them can be:

1. Feeling but no apparent cause
2. Sudden, instant reaction
3. Accumulation
4. Conflicting feelings
5. Lots of feelings
6. Stress is out of control, internal, but fear, anxiety is external
7. No boundaries
8. Moments of stress which pass
9. Can come out of blue
10. Vicious circle
11. Can be a motivator
12. Can be a minor trigger e.g. leaving a hat on the train

The idea that 'Stress is out control, internal, but fear, anxiety is external' describes the meaning that is created out of the transaction with the person and environment and serves to highlight the discrete concept of stress that is in common usage.

The next task given to the group was to brainstorm in small groups - Stress is caused by..... The results can be seen in Table 7.6. Although the majority of causes seem to be in the environment, some seem to be in the person e.g. pretending, posing. This seems to reflect the same mixture that was evident in the first brainstorming of 'Stress is....' Similar conclusions may be drawn.

These causes were then compared to the words generated in Study Three (Table 5.1). Table 7.7 shows the words that are common to both samples. These findings suggest that environment does play a part in the perception of stress. Common themes seem to reflect similar experiences e.g. course work, examinations, relationships with families and job hunting. This implies that it could be useful to consider the 'common' stresses that appear from an environment and explore ways of helping individuals to find strategies to deal

with these. However, because of the general nature of the responses to this task, it is not possible to explore the individual meaning that the subjects have for each stress. For some, the stress of families could be that they feel they are carrying expectations, for others it could be that they feel they have to fight the prejudices of their families in order to succeed on the course. The same 'individual' meaning could be explored for each item generated and so it would seem to be mistaken to generalise too firmly from the data. It seems necessary to keep the phenomenological perspective firmly in mind.

The fifth task that the group were invited to do was to consider their own personal history of stress. The idea behind this activity was that events take on meanings for individuals and this meaning is the result of previous experience. This became very concrete for me when I ran a day course on bereavement. The participants seemed to gain greater understanding of their experience of loss through exploring their 'history'. On a personal level I found that some of my previously inexplicable behaviour and feelings around loss suddenly made much more sense. Because of this, I used a similar exercise with these subjects to see if similar insights occurred, and whether any clues to unconscious processing could be found.

The subjects were also asked to prepare a third person account of a stressful incident. This is based on Kelly's (1955) approach to discovering what people are about by inviting them to write a sketch. He describes this approach when giving instructions to Felix (1991):

" I should like you to write a character sketch of Felix, just as if he was a character in a play. Write it as it might be written by a friend who knew him very *intimately* and very *sympathetically* , perhaps better than anyone could know him. For example start out by saying, "Felix is" "(p242)

The instructions given to the subjects in this study were similar but the focus was on their experience of something they found stressful. The raw data from this is found in Appendix C.

The final task for this group was to complete the repertory grids.

These three later tasks were designed to examine the relationships between how the individuals viewed their world and their perception of stress and to

see if past experiences of stress was a meaningful contributory factor in the perception of stress. They were also examined for evidence of contradictions to see if the unconscious process could be revealed. In order to do this, themes were pulled out from the rep grids, personal histories and third person accounts. These can be found in Table 7.8.

The notion of pulling out of themes, to explore the proposition that perception of stress is related to the meaning that stress has for the individual and the proposition that the meaning of this is built up from childhood experience, may seem, at first sight, to be tautological. In order to combat this I attempted to use the humanistic counselling skills I use as a counsellor. I attempted to enter the subjects world and to stay in their frame of reference and to see if themes emerged. The methodological justification for this comes from Miles and Huberman (1984) where they suggest that data needs to be organised in a way that does not violate the nature of the phenomena and thus produces a useful organiser of the data. However, just wanting to do this doesn't make it so, it needs method. Charmaz (1990) advocates a constructivist version of grounded theory whereby:

"...qualitative researchers must have a *perspective* from which they seek actively to build their analyses, but without merely 'applying' it to new data, problems and contexts. Previously we (Henwood & Pidgeon (1992) have characterised this as a process of 'flip-flop' between data and interpretations. "(from Henwood and Pidgeon, 1995, Pge 117)

Grounded theory is described by Henwood and Pidgeon (1995) as having two meanings when it is associated with the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967):

" First, they evoke the notion of grounding the *theory* in experiences, accounts, and local contexts. In this sense the term is also used, rhetorically, by other researchers working within the qualitative paradigm, to signify the 'goodness' of a particular piece of research. Second, it is used to describe a method. This involves specific analytic strategies formulated for handling, and making sense of, initially ill-structured qualitative data." (Pge 116)

It is in the first sense that this study uses the term although study six goes onto use the term in the second sense.

The method used to organise this data comes from the phenomenological method as described by Spinelli (1989), and followed three steps - The Rule of Epoche, the rule of description and the rule of horizontalisation (the equalization rule.) Spinelli describes the rule of epoche as the:

"...rule (which) urges us to set aside our initial biases and prejudices of things, to suspend our expectations and assumptions, in short, *to bracket* all such temporarily and as far as possible so that we can focus on the primary data of our experience."(Pge 17)

Although this is a very difficult thing to attempt, I used the counselling skills that I have to try and approach the data in this way.

The second rule - the rule of description is described by Spinelli as having as its essence:

" Describe don't explain" (Pge 17)

Whilst the third rule of horizontalisation is explained by Spinelli as :

" Having stuck to an immediate experience which we seek to describe, this rule further urges us to avoid placing any hierarchies of significance or importance upon the items of our descriptions, and instead to treat each initially as having equal value or significance."(Pge 18)

Spinelli suggests that:

" in a sense, phenomenologists urge us to treat each bit of initial experience as if we have been given the task of piecing together some gigantic jigsaw puzzle without prior knowledge of what image the completed puzzle depicts."(Pge 19)

It was from this perspective that the data was approached. What follows is a discussion of examples of the themes which emerged.

From Subject M S's repertory grid I picked out the following themes:

1. Issues of depth and superficiality - deep hurt and deep praise

2. Locus of control/responsibility - others fault/my fault, my control/out of control
3. Skills /relationships
4. Seems to need the acceptance of others and yet angry at that need.

From her personal history:

1. Felt exposed, powerless and isolated
2. Abandoned at boarding school at 8.
3. Angry, hurt, lost, confusion.

From her third person report:

She felt excluded and different but proud and also hurt and angry at what she viewed as others superficiality.

For her elements she had:

Things that made her feel;

1. Glad = praise
2. Sad = quarrels
3. Threatened = people misusing authority
4. Valued = being asked to join in or help
5. Useless = ignorance (mine)
6. Frustrated = inability to change things - i.e. powerless
7. Not valued = being ignored
8. Interested = when things seem relevant
9. Frightened = flying, sailing, being lost
10. In control = when I have a plan
11. Happy = on a beach , nothing to do
12. Anxious - assignments

The connections between what she perceives as stressful, how she views the world and her experiences seem very powerful. As an eight year old she felt powerless and abandoned in a world where she felt ignored, rejected and superficially judged. She was hurt and angry, desperate for approval and not willing to pay the price of conformity that approval seemed to demand.

The material from subject J1 seem to show connections between the perception of stress and experiences that are stored in the unconscious or internalised.

From her rep grid I picked out the following themes:

1. Get a lot of her sense of who she is from others
2. External locus of control - reliant upon others for sense of self

From her personal history:

1. Friendships suddenly taken away for no reason
2. Fear of being deserted and left
3. Feels this feeling 'inside' herself
4. Goes to family and friends for reassurance

From her third person report:

Upset, alone, no-one to help, can't trust friends, feels it's her fault, cutting herself off before she gets hurt (friendships don't last forever)

For her elements she had:

Things that made her feel;

1. Glad = seeing my boyfriend
2. Sad = being ill
3. Threatened = seeing an ex friend
4. Valued = being welcome in someone's home
5. Useless = my mother's snapped Achilles' tendon
6. Frustrated = people not listening
7. Not valued = being ignored
8. Interested = talking about people/relationships
9. Frightened = being alone on a dark night
10. In control = talking about things I understand
11. Happy = seeing my friends
12. Anxious - exams

She was age 13 filling in the history of stress and first remember similar feelings at age 6.

Several issues that she seems concerned by are common to children who have suffered a loss, bereavement or desertion. Her assumptive world is fragile, she feels it's her fault and she protects herself by cutting off. She describes her feelings as being inside her and this could suggest an event which happened before she had words or an event whose meaning has been internalised.

All the subjects (with the exception of one, Subject C C) managed to identify similar feelings which suggests that meaning is built up from experience. The depth to which they managed to go is uncertain, but valuable connections seemed to be evident. Possibly, in a safer environment, this material could be enriched.

The task of looking for contradictions in order to infer unconscious process was a difficult one and was perhaps most suggested by Subject CC. She couldn't, or chose not to complete the personal history of stress. This may have been that she had a completely stress free childhood, or, that she has a healthy ability to protect herself. It is interesting to note that her repertory grid shows a connection between being out of control, pain and being in control and having choices. This may suggest that the choice not to produce a history of stress was a defence mechanism. The 'clue' seems to be in her saying 'I had a stress free childhood', and 'feeling pain when out of control'. It could be an indication of the contradiction suggested by Folkman and Lazarus (1984) "between what is said and what is felt".

7.7 Conclusions and Links to Other Studies

This data has produced a very rich source of material. The first two tasks seemed to support the notion that 'stress' is a concept that is readily understood and the definitions broadly supported the idea of it being about transactions between elements. The connections between the words in this study and Study Three are interesting and suggest an overlap of perceived stress between individuals which could relate to symbolic interactionism and also to the environment in which the subjects were placed. There were also connections between the description of stress in this study and those in the third and fourth studies and suggest an overlap of perceived stress between individuals which again could inform the newly developing model. The final tasks explored a different 'way of knowing' and suggested links between our previous experiences and our perception of stress. How we 'make meaning' from our experience is considered in Study Six.

The results from this study appear to support the theoretical models upon which the 'new' model is built, even though the material gathered could not possibly encompass the whole of an individuals history, or their individual phenomenology.

This broadening and developing of the concept of the nature of the problem led to the sixth and final study. Study Five left me wanting to re-examine the cognitive model to search for an explanation of seemingly 'unconscious' responses and drove me to the counselling literature. I wanted to see if my integrated view of the person and transactional model of stress could be one on which to base an explanation of the stress process.

Chapter 8 - Study 6 - Case Material from Two Volunteers

8.1 Introduction

The final piece of practical work came at the 'issue' from a different direction. I felt much of my intuitive knowledge about stress in children had come from my counselling work, and although I felt unable, for ethical reasons (see Chapter Two), to use client material, a counselling exploration of the issue seemed to offer a rich source of data. The aim of this study was to produce theoretical propositions directly from the data using a technique described more fully in the methodology section of this study. This was a different focus from the other studies in that the previous studies gathered data with a view to finding the answer to questions. This study gathered data and generated theoretical propositions from that data.

The results from the previous study suggested that the extended Folkman and Lazarus model was a useful way of understanding the perception of stress. The aim of the next study was to shine the 'flashlight' from another direction by utilising the 'way of knowing' suggested by Heppner *et al* (1992) - the method of learning through one's own experience of the world. My experience as a student counsellor informed my theories of how adolescents perceive stress, and, from my practice I had come to accept several tenets:

- a) the behaviour or event which had been identified by the client as the cause of the stress rarely, after exploration, remained. It often seemed that the behaviour was a 'learned' response to a stressful situation e.g. anorexia and bulimia, and that the suggested event e.g. exams, work, was a focus for some deeper stress, e.g. feelings of never being good enough to earn parental love and approval.
- b) that we have a need to make sense of our world and we do this at several different levels and both consciously and unconsciously. By this I mean that experiences that do not 'fit' with our idea of 'self' are dissociated from but that when other experiences trigger our 'unconscious'

knowledge, this can cause responses which seem to stem from the unconscious rather than the conscious e.g. feeling sick and worthless at the prospect of examinations tying into the unconscious or dissociated feeling of never having been good enough.

- c) that the 'cause' of stress often seemed to lie in childhood experiences and perceptions and that these, once triggered, again evoked the same childhood responses, behaviours, emotions and coping strategies. These experiences could be specific and/or diffuse.
- d) that the 'cause' could be found in a single event, several events, or in the emotional or physical environment that the child experienced
- e) that these 'causes' produced responses through an interaction or transaction between the child, the environment and the event (all at external and internal levels)
- f) that our experience of the event/events/ environment is internalised - i.e. experiences are taken in and made part of 'self' and used to inform our understanding of the world.
- g) that we continue to learn and interpret through our experiences throughout life.

These ideas did seem to support the theory that I had come to accept from the other 'ways of knowing' I had explored in this study. As well as evidence from the practical studies, theoretical models from counselling psychology also offered a framework of understanding. These are discussed in relation to each of the tenets.

The first is that:

the behaviour or event which had been identified by the client as the cause of the stress rarely, after exploration, remained.

The theoretical base for this tenet may be understood in terms of the 'new' cognitive, humanistic, dynamic, phenomenological model, which, as discussed in the 'Positivism versus Verstehen' section of this chapter, has implications for methodology. As Romanyshyn (1981) argues:

"It reawakens the observer to experienced reality, or to what Merleau-Ponty (1962) calls "the phenomenal field," that layer of living experience through which other people and things are first given to us" (p.57)"(Pge 5)

This can be understood in terms of the metaphorical character of reality. Romanyshyn (1981) goes on to suggest that:

"The see-er and seen form an indissoluble system, one gestalt, so that *what* is seen is always inextricably bound up with *how* one sees, that is, with the concrete anthropological conditions of the perceiver. Reality in its original metaphorical presentation is elusive. It shows itself to be this, and then, through that appearance, alludes to something other than what appears. ...A reality which is neither *in* us nor *in* the world but between the world and us in a *relation of experience* becomes a fact *in* the world of which we *have an experience* Experience is an awareness of the world precisely as it is a forgetfulness of itself, or there is, so to speak, a natural unconsciousness at the heart of experience.....*what is seen* ... is always in relation to a *way of seeing* ."(Pge 6)

This view conflicts to an extent with the phenomenological view of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). They argue that:

"Our phenomenology does not state that thinking something necessarily makes it so, or that every appraisal is subjective and private. Rather, people are normally constrained in what they perceive and appraise by what is actually the case, although their cognitions are not perfectly correlated with objective reality"(Pge 48)

They argue that a view of the environment 'as it is' interacts with what the individual wants, to produce the appraisal. Embedded in this view is the

notion of an objective reality. Evidence from my 'own experience of the world' suggests that reality is more metaphoric in character. A child's experience of being beaten by a parent has no 'as it is' but only a 'how it seems'. The seemingly objective element of physical pain is dependent upon the physiological make-up of the child - the number and sensitivity of nerves, the quality of the synaptic connections, the thickness of the skin - combined with the hardness of the hit - combined with the psychological meaning that the child constructs. Beating could be an indication for the child that they are 'bad', it could equally be viewed as a sign of caring or it could be a re-enforcement of the view that they are unlovable. There seems to be no objective reality either in the environment or in what the individual wants. Methodologically this leads to Verstehen.

The second tenet that:

we have a need to make sense of our world and we do this at several different levels and both consciously and unconsciously

seems to have its roots both in cognitive psychology from Kelly and in psychodynamic theory. As has been discussed previously, Kelly viewed individuals as scientists, always attempting to make sense of their world whilst psychodynamic theory stresses unconscious motivations. This is connected to the third tenet :

that the 'cause' of stress often seemed to lie in childhood experiences and perceptions and that once triggered again evoked the same childhood responses, behaviours, emotions and coping strategies.

as well as linking with the explanation of metaphoric reality.

The fourth tenet:

that the 'cause' could be found in a single event, several events, or in the emotional or physical environment that the child experienced

and fifth tenet:

that these 'causes' produced responses through an interaction or transaction between the child, the environment and the event (all at external and internal levels)

also may be explained in terms of an integrated psychodynamic, phenomenological, transactional, cognitive and metaphoric model earlier suggested.

The sixth tenet:

that our experience of the events/ environment is internalised

is phenomenological as well as psychodynamic and the final tenet:

that we continue to learn and interpret through our experiences throughout life.

also can be explained by the integrated model.

This combination of experience and theoretical basis led to the Study Six and again to a methodology which explored the subjective world of the subjects.

8.2 Methodology

In order to pursue these connections further I undertook two case studies. resulting counselling sessions were videoed, transcribed and subjected to grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

In the context of my previous arguments, this seemed an appropriate methodology as its aim is similar to that of a counselling interview in that the researcher is trying to gain an empathic understanding of the subject's frame of reference. As suggested by Heppner *et al* (1992)

"The qualitative interview itself is unstructured. with the researcher acting as a participant-observer..... The goal of the qualitative interview is to describe the essential meaning of the experience (Hoshmand, 1989). through 'grounded theory' whose purpose is to

systematically observe a phenomenon as a way of generating theory.
" (Pge 198)

Both the method and the goal of this methodology seemed appropriate to my study.

Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988), describe five steps in the conducting of a grounded theory investigation:

- (1) data collection,
- (2) categorisation,
- (3) memoing,
- (4) movement toward parsimony,
- (5) writing the theory.

These steps were followed and reported in the results chapter of this study.

8.3 Ethical Issues

Again, for the same ethical reasons which were discussed in Chapter Seven in relation to Study Five, I did not feel able to use children as clients, and as has been discussed in Chapter Two, I did not feel able to use existing client material to inform my research. However, because it was my counselling practice which informed some of my thinking on stress, this suggested using counselling clients as case studies. However, I felt uncomfortable with this for several reasons as discussed in Chapter Two.

These concerns were addressed by asking counselling students to volunteer. Two students volunteered and gave a free consent to our sessions being videoed and used in this way.

Because it was from counselling sessions that I felt my theory had been informed, it was decided to invite the volunteers, Victoria and Georgie (names changed) , to have an hours counselling session exploring some childhood stress. Because they were both counselling students I felt that they would have an understanding of this process and thus be able to choose their level of involvement. Also, as they were used to self-

exploration, they may be able to come up with some useful insights. This seemed to be the case.

8.4 Other Issues

One of my concerns before entering the sessions was that because I knew what I was hoping to find, I might manipulate the session so that I found it. I decided to try and guard against this by using the counselling skills I would normally use and not to try and structure the client's pathway through the material. I feel, looking at the transcripts, that on the whole this was achieved, although again this is very subjective !

My second concern was that one of the volunteers, Victoria, gave me a very clear message at the beginning of the session that she had to work later on in the day and did not want to be upset. I was aware of this at the beginning of the session, but, again by using counselling skills, I hope I followed where she led and didn't manipulate the session to either avoid or collide with things she didn't want to look at right then.

8.5 Practical Problems

The sessions were video taped, and although this provided a wealth of valuable information, unfortunately I am very softly spoken and this is accentuated when I am counselling. The client's seemed to have little difficulty hearing my interventions, but unfortunately the video equipment did! This has led to some gaps in the transcript and to a resolve, if there is a next time, to also use an audio recorder and to check it can pick up my intimate murmurs.

8.6 Results

The detailed results are described below, case by case, and in Appendix D. The method of analysis is explained in each section for the first case study.

8.6.1 Case 1 "Victoria"

After the subjects have been selected the first step in a grounded theory analysis is categorisation. This begins by the choice of a unit of analysis. Initially the choice of unit may be arbitrary, but once chosen, must remain consistent. In this study the unit of analysis chosen was each phrase of speech, both from the client and the counsellor. The step is to categorise the units into descriptive categories and Rennie *et al* (1988) advocate a process of 'open categorisation' which involves assigning the units to as many categories as possible until saturation occurs. The third step in this process is known as 'memoing' and is the:

" ...process of recording the ideas that occur to the researcher during the categorisation process. These memos serve as a record of the process of theory building and also serve to get the researcher to think about themes and patterns in the data. "
(Heppner *et al* (1992) (Pge 119)

The results of these processes may be seen in Appendix D.

The next step in the grounded theory approach is the move towards parsimony. This is described by Heppner *et al* (1992) thus:

" After the categories are saturated, the researcher focuses on the relationships among the categories. The researcher begins to search for 'central' categories. The researcher tries to develop a hierarchical structure with more central categories subsuming lower-level categories. The ultimate goal of this process is the identification of a "core" category that can explain the phenomenon in question. "(Pge 199)

The results of this process may be seen below.

8.6.2 Move Towards Parsimony

1. Refusal of food identified as a source of stress and cause of relationship difficulties with her sister.

2. Identification of other difficulties in relationship with family - e.g. being a 'son' for the father.
3. Move towards recognition of food refusal as being a weapon to fight the stress found in her environment - a way of getting more attention, of being special.
4. Different levels of explanation needed by her. Came into the session with an explanation. Went down various exploratory paths - some dead ends. As the exploration continued the depth of the explanation seemed deeper - another level.
5. Once the explanation seems to fit, it is then 'tried on for size' in other experiences and contexts.
6. Some areas seemed unreachable and were well defended by 'intellectual' theories - were some thing's being defended in an unconscious way ?
7. Stressful situations now relate to stress perceived as child e.g. rejection, lack of attention and are (or the temptation is there) coped with in the same manner - refusal of food.
8. Clues to unresolved issues seem to lie in ambivalence.
9. Children differ from adults in the way they see the world e.g. moral, power, thought etc. as well as in the options open to them because of their position in the world, family and society.

The final stage in this process is the generating of theoretical propositions. Rennie *et al* suggest that there are four criteria for judging the quality of the theoretical propositions and the report. Heppner *et al* describe these criteria as:

" First, it should be believable to the reader. Second, it should be comprehensive, accounting for all important parts of the phenomenon. Third, the theory should be inductively tied to the data. Finally the data should be applicable and heuristic. "(Pge 199)

The theoretical propositions generated from this study is described below and discussed in the next section.

8.6.3 Theoretical Propositions Generated

1. The symptom or way of dealing with stress can become the stressor e.g. Victoria identifies food refusal as a source of stress but also as a way of gaining the attention she needed.
2. The 'symptom' can be perceived to be the cause of other problems e.g. relationship to sister
3. The cause of the stress may not be a single 'event', but can be an 'environment', e.g. not getting enough attention, not being 'special' enough.
4. There seems to be a human need to 'make sense' of what is happening to and for us. The counselling process enables 'new' explanations and connections to be found at different levels as we gain new self-knowledge.
A diagram of how we gain and make sense of self knowledge during the counselling process may be represented as seen in Figure 10.1.
5. Once the 'new' meaning seems to fit, it's then 'tried on for size' in other experiences and contexts.
6. Material that is perceived unconsciously to be unacceptable e.g. as long as it looks all right, it is all right, never mind the nasty emotions, is intellectualised.
7. The experience of childhood stress defines the perception of, and the response to subsequent stress e.g. not getting enough attention leads to a wish to refuse food.
8. Clues to unresolved issues/stress seem to lie in ambivalence e.g. I have an eating disorder/ It's not serious; I could buy friends/ I don't need to; Physical appearance doesn't matter/ I have to be thin to be an individual and valued.

9. Children's experience of the world differs from adult's because of their different position, e.g. dependent, stage of development, different options in terms of behaviour.

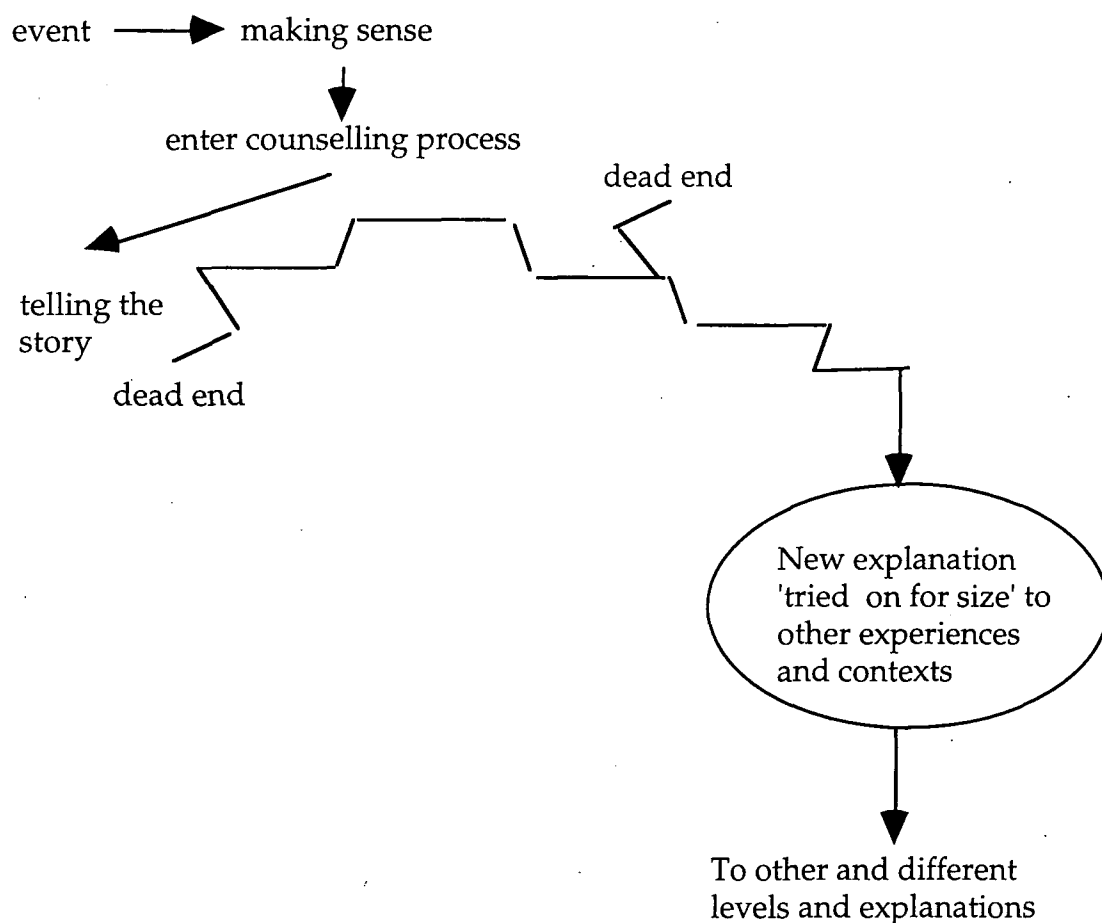


Figure 8.1

8.6.4 Case 2 "Georgie"

The following is the results from the second case study, organised in the same way as 'Victoria'

The results of categorisation and memoing for Georgie may be found in Appendix D.

8.6.5 Move Towards Parsimony

Below are the results of the move towards parsimony.

1. Begins by telling the story, adding more details.

2. Counsellor does a lot of trying to reach empathic understanding.
3. The stressful effects of Life Events seem not to come from the life events themselves, but from the consequences (see memo 48)
4. When she's telling the story, it has an almost child-like quality, as if she's trapped as the little girl she was when it happened. Also, the presence of such a lot of reported speech may indicate she is trapped - the past has never moved on to the present and is, in a sense, still the present.
5. She projects her powerless anger and resentment at those around her (memo 22)
6. No matter how much I tried to follow the client's agenda, I do occasionally slip in my own (e.g. Memo 29)
7. Her powerlessness to control events seem to have led her to need to be very controlled in as much of the rest of her life as possible. e.g. diabetes.
8. Lots of loss - leaving familiar , grandparents, safe and known world - never acknowledged - had to look on the bright side ?
9. 'Other people' seem very powerful - internalisation of her own perceived lack of power?
10. Feels she can talk **about** her feelings but they are frozen - can't **experience** them.
11. It seems to be very important to her to be uncritical of her parents. She seems to need to be loyal towards them.
12. Reports very deep feelings e.g. terror , and re memo 72, I wonder if she felt part of herself was dying during the move.
13. Emotion-focused coping seemed to have been encouraged but this seems to have led to denial which seems to have kept experiences alive but 'stuck'.

14. She seems to have lost her ability to consider the world a safe place - disaster is waiting to happen unless control is very tightly held.
15. Her 'safe place' is geographically located - she doesn't seem to have any sense of internal control or safety.
16. The counselling process seems to have been a journey to a different place that both the counsellor and client engaged in.

8.6.6 Theoretical Propositions Generated

1. Client moves from 'telling the story' and exploration but initially cannot reach understanding or action if the original trauma has not been integrated into the self concept.
2. The counsellor uses the struggle for empathic understanding to facilitate the exploration.
3. Childhood trauma defines the perception and responses to subsequent stress.
4. Childhood trauma can 'freeze' the child in the moment before the trauma and thus 'trap' the perception in that moment of time.
5. Projection seems to be an important defence mechanism.
6. It is impossible for a counsellor (or at least for me !) to be completely 'agenda-less'.
7. The perceived loss of control during trauma seems to lead to an exaggerated need to control virtually everything.
8. The experience of a traumatic transition leads to the collapse of the assumptive world.
9. The pressure to focus on an emotion -focused form of coping seems to lock in feelings of loss and lead to denial.

10. The need for parental love is more powerful than our organismic valuing.
11. Internalisation of powerlessness seems to occur when events happen outside the persons' control, leading to an external locus of control.
12. The experience of terror attacks the 'core' of our personalities and leads to avoiding behaviours and vulnerability.
13. The experience of trauma defines the 'place of safety' e.g. a geographic move leads to the need for a geographic place of safety.
14. The counselling process produces a 'journey ' both for the client and the counsellor to a different level of consciousness.

8.7 Key Findings

This study found that:

- the symptom of stress can become the stressor and can be perceived to be the cause of other problems
- early stressful experience can be linked to subsequent disorders and to bodily changes which, in turn, may influence later functioning and can lead to altered behaviour which can lead to an overt disorder some years later
- the experience of childhood stress defines the perception of and response to subsequent stress
- stress can be related to perceived unmet needs and there seems to be a human need to 'make sense' of our experience and the need for parental love is more powerful than our organismic valuing.
- the cause of stress may be found in the transaction between a single event, several events, or in the emotional and or physical environment the child experiences and the child

- stressful material that is perceived unconsciously to be unacceptable is intellectualised and the clues to unresolved issues/stress lie in ambivalence
- a child's experience of and response to stress differs from an adult's because of their different power positions and developmental level
- when exploring childhood stress, the counselling process enables new explanations and connections to be found at different levels as we gain new self knowledge and once the 'new' meaning emerges, it is 'tried on for size' in other experiences and contexts
- that childhood stressful trauma defines the perception and responses to subsequent stress and can 'freeze' the child in the moment before the trauma and thus 'trap' the perception in that moment of time. It appears that the perceived loss of control during stressful trauma can seem to lead to an exaggerated need to control virtually everything.
- that projection seems to be an important defence mechanism related to coping with stress and that the pressure to focus on an emotion -focused form of coping seems to lock in feelings of loss and lead to denial.
- that the experience of a stressful and traumatic transition leads to the collapse of the assumptive world and that internalisation of powerlessness seems to occur when events happen outside the persons' control, leading to an external locus of control.
- that the experience of terror attacks the 'core' of our personalities and leads to avoiding behaviours and vulnerability and that the experience of trauma defines the 'place of safety' e.g. a geographic move leads to the need for a geographic place of safety.

8.8 Discussion of Results

The theoretical propositions which were generated from this study may be viewed as triangulation in the sense that McLeod (1994) uses the term. He describes the concept as one which in qualitative research:

"...refers to a more holistic comparison of multiple perspectives (Denzin (1978), based on the informed judgement of the researcher rather than on the application of statistical techniques."(Pge 181)

The theoretical propositions generated from this perspective may be viewed through the filter of the previous studies.

The theoretical propositions generated also need to be judged according to the criteria suggested by Rennie *et al*, and described by Heppner *et al* (1992) as:

" First, it should be believable to the reader. Second, it should be comprehensive, accounting for all important parts of the phenomenon. Third, the theory should be inductively tied to the data. Finally the data should be applicable and heuristic. "(Pge 199)

What I intend to do in this discussion is to consider the theoretical propositions generated by each subject separately and in relation to previous studies, and then to consider the issues raised by the criteria suggested by Rennie *et al* at the end of this section and further in the conclusion to this thesis.

The subjects who volunteered to take part in this study could be viewed as being on opposite ends of a control continuum. The first, Victoria, could be viewed as 'out of control' in terms of her eating. She describes herself as having been anorexic - unable to allow herself enough to eat. The other subject, Georgie, could be viewed as being tightly controlled, to the extent that at the time of the session she was managing to control her diabetes without the help of insulin. On the face of it, these two subjects should have generated few common theoretical propositions but the results did

show a remarkable similarity in the way that findings from the previous studies could be applicable to them.

From the work with Victoria, I generated nine theoretical propositions. The first was that the symptom, or way of dealing with the stressor can become the stressor, e.g. Victoria identifying food refusal as a source of stress and also sees it as a way of gaining the attention which she needed. This relates very strongly to the first two tenets that I offered in the introduction to this study as a motivating factor for this type of exploration. Namely that:

the behaviour or event which had been identified by the client as the cause of the stress rarely, after exploration, remained.

and that:

that the 'cause' of stress often seemed to lie in childhood experiences and perceptions and that once triggered again evoked the same childhood responses, behaviours, emotions and coping strategies.

It also relates to Rutter's (1983) five propositions about how early experience may be linked to subsequent disorders. Victoria's experience of an environment that did not seem to meet her need for attention and specialness did seem to lead to a disorder at the time which persisted even when outside that environment. She acknowledges the impulse in the present to refuse food in order to gain attention.

She also talks about the idea of being 'thin' and 'tiny' as a way of being acceptable which relates to Rutter's second proposition that early events can lead to bodily changes which in turn may influence later functioning.

The third proposition that early events can lead to altered behaviour which takes the form of an overt disorder some years later can be applied to her anorexia. She also seems to feel that her family's attitude to food predisposed her to a disorder which relates to Rutter's fourth proposition.

Her early experiences did not seem to operate by protecting her from disorders in later life in the presence of later stressful events, but may have predisposed her coping in this direction. This relates to Rutter's fifth proposition.

The stress that Victoria experienced as a child seems to be related to a need not being met - that of not being 'special' enough. This relates to the findings from the other studies in this exploration which have been discussed in section 6.6. An exploration for why this none meeting of needs can result in stress being perceived may be found in most major counselling psychology. A cognitive explanation could be that homeostasis was not achieved, a psychoanalytic explanation could be that the experience was unacceptable to the unconscious and was kept out of the conscious mind through the employment of defence mechanisms. A humanistic explanation may be found in the thwarting by experience of the individuals organismic need to be valued. It would be possible to argue that each of these are 'true' explanations in some sense but the important finding of this study seems to be that the perception of stress is defined by experience. The reason for this appears to have elements drawn from all the major strands of psychology and that the 'truth' lies in a synthesis of these.

The second theoretical proposition generated from the work with Victoria was that the 'symptom' can be perceived to be the cause of other problems e.g. the relationship with her sister. This again relates to the first tenet discussed in the earlier in this chapter and to Rutter's five propositions. Victoria's relationship with her sister seems to have been shaped by both the competition for attention and her idea of body image and acceptability. It appears to swing between being a compensatory relationship - making her pretty clothes to make up for her bodily appearance, to feelings of resentment when the sister becomes the focus for family attention. She also wants people to 'see' beyond her sister's outward appearance to the valuable inside. This could be seen as a projection onto her sister of her need to be accepted.

The third theoretical proposition generated is to do with the importance of environment - that the 'cause' of stress may not be an 'event' but an 'environment' - not being special enough. It also relates to the fourth and fifth tenets that I have come to believe from my counselling work - that:

the 'cause' could be found in a single event, several events, or in the emotional or physical environment that the child experienced

and:

these 'causes' produced responses through an interaction or transaction between the child, the environment and the event (all at external and internal levels)

Victoria did not pinpoint an actual event as the cause of her childhood distress, but talked of her environment. This relates to the findings of Study Four which suggested that the environment in which the child is a part is very important to the perception of stress. It is also an important finding in terms of evaluating the importance of life events. If Victoria had been asked to fill in a stress questionnaire which focused upon life events, it is unlikely that she would have gained a very high rating for stress levels. However, she did perceive her eating disorder to be the result of childhood stress and the experience she had of her environment does seem to have defined her current perceptions of stressful experiences.

The fourth theoretical proposition generated from the work with Victoria was that there seems to be a human need to 'make sense' of our experiences and that the counselling process enables 'new' explanations and connections to be found at different levels as we gain new self-knowledge. This supports one of the tenets that I have come to accept through my counselling work - that we have a need to make sense of our world and we do this at several different levels and both consciously and unconsciously. We can make sense of this process in humanistic terms by considering introjects. It seems appropriate to consider this explanation as a humanistic, person centred counselling approach was used in gathering this data. An introject may be seen as something very powerful in our environment that we assimilate as being part of us. We take the whole package, including some very conflicting material, and experiences that are not compatible with our need for organismic valuing are denied. If a counselling relationship can be offered in which the client can explore themselves and their experiences and still be

valued, then they are able to challenge their introjections and become aware of experiences that they denied. This is what appeared to be happening for Victoria although as Rogers (1942) cautions, if we have any regard for the complexities of human experience we need to be aware that it is unlikely that we could facilitate an individual to re-organise their life structure in an hour ! This is not to negate the powerfulness of what can happen in an hour and he goes on to say that we can offer :

" a very definite type of clarifying help, even in a short space of time. That we can enable the client to express his problems and feelings freely and to leave with a clearer recognition of the issues with which he is faced."

The production of this thesis can be seen to mirror this process (though not in time scale !) in that a meaning about how stress was perceived has been subjected to challenge throughout the process and as new information and experience has been assimilated, new 'truths' emerge.

The fifth theoretical proposition generated is connected to the above experience and is that once the 'new' meaning seems to fit with the experience, it is then 'tried on for size' in other experiences and contexts. It connects to the tenet put forward in the methodology chapter - that we continue to learn and interpret through our experiences throughout life.

The sixth theoretical proposition generated was that material that is perceived unconsciously to be unacceptable is intellectualised e.g. as long as it looks all right it is all right, never mind the hidden, nasty emotions. This ties in with the idea of introjects as well as the psychodynamic idea of unacceptable material being kept from the conscious mind by the defence mechanisms or dissociation. It can also provide a clue that unconscious processes are engaged in the perception of stress through Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) idea of contradictions between what is said and felt. Victoria says people should be valued for who they are irrespective of physical appearance and she feels that to be thin and tiny is to be acceptable. It also helps us to understand why we may be unable to explain why we feel stressed but only know that we do. It relates to one of the tenets put forward earlier- that our experience of the event/events/ environment is internalised

The seventh theoretical proposition - the experience of childhood stress defines the perception of and response to subsequent stress - supports the findings from Study Three where the perception of stress seemed dependent upon previous experience of stress and coping. Lovell's (1992) definition of learning as being rooted in past experience also supports this view.

Again, the eighth theoretical proposition - that clues to unresolved issues/stresses seem to lie in ambivalence e.g. I have an eating disorder / it's not serious, I could buy friends/ I don't need to, Physical appearance doesn't matter/ I have to be thin to be an individual and valued, all give clues to contradictions which could infer unconscious process. Experience could be seen to be denied or dissociated because it was unacceptable.

The final theoretical proposition generated from the work with Victoria supports the findings from Studies Three and Four that a child's experience of and response to stress differs from an adult's because of their different positions. From Victoria's experience there were differences because of being dependent, different options in terms of behaviour and differences in the possibilities of action which are open to an adult and a child.

Work with Georgie generated fourteen theoretical propositions. The first - that the client moves from 'telling the story' to exploration but initially cannot reach understanding or action if the original trauma has not been integrated into the self-concept - has links with the idea of what can be expected in an hour. I felt, as a counsellor, quite 'stuck' with Georgie at times, as if we were going over the same material at the same level but from different perspectives. It could be that I was not offering an environment which was safe enough for her but it felt more as if my stuckness was a reflection of hers and relates to the fourth theoretical proposition generated that childhood trauma can 'freeze' the child in the moment before the trauma and thus 'trap' the perception in that moment of time. Georgie had been on a counselling course for three months and had had opportunities to explore her feelings about this subject on numerous occasions and had had 'formal' counselling. This leads me to feel that it wasn't the environment that we created that led to the stuckness, but the trauma of the event. She also used a lot of reported speech in her 'telling' which suggested that the events were not in the past but in the

here and now. Her tone of voice was also reminiscent of a little girl. This lead me to look for explanations of her experience away from mainstream counselling psychology and towards the work of David Groves. Unfortunately he has published little but I have been involved in various training session run by him and about his theories. Cook (1994) describes what is thought to happen when a child is faced with a stressful event which they cannot assimilate as being a residual memory which :

" ...can be thought of as a child with feelings and an environment, trapped at a point in time ($t - 1$) immediately before the frightening event (t), and therefore unaware of the actual child's survival after the event ($t + 1$). " (Pge 3)

He goes onto suggest that:

" For a child to be present there needs to be an event which is perceived as threatening by the child at that stage in its development." Such events may range from life threatening incidents like attacks or accidents, to incidents which attack the child's sense of self, like a rebuke or display of anger from an adult" (Pge 3)

Interestingly, in Georgie's case, her sense of self seems to have been attacked, not by the event of moving, but by the consequences of that event - losing her grandparents, losing her sense of who she was, losing her sense of being in control of her environment. The trauma -t- seems to be made up of a series of traumas over time and perhaps resulted in a little bit of the child being trapped just before each one.

This explanation is, of course, a metaphor in its own right and the 'truth' cannot be scientifically proven, but as Siegelman (1990) suggests metaphor plays a key role in developing new understandings:

"....the main way in which we develop new ideas is through the metaphoric process. Essentially that process entails describing one thing in terms of another so that from this comparison a "third thing", a new idea is born." (Pge 4)

My experience of being with Georgie so resonated with the idea of a trapped child, that understanding came through the new ideas of Grove. It allowed my experience to be incorporated into my growing sense of what perceiving stress may be about.

The second theoretical proposition generated was that the counsellor used the struggle for empathic understanding to facilitate the exploration of the client. I certainly tried to do this believing that this would be the key to any facilitated exploration. On the surface this seems to have little to do with the focus of this study - the exploration of children's perception of stress but has huge methodological implications. By using this method it suggests that instead of denying our subjective world we should harness it in order to develop our understandings of other people's experience. If I had used a scientific method - using material that was observable and measurable, I believe I could never have truly entered the client's world and thus would not have been able to help her explore her experiences, or to have come to an understanding of how she might perceive stress. McLeod (1994) argues that person-centred theory suggests that collaboration will be more effective when the relationship is established which is characterised by empathy, acceptance and congruence - the 'core conditions'.

The third theoretical proposition generated - that childhood trauma defines the perception of and response to subsequent stress - was also generated by the work with Victoria. It is supported by the findings of Study Three and, in Georgie's case, has led to her perceiving as stressful events which are out of her control. She experiences similar responses to those she described in relation to her move and only feels 'safe' if things are under control - to the extent that she never drinks excessively because this would be out of control and has very good control of her diabetes.

The fourth theoretical proposition has been discussed in relation to the first and the fifth theoretical proposition again suggests unconscious processing - projection seems an important defence mechanism. Georgie recognised that she projected a lot of her feelings of anger onto those around her. According to psycho dynamic theory, in order to be effective, a defence mechanism has to be unconscious. In Georgie's case she seemed to be very aware of what she was doing. This may be with the benefit of hindsight or she may have been aware of what she was doing at the time and it was how she resolved her need to express her rage and still retain the approval of those around

her. Alternatively it could be explained in terms of dissociated or divided consciousness. (Spinelli, 1994) In either case, it does seem to offer her a target for her powerful feelings and would seem to be an important element in coping with stress.

The sixth theoretical proposition - that it is impossible for the counsellor to be completely 'agenda less' has implications for this approach to research. Glaser and Strauss (1967) advise researchers to suspend all theoretical notions when collecting and inspecting data, and this would suggest that in this case the counsellor should be as agenda-less as possible. Although I tried to do this as much as possible (and there is an argument that every intervention or non intervention by the counsellor sets the agenda) there were times where I caught myself 'testing' out theories. However, because this was done in a very tentative manner, I hope it did not corrupt the data but rather led to a greater understanding of the client's phenomenological world. The aim of phenomenological research is, in and through consciousness, to study the world as it appears to us. (Bullington and Karlson, 1984)

Because of the relationship that we had created between us I feel that it was possible to offer my hunches in a way that could either be accepted or rejected by the client.

The seventh theoretical proposition - that the perceived loss of control during trauma seeming to lead to an exaggerated need to control virtually everything- has links with Bandura's notion (Bandura and Walters (1963) that the ability to feel in control of the situation is the primary determinant of coping, defensive and anxious behaviours. Many of the previous studies have contained hints that control is important in the perception of stress, both because stress is often associated with feelings of being out of control, and also because we seem to need to feel in control of our lives. Uncertainty is very hard to live with. However, feeling in control of uncontrollable events can also lead to feelings of responsibility or blame and Taylor (1991) suggests:

" ...the potential benefits of the concept of psychological control and interventions based on it must be tempered by knowledge of its potential psychological costs as well."(Pge 75)

Georgie had a very highly developed need for control. She seemed to strive towards an inner locus of control, defined by Folkman and Lazarus (1984) as:

" the belief that events are contingent upon one's own behaviour"(Page 66)

whilst actually believing things were dangerous once out of her control. She felt stressed when she felt things were out of control, for example when her parents went on holiday and she couldn't contact them. She always imagines the worse and feels dreadful. Victoria's relationship with food could be viewed as a form of control taking. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that an attempt to control a situation is an attempt to cope with it, whether by changing the meaning of the situation, altering the environment and/or managing one's behaviours and emotions.

This also links with the idea that the perception of stress is dependent upon previous experience of stress and coping. Georgie's move was out of her control and she seems to have linked the perception of other stresses to this lack of control. This seems to have led to an internalisation of the feeling of powerlessness and an external locus of control. This is a term conceived by Rotter (1966) and defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as:

"...the belief that events are not contingent upon one's actions, but upon luck, chance, fate, or powerful others" (Page 66)

This was the eleventh theoretical proposition generated and developed out of Georgie's seeming dependence upon external figures, such as her parents, in knowing how to act and feel. In her case, the ninth theoretical proposition generated seems pertinent here. This was that the pressure to focus upon emotion-focused coping seemed to link in the feelings of loss leading to denial. Her family seemed to concentrate on coping with the emotions in a situation they felt to be out of control. The father had to move jobs and the family had to follow. The way to cope was to 'look on the bright side' and to minimise the losses. This would seem to be a 'good fit' in the sense that this term is used by Forsythe and Compas (1987) but did seem to leave Georgie with unresolved feelings of loss which then resurfaced when faced with subsequent stress. Raphael (1984), when talking about loss by death, suggests that:

" The family response may well govern whether or not the child achieves any successful longer term adaptation and whether or not he resolves the loss." (Pge 114)

She goes on to say that in families where the loss can be acknowledged:

" The child will suffer pain with the loss. His development may be different because of the depravation. But he learns that loss can be mastered and that the care and consolation offered by others in times of pain are very healing. He is hurt by the loss, but not scarred, and he does not fear life because of it." (Pge 119)

This did not seem to happen for Georgie and she seemed to remain scarred. This is related to the tenth theoretical proposition generated -that the need for parental love is more powerful than organismic valuing. This is connected to the idea discussed previously in relation to Victoria, that experiences that do not correlate with awareness of self are denied.

The eighth theoretical proposition - that the experience of a traumatic transition can cause the assumptive world to collapse is supported by the literature on bereavement and transition. Lewin (1935) argues that the impact of the change is dependent upon how it affects the individuals 'life space' and 'assumptive world'. He defines 'life space' as that part of our environment with which we interact in our immediate experience, for example, family, self, possessions and where we live. The change in 'life space' is either important or unimportant depending on the influence it exerts upon the assumptions we make about the world about us. These assumptions are based upon past experience and create the individuals 'assumptive world.' Parkes (1971) says that this world is :

"....the only world we know and it includes everything we know or think we know. It includes our interpretations of the past and our expectations of the future, our plans and our prejudices. Any or all of these may need to change as a result of changes in the life space." (Pge 103)

Georgie's assumptions about the world being a safe place and that she was valued in it had to undergo a radical change as a result of change in her life space. This seemed to define her perception of stress.

One of the feelings that Georgie seemed to feel was terror. This led to the twelfth theoretical proposition - that the experience of terror attacks the 'core' personality and leads to avoiding behaviours and vulnerability. This view is supported by the work of Brammer, Abrego and Shostrom (1993). They suggest a dynamic depth model of personality which they represent as shown in Figure 8.2.

As can be seen from Figure 8.2, the core houses much of the painful hurt of past experiences. Brammer *et al* (1993) call the core:

"...the centre of one's experience and (it) has the function of providing a harmonious and satisfying home in a world of loneliness and isolation from others; or it can be a living "hell on earth" of accumulated painful feeling experiences of which one is only vaguely aware"(Pge 71)

If terror was one of the emotions that Georgie felt at the time of the move then it might remain in the core. Brammer *et al* (1993) suggest that:

"Core pain is thus a basic reaction to the denial of the person's fundamental right to exist as a person" (Pge 72)

They describe the core as being like the unconscious described by Fromm (1950) and being neither good nor bad. The facade level in which we operate in the world is reached through permeable boundaries and is where we:

"...manage the balance of emotional closeness and distance from others."(Pge 69)

In the facade, defensive functions such as projection and deception, are initiated. These are learned in the process of development and may be quite automatic. In Georgie's case, if we are to understand it in Brammer *et al*'s (1993) terms, her experience of terror has led to her avoiding situations which are uncontrollable, and feeling unsure, hurt and vulnerable.

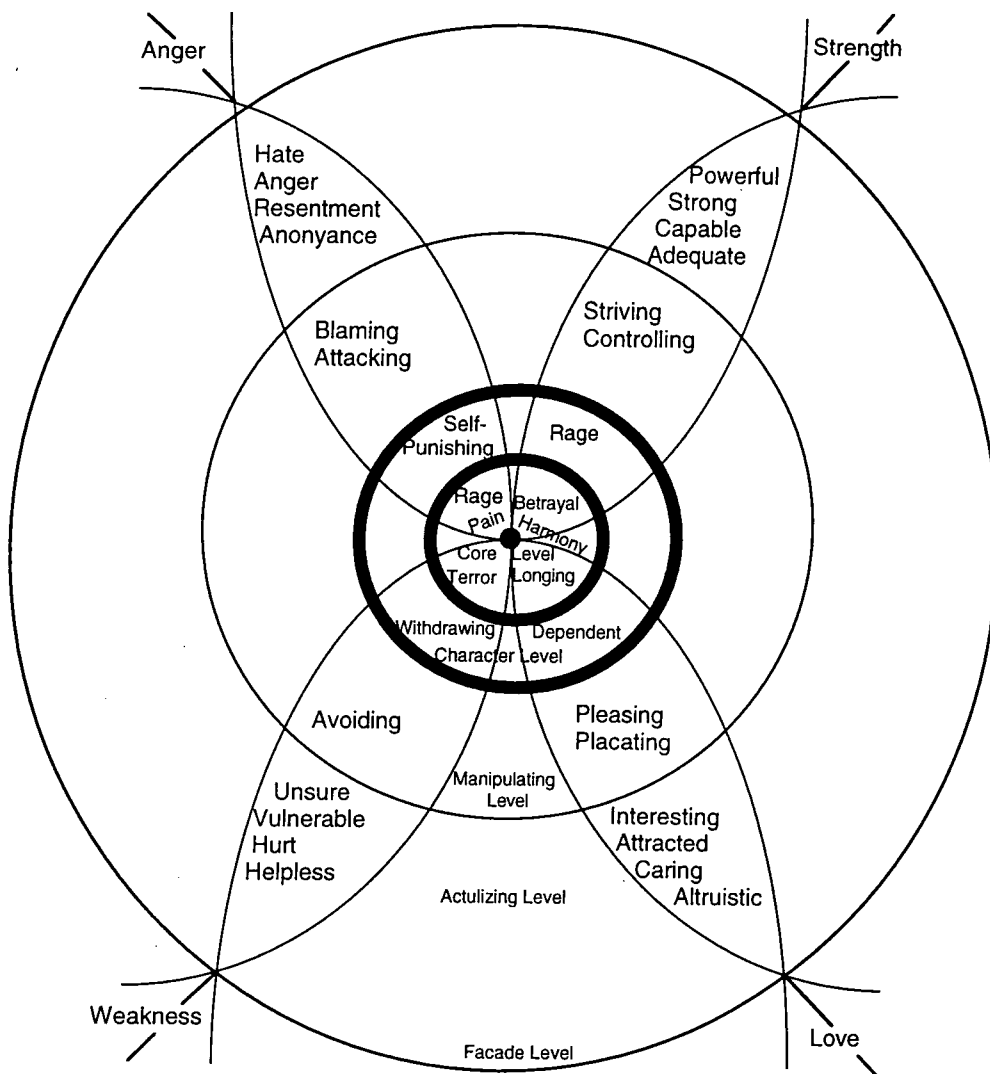


Figure 8.2

The thirteenth theoretical proposition generated by the work with Georgie was that the experience of trauma defines the 'place of safety' e.g. geographic move, geographic place of safety. This proposition came from what I experienced as a surprising response when Georgie was asked about safety. I was surprised that her response was a geographic place rather located within self. Rogers (1951) argues that:

" Another point which needs to be made in regard to the development of a conscious self is the fact that it is not necessarily coexistent with the physical organism....Whether or not an object or an experience is regarded as a part of the self depends to a

considerable extent upon whether or not it is perceived as part of self. Those elements which we control are regarded as part of self, but even when such an object as part of our body is out of control, it is experienced as being less a part of the self. " (page 497)

This seems to suggest that Georgie's 'self' was out of control and that a safe place was externalised. Her description of stress was about a geographic move from a place where she felt safe to one where she did not, Because of this it seems feasible to postulate that another geographic place would then become safe - 'self' was not in control enough to be that place.

The final theoretical proposition generated was that the counselling process produces a 'journey' for both the counsellor and the client to a different level of consciousness. We can relate this to the fourth theoretical proposition generated from the work with Victoria where there seems to be a human need to 'make sense' of our experiences and that the counselling process enables 'new' explanations and connections to be found at different levels as we gain new self-knowledge. We made sense of this process in humanistic terms by considering introjects, and an equally appealing explanation which does not preclude the humanistic one can be found in Brammer *et al's* depth model of personality. Through counselling we facilitate the client's exploration of the different levels of their experience. That the counsellor also feels that they too have been to a different level may be explained by the use of empathy. Through it, Rogers (1980) suggests that:

" It means temporarily living in the other's life, moving about in it delicately without making judgements; it means sensing meanings of which he or she is scarcely aware.....You are a confident companion to the person in his or her inner world" (Pge 142)

It is scarcely surprising then that the counsellor also feels as if they have journeyed. This has implications for the validity of this type of enquiry as it offers a unique entry into an others phenomenological world.

Both these studies generated some very interesting data. Some served to triangulate findings from the other studies as well as generating some new insights into both the experience of stress and phenomenology as a research

method. We need now to consider whether the theoretical propositions generated meets the criteria suggested by Rennie *et al*, and described by Heppner *et al* (1992) as:

" First, it should be believable to the reader. Second, it should be comprehensive, accounting for all important parts of the phenomenon. Third, the theory should be inductively tied to the data. Finally the data should be applicable and heuristic. " (Pge 199)

As both the reader and the researcher, it does seem believable to me, but perhaps this criteria needs to be judged by you. The theoretical propositions generated from these two case studies does seem to be fairly comprehensive and manages to support many of the findings of the other studies. In this way it may be said to account for all important parts of the phenomenon although the judgement of what is important is inherently phenomenological. All the theoretical propositions generated has been inductively tied to the data. The explanations offered are open to discussion as are the theoretical propositions induced, but I do feel that it originated in the data and does not destroy its integrity. The data is applicable to the exploration of the perception and experience of stress and has certainly been heuristic in that it has been a processes of discovery in the attempt to unravel the meanings contained in the counselling sessions.

Throughout this study the methodology has been motivated by the drive to 'know'. All the ways of knowing as described by Heppner *et al* have been utilised and the 'flashlight' has been directed at the problem from various directions in order to provide as complete an illumination as possible. The directing of the flashlight and the choice of the ways of knowing have all, to a lesser or greater extent, been subjective. This is seen as a strength rather than a weakness. As Rogers (1955) says:

"Science exists only in people. Each scientific project has its inception, its process, and its tentative conclusion, in person or persons. Knowledge - even scientific knowledge - is that which is subjectively accepted. Scientific knowledge can be communicated only to those who are subjectively ready to receive its communication. The utilization of science also occurs only

through people who are in pursuit of values which have meaning for them."(Pge 274)

Interestingly he begins this section of his paper by saying:

" The major shortcoming was, I believe, in viewing science as something 'out there', something spelled with a capital S, a 'body of knowledge', existing somewhere in space and time."(Pge 274)

and this exactly reflects how I felt about 'stress' and the beginning of this journey - as something 'out there', spelled with a capital S, a 'body of knowledge' existing in time and space. As I near the end of my journey, the experience of conducting this research has left me believing 'stress exists only in people'.

I feel that the process of collecting, selecting, displaying, conclusion drawing and verification as described by Miles and Huberman (1984) has been both exciting and productive and I will discuss the conclusions which might be drawn from this in the next chapter.

Chapter 9 - Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

The journey to this point in the study has been long and fraught with steep slopes and danger signs as well as meandering lanes and beauty spots. My perception of the concept of stress has changed. It has been modified and extended alongside the experience, sometimes getting lost and sometimes appearing with great clarity.

Many ideas have developed over time and I would like to use this chapter to reflect upon those and to set this in the context of existing knowledge about children's perception of stress. I also intend to discuss the implications for schools of this research and the usefulness of the methodology chosen. I will also consider the thesis in the light of the research questions formulated in Chapter One, and suggest further areas for research.

9.2 Research Questions

At the beginning of this research I had five research questions that I wished to answer:

- 1) To what extent is stress a meaningful concept to children?
- 2) How is the term stress understood in common usage and the academic literature?
- 3) How is stress perceived by children?
- 4) How is stress perceived differently by adults and children?
- 5) In what way can a child's perception of stress be modelled theoretically?

These questions have been answered in the discussions below and consideration is given in Section 9.5 to the implications for schools in the way children perceive stress .

9.3 Main Conclusions

The first research question that this thesis addressed was to what extent stress was a meaningful concept to children. The pilot studies (described in Chapter Three) investigated this without using the term stress in order not to confound the results. The first study found that the experiences described by the children could be labelled stressors if we use the term as defined by Schultz and Heuchert (1983), but as the word had never been used, these first pilot studies could not show, definitively, whether stress was a meaningful concept to children or not. What they did show was that experiences (or stressors, in the term described above) could be both positive and negative and that there were cultural, as well as unique experiences/stressors. What these studies did do, in relation to the first research question, was to 'clear the ground' and dictate the direction of the following studies. They showed that children were suffering stress if we used the Schultz and Heuchert definition and confirmed that some sort of phenomena was present in children's lives. Whether children would find stress a meaningful concept to describe this phenomenon was one of the questions investigated in Studies Three, Four and Five. All these studies confirmed that stress was a meaningful concept to children in that all could answer the question "What is Stress" but the extent that it could be labelled as meaningful seems to rest with the universality of meaning attached to the term. All the responses in the studies had overlapping meanings but none of the meanings offered were in complete agreement with each other which supports Lazarus's (1966) notion of stress being regarded as a very general concept. They also underlined the confusion that surrounds the definition of the term in academic literature and common usage. This was the second research question explored.

The term stress seems to have several meanings both in the literature and in common usage. It has been used to describe both a response and a stimulus as well as a general state. As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis and in Chapter Four in particular, the term in the literature was used differently and encompassed both positive and negative states. This thesis demonstrated that the common understanding of the word related much more to Lazarus's definition of a general concept than to Selye's (1974) idea of a non specific response. Anthony and Thibodeau's (1979) suggestion of a syndrome of subjective and objective responses also seems to reflect the

common usage. Stress seems, on the whole, to be viewed as a negative concept - causing distress rather than eustress. Support for these ideas comes from Studies Two, Three, Four, Five and Six.

The third research question, how stress is perceived by children, is partially answered in Section 9.4 - the developing model, but several factors have emerged from this study that seem to affect how children perceive stress.

The findings from Study Two suggested that the mood or way of viewing the world did colour the perception of what the subjects saw. This was supported in Study Three where the results suggested stressors identified by the group did not have the same amount of significance for each of them and that the process of the perception of stress was dependent upon past experience of both stress and coping. The tightness or looseness of meaning structures also appeared to have an effect upon the perception of stress, with those who had 'tight' structures reporting more stressors. The sample in this study was very small and other explanations for this result might be offered. For example, that those with tight meaning structures are more willing to talk about the stress they encounter, but nevertheless this is an interesting finding and is supported by the literature (Adams-Webber, 1981, Radley, 1974).

The question of whether appraisal is purely phenomenological was examined in all the studies and the results from Study Two suggested that it was, but within the confines of developmental level and social context. The following studies supported this view as did much of the literature including the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Lazarus (1983), Watzlawick *et al* (1974) and Spinelli (1989) .

Selye (1974) suggested that psychological stress is only stressful if we recognise it as such but the findings of Studies Three, Five and Six suggest that we also appraise and respond unconsciously. Although unconscious processes are hard to define empirically because of their very nature, evidence in terms of the contradictions suggested by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) was found in many of the studies. This unconscious appraisal seemed also to be important in the defining of, and response to, future stressors.

The importance of environment was demonstrated in Study Three which suggested that sharing an environment could lead to similar stressors being perceived. This was supported by the findings of Studies Four and Five. This

has implications for any interventions that schools may want to offer. These are discussed fully in two papers which were developed from this research (Robson, 1994 and Robson 1996) and will be discussed in Section 9.5 of this chapter. Study Six also supported the notion that environment was a contributory factor in the perception of stress. Victoria's experience of an environment where she felt herself not to have the attention she needed seemed to have resulted in the appearance of an eating disorder. Thus environment can have a two-fold effect. Firstly, those who share an environment may experience similar stressors although the meaning that is made of them will be individual. This is supported by the work of Compas (1987) who suggests that cultural events can provide social support and reference figures for norms of behaviour and also that we are shaped by the social distribution of events (e.g. economic depression) and by cohort effects upon events (e.g. living through a war). Clarkson and MacKewan (1993) also suggest that individuals may only be understood by reference to their intrinsic social, historical and cultural fields. Secondly, an environment which does not offer the necessary conditions for a child to feel sustained may cause stress to be perceived.

Although not the main thrust of this research, coping also seems to have an effect upon the perception of and response to stress. The literature (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980, Forsythe and Compass 1987) suggests a 'goodness of fit' concept where psychological symptoms were related to the degree of fit between appraisals of control and the relative amount of problem and emotion-focused coping used. The findings from this research were mixed. Georgie's experience of emotion focused coping in a situation appraised as uncontrollable does not seem to have helped in the long term. Much of her experience seems to be unresolved and to have left part of her 'stuck' possibly at a moment of t-1. Study Three did not link coping to specific stressors and a mixture of both types of coping was reported. This would be a very interesting area for future study.

Social support seems to be an important factor in studying the perception of stress. The literature suggests that relationships with parents are important ; more important than that of peers (Greenberget *al* , 1983), and that having a relationship with one parent that was characterised by high warmth and the absence of severe criticism (Rutter, 1979) could provide a potentially protective effect. Other studies (Wadsworth, 1984), Andrews *et al* , 1978) showed that the loss of or drastic change in the relationship with one parent

in the first five years of life, or the perception of one parent as a 'worrying type', was related to childhood stress. Although none of the studies in this thesis addressed this issue overtly, evidence from both the first and third studies support this notion and could be inferred from the experiences explored by both Victoria and Georgie in Study Six.

The question of whether life events or hassles were better predictors of the experiencing of stress became subsumed by the exploration of how stress is perceived. However, the findings from Study One and Study Three suggested that hassles were an important element in the perception of stress. Study Six highlighted the effects of both a traumatic life event and an environment which might be considered to contain hassles. Both seem very important in the way we perceive subsequent stress and thus notice needs to be taken of both. We cannot rely solely on life event inventories as a way to predict the likelihood of stress occurring.

The answer to the fourth research question - how is stress perceived differently by adults and children - seems to be related to developmental level and power differences.

The results from Studies Two, Three and Four suggested that developmental level was an important factor in the perception of stress, both as a determinant of behaviour and as a foundation for the adult perception of stress. These findings are supported by the work of Rutter (1983) and Compass (1987) and in the theoretical propositions generated from Study Six. Links are made within the thesis to the three central principles of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934, Blumer, 1969) and Studies Three and Six connect this to human needs and to Rogers (1955) suggestion that:

" Intellectually, we match carefully the symbol we select with the meaning which an experience has for us" (Pge 269)

This intellectual matching and meaning making will be limited by our developmental level and experience.

Power differentials also seem to be a factor in determining the different ways that stress is perceived between adults and children. Study Six showed Georgie powerless to control or change her parent's decision to move. Studies Three and Four showed children locked into a school system that may be

making demands on them that they perceived to be overwhelming. It could be argued that some adults are locked into systems that they perceive as making demands on them that are overwhelming, but, I would argue, in the final analysis, adults can always leave. Children are locked in the school system by statutory laws and thus can be perceived as having less choice and power. They are also usually more dependant than adults, both financially, physically and emotionally, and thus their choices may be limited. An adult can always choose to leave a marriage that is unfulfilling or unsupportive, even though that decision is difficult. A child cannot choose to leave a family perceived in this way unless abuse can be proved, or they run away.

The final research question of 'In what ways can a child's perception of stress be modelled theoretically' is addressed in the next section.

9.4 The Developing Model

A model of the perception of stress has been developing throughout this thesis. The first, tentative model was a simple stimulus response one which viewed stress as either a cause (e.g. stimulus such as 'too much work') or as a response (e.g. inability to concentrate, feeling of being pressured). The inadequacies of such a model became apparent through the first and second studies and led to the adoption of a cognitive-phenomenological model. As was discussed in Chapter Four, the cognitive-phenomenological model of stress proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) seemed limited in that it gave insufficient weight to perception, and did not allow for unconscious processes. Study Two demonstrated starkly the importance of phenomenology in the meaning-making process and need for the inclusion of unconscious processes. I proposed, in Chapter Four that the adaptations that were necessary to the Lazarus & Folkman model were an incorporation of a Rogerian (1951) notion that not all our experiences are available to awareness, and McCann *et al's* (1988) phenomenological view. The conclusions of this thesis seem to support the new, synthesised model which regards stress as a transactional construction, being made up of an idea of a general concept organised by transactions between the adolescent and the environment. The perception of stress appears to be dependent upon the perceived meaning that a transaction has for the individual. Meaning is formed by experience but not all experience can be incorporated into the individual's idea of self and

may be dissociated from or denied. All experience is part of the perceptual process, whether it is denied, dissociated or admitted to conscious processing.

This may be seen pictorially below:

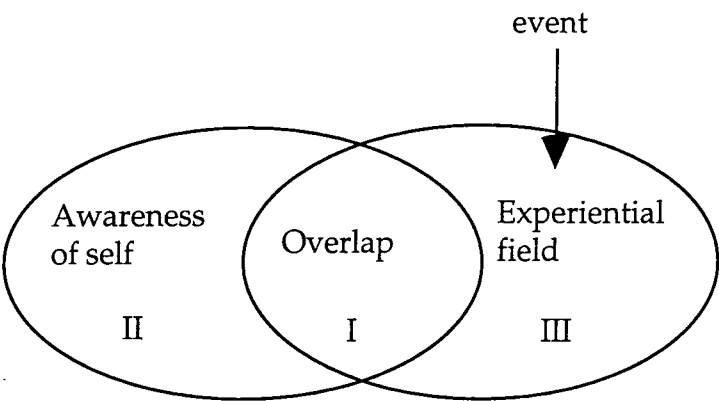


Figure 9.1

The perception of stress is a process and the result of a transaction between the person and the environment and the experience is constructed internally in the following way. Experience is the result of a transaction between the person and the event. The experience is located, using Rogers (1951) framework, within the individual's sense of self. Some experience is available to the conscious awareness of self and so is stored in 'I' in the above diagram. Some experience is not acceptable to the conscious awareness of self and so is stored in 'III' in the above diagram. In addition to the idea of an available or conscious awareness of self, I believe that it is necessary to extend the Rogerian idea by including an awareness of self which is not available to conscious awareness, created and sustained by experiences located in 'III'. For example, a child who experiences abuse and is unable to incorporate this experience into awareness, may, nevertheless, have part of their unconscious notion of self formed by the experience. This could lead to perceived stress being determined by the unconscious awareness of self - e.g. a sense of self as dirty or worthless or not good enough to be loveable. The conscious awareness of self may reject these notions, but, in stressful situations, the unconscious awareness of self may determine responses which are based on the notion of being dirty, worthless and unlovable.

This seems to be a very exciting extension to Rogers' (1951) ideas and, although this thesis is drawing to a close, to be a starting point for another journey.

This model appears to adequately explain individual differences in the perception of and response to stress and, as, has been discussed in Section 9.2, all the studies supported a phenomenological perspective. The importance of unconscious appraisal in defining and responding to future stressors was also supported by the results.

9.5 Implications for Schools

As has been suggested earlier, a full exploration of the implications for schools of the findings of this research may be found in related papers (Robson, 1994, Robson, 1996) but what follows is a brief overview of these implications.

Although the view of stress which has emerged from this research emphasises the meaning that the event or events have for individuals, it does not follow that interventions can only be made on an individual level. As shown by Grant (1992), individual help in the form of professional counselling and or someone to talk to on a more informal basis, can be very useful. The results from Study Three support this view with over half the respondents identifying the need to have 'someone to talk to'. The results from all the studies suggest that we also need to examine other areas. The areas identified by this research are those suggested by Lazarus (1966) in terms of transactions between the event, the environment and the person. I propose to examine these areas in relation to the implications for schools with regard to the child, the teacher and the school.

For the children

Findings from the research suggest that children need to have a good feeling about themselves and to feel in control. Study Four found that stress is a relationship between the individual and their environment that is appraised as endangering their well-being, and that the environment that a child is part of is very important in the perception of stress. Study Six found that the perceived loss of control during trauma seems to lead to an exaggerated need

to control virtually everything and that internalisation of powerlessness seems to occur when events happen outside the persons' control, leading to an external locus of control. We can help with positive support in a safe but challenging environment. The respondents in Study Three found boredom stressful and it was the second most frequently cited negative word in Study Two.

Because the perception of stress seems to be phenomenological, in order to help our children we need to know them and their world. This view of the perception of stress is supported by the findings of Study Two, which found the ways of viewing the world seemed to colour the perception of events and that appraisal is phenomenological, Study Three which found that the perception of stress is dependant upon the meaning that is constructed around an experience by the individual, Study Five which also found that the perception of stress is related to the meaning the event has for the individual and that the meaning is built up from previous experience.

It appears that the causes of anxiety change with age as do perceptions of stressful situations (Studies Two, Three and Four) and so any interventions much be developmentally related.

Anxiety that manifests itself in school may often be caused by unrelated factors outside school (Study Three) and thus it is important to enter into the world of the child.

If teachers induce stress in students, then students in turn are likely to manifest behaviour that develops into stress inducing factors for the teacher and thus a vicious circle perpetuates. Study Four showed that the environment that a child is part of is very important to the perception of stress and Study Six found that the cause of stress may be found in a single event, several events or in the emotional and/or physical environment the child experiences.

Ideas for a stress management programme for children that have arisen from this research may be found in Appendix E.

For the teachers

The transaction between the teacher, his/her environment and the stressful event is as complex as it is for the child. The research findings from the studies quoted above apply equally well to teachers. The meaning that an event has for an individual (Studies Two, Three, Five and Six) is possibly best explored with the help of others so a good support system is essential. This support system needs to be one in which the teacher feels safe enough to acknowledge stresses, without feeling judged or under valued. Such a system could possibly be operated by peers as long as trust is established and maintained.

For the school

The school is an important element in addressing the issues of stress. The physical element can either threaten or sustain the population within (Studies Four, Five and Six). Playgrounds can become stressful environments for children if they cannot feel safe (see Georgie's transcript). Classrooms can become rooms full of stress because they are too open to public view, or conversely, too separate from the rest of the school (again, see Georgie's transcript). As well as the physical setting of the school, the emotional climate that it creates, both hidden and overt, are crucial in the perception of stress (Study Three). These findings suggest that if individuals, teachers and pupils, feel that the environment is one in which they are valued and safe, stress is likely to be perceived as much more manageable. The ideas in Appendix E could be adapted by the school in order to help children manage stressful events by proactive strategies that attempt to equip individuals to manage their stress and also promote an environment that does not produce stress.

Conclusion

It appears that stress is best understood in terms of transactions between the individual, the event and the environment. Also, it is essential to emphasise the importance of the exploration of the meaning an event has for the individual. For a stress management programme to encapsulate all these elements, it is necessary to explore the meaning of the event for the individual, their perceptions of their environment and their perceptions of their ability to cope. By this exploration, individuals will come to understand their stress and be empowered to manage it in a way that is uniquely theirs.

The preceding discussion suggests that any intervention in stress management should encompass these issues.

9.6 Methodology

The methodology used in this research can be described as qualitative research. It is based upon a philosophical view that:

"...meanings - including lay and scientific knowledge of the world - do not merely reflect the world as it exists, but are produced or constructed by persons and within cultural, social and historical relationships." (Henwood and Nicolson, 1995, Page 109)

This is reflected in the joke reported by Gillett (1995) and accredited to one of Skinner's rats where the rat says:

"Boy have I got this guy conditioned, every time I press the bar he gives me food" (Page 111)

Although amusing, this does reflect a serious point which is taken up by Bannister and Mair (1968) where they argue:

"No one suggests that the subject matter which the physicist, the chemist, the botanist, or geologist seeks to order and make sensible, at the same time may seek to order and make sense of him. This, however, is perhaps the single most outstanding feature of the field of events which the psychologist has chosen to study - people" (from Gillett (1995), Page 111)

So, it was upon this philosophical base that the methodology was chosen. An attempt was made to do what Gillett (1995) suggests we need to do:

"We must learn to see the mind as the meeting of a wide range of forces and structuring influences whose nature can only be painted on a broader canvas than that provided by the study of individual organisms. On this view our conceptualisation of the subject matter of psychology has to take account of discourses, significations, subjectivities and positioning. Each of these draws our attention to

the fact that the study of the mind is a way of conceptualising the phenomena that arise when different socio-cultural discourses are integrated within an identifiable human individual situated in relation to those discourses." (Pge 113)

However, pursuing this methodology has its own pitfalls in terms of self delusion. As Miles (1979) in Miles and Huberman (1984) suggests:

"...the analyst faced with a bank of qualitative data has very few guidelines for protection against self-delusion, let alone the presentation of unreliable or invalid conclusions to scientific or policy making. How can we be sure that an 'earthy,' 'undeniable,' 'serendipitous' finding is not wrong?" (Pge 16)

This research attempted to avoid those pitfalls by being explicit and systematic about drawing conclusions and by testing the conclusions from a variety of approaches. As a final test, the theory generated also needs to be judged according to the criteria suggested by Rennie *et al*, and described by Heppner *et al* (1992). Firstly, it should be believable to the reader. This is quite difficult to judge as, by the fact that I drew the conclusions, they are believable to me. However, support for my conclusions do come from both within the studies and from supporting literature. Secondly, it should account for all important parts of the phenomenon. I believe it does this as it can account for many of the vexing questions surrounding the study of stress such as:

- a) What is it?
- b) Why does the same stressor not affect everyone in the same way?
- c) Do we have to know we are stressed to be stressed?
- d) Are there 'universal' stressors?

Thirdly, the theory should be inductively tied to the data. I believe this to be true as all the theory came directly from the data rather than the theory being used as a filter to collect data.

Finally, the data should be applicable and heuristic. The theories generated from the data can be applied to the phenomenon of stress and each study has served to find out more and to stimulate investigation.

With all this in mind, I feel that the results of this research are more than serendipitous. They describe and analyse a phenomenon without violating its integrity.

9.7 Future Research Directions

Several areas which may be of interest for future research have emerged from this work. These are:

- a) More investigation of the concept of 'goodness of fit'
- b) An exploration of the role and meaning of metaphor in the perception of stress
- c) An exploration of the role of social support in the perception of stress
- d) An exploration of the effects of a hostile environment upon children's perception of stress.
- e) A further exploration of how ethical issues may be resolved
- f) The further exploration of the usefulness of an extended Rogerian model of personality

As has been discussed earlier, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) and Forsythe and Compas (1987) suggested a concept of 'goodness of fit' between the type of coping used and the perceived degree of control over the event. My research found both types of coping were used but did not match this to specific stressors. Also, the experience of emotion-focused coping reported by Georgie in a situation where the problem seemed uncontrollable also has left questions unanswered. Future work in this area could be to study which coping is used in response to specific stressful encounters as well as exploring how people coped in the past and the type of coping they used.

Metaphor and working with the inner child seemed to be a particular issue in relation to Georgie. It would be very interesting to see if there was any connection between childhood stress and the presence of a 'frozen' inner child, and to explore what role this freezing performed. I feel that this would be as fraught with difficulties as trying to uncover unconscious processes has been in this study, but it does seem to offer a richness to further exploration.

Social support seems to be an important factor in the mediation of stress and this study did not directly explore these issues. It would be interesting to follow Rutter's work and explore the effect of parental relationship on the perception of stress. Another area which would also be interesting to explore is peer support. Many of the clients that I see at the counselling service are very isolated and I wonder if this adds to their stress or if it is a direct result of their stress.

It would be useful to explore the effects of a hostile environment upon children's perception of stress. Most of the work done in this area has concentrated upon 'events' rather than the general environment. This is true in the study of most trauma (Harris Hendricks *et al* , 1993, McCann *et al* , 1988, McCann and Pearlman, 1990) and although an acknowledgement of the environment prior to the trauma is often made, little research has been conducted specifically in this area.

The processes that are involved in ethical decision making could be explored further. As has been argued in the chapter on ethical issues, it seems that there is an idea that we can solve ethical dilemmas rationally. This may not be the case and it is not clear what constitutes 'rational' and this could be the focus of future research.

Finally, the idea of extending the Rogerian model of personality to incorporate an unconscious awareness of self seems very exciting and demanding, and again could be the focus of future research.

The process of developing this thesis has been an exciting one and has offered some understandings into how stress is perceived by children. It has also led to other questions that need to be answered and I hope that this will be an area that will attract future research.

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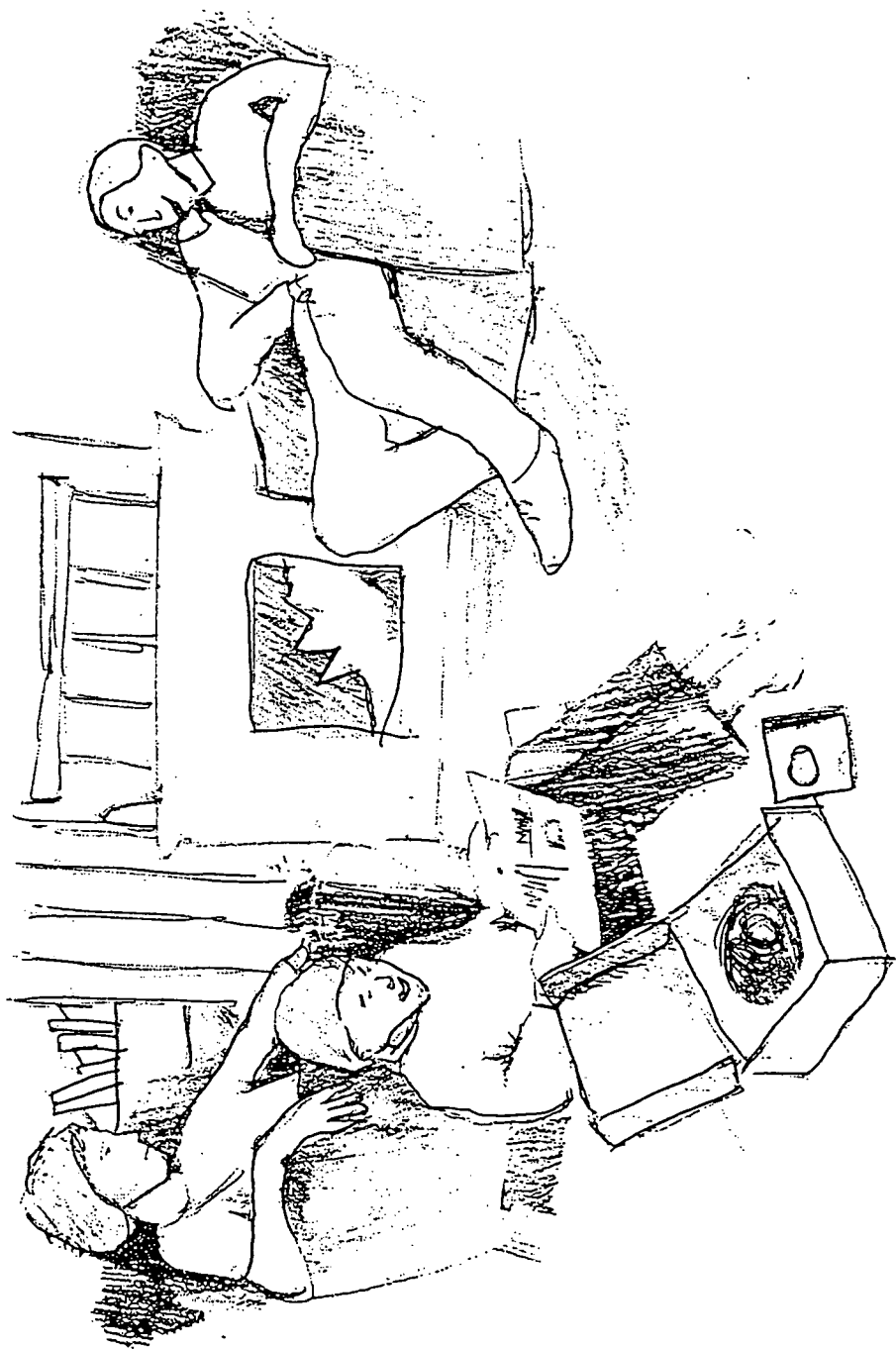
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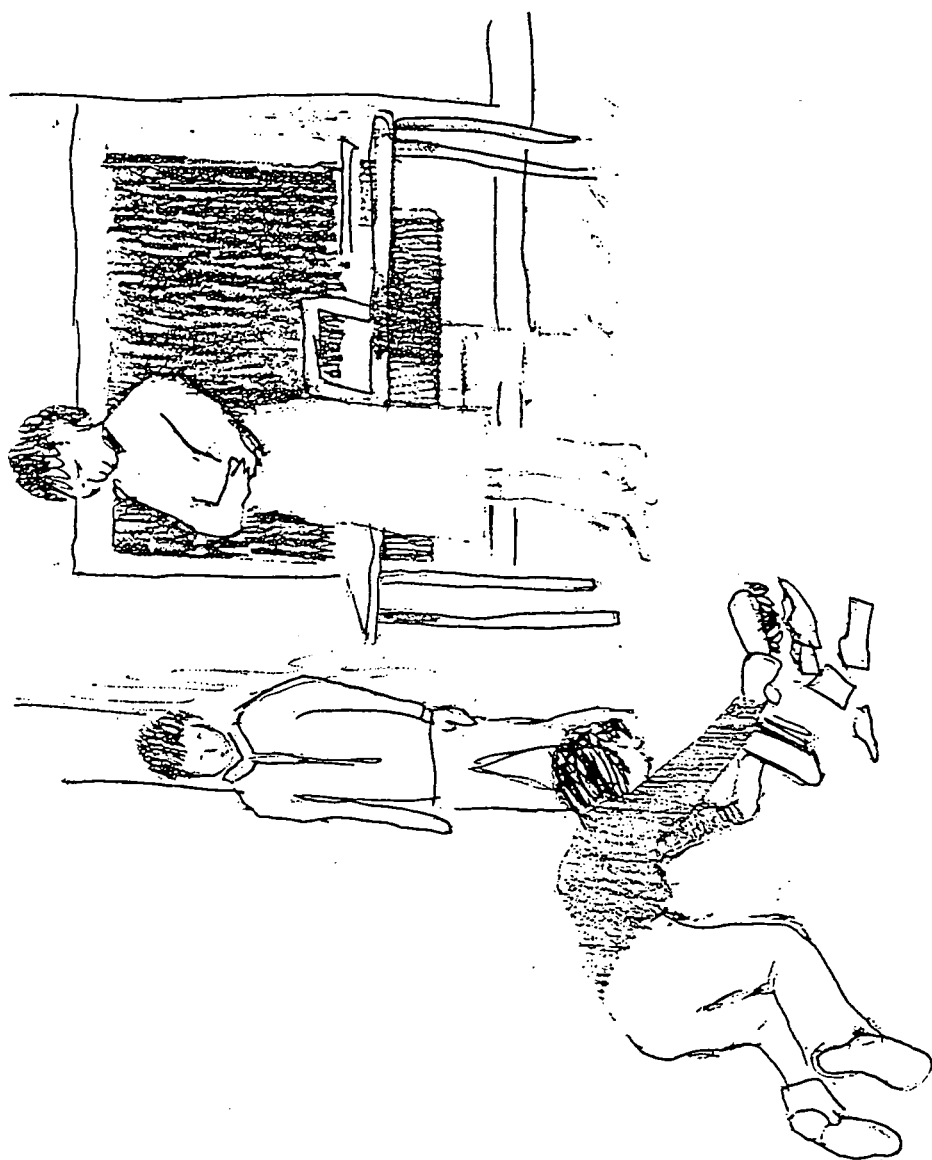
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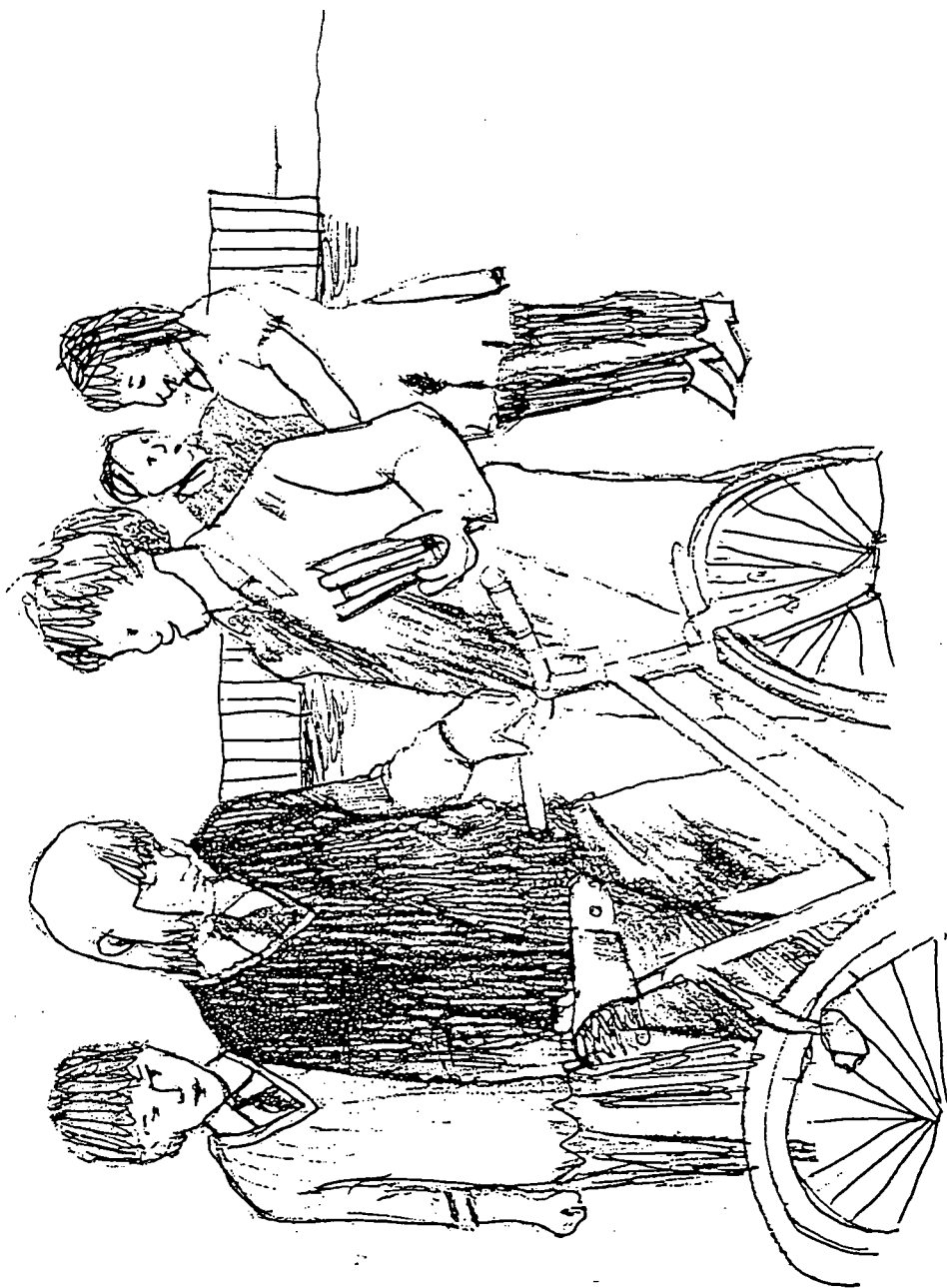
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Appendix A - TAT-like Pictures used in Study Two

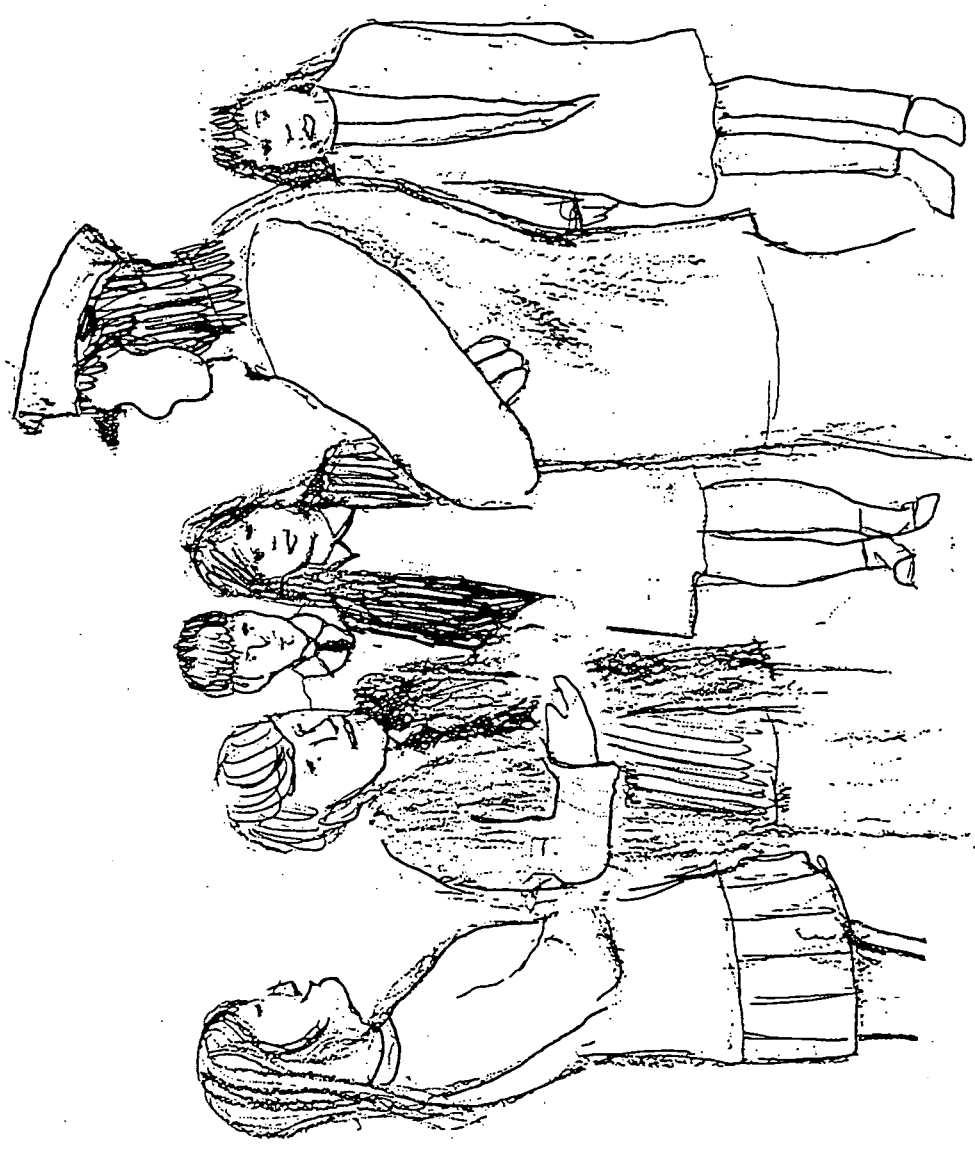


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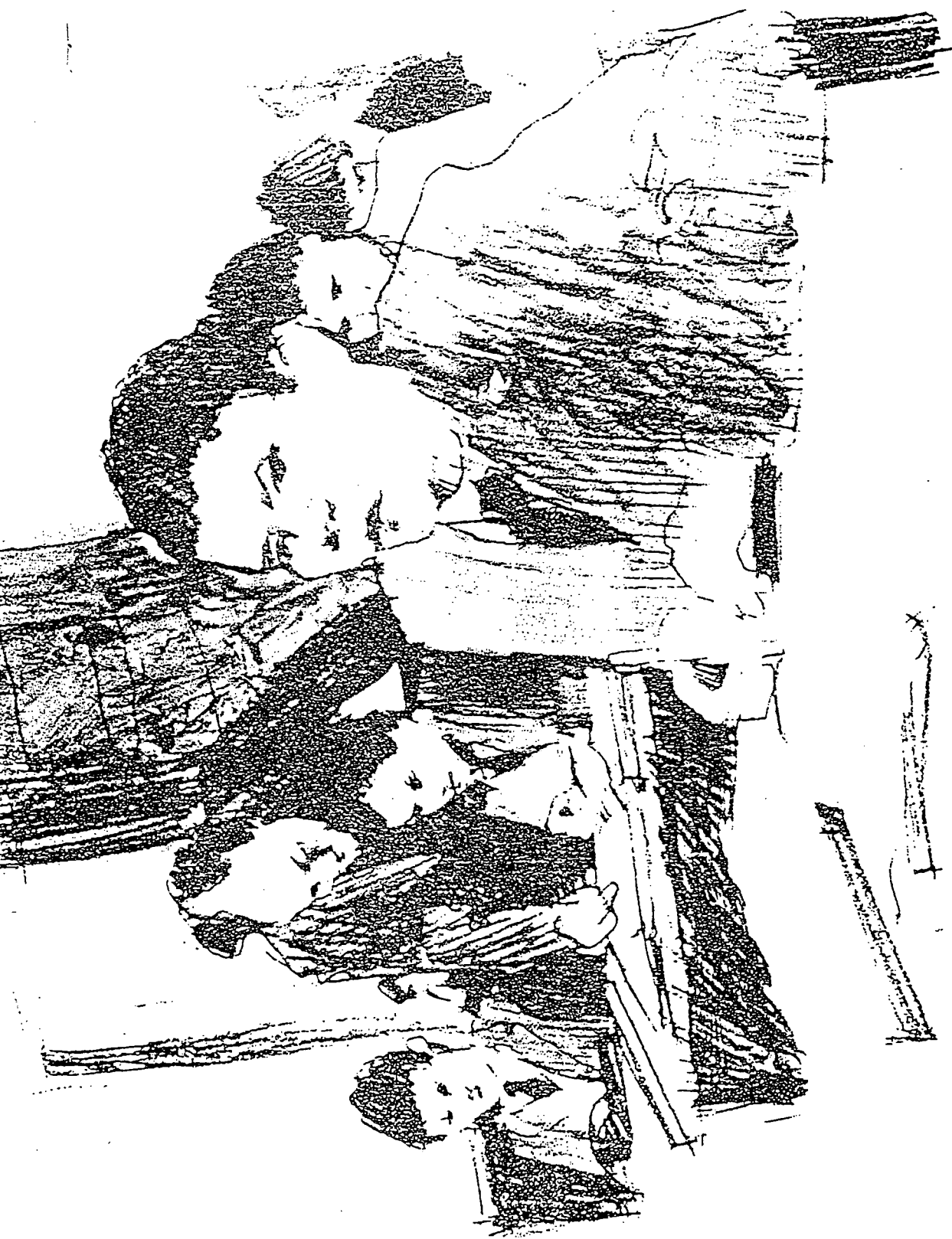


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5



6







Appendix B - Details of Tasks for Study Three

3.7.91

1.30 - 1.40 Introductions

Say who I am and that I am studying stress in people their age so that ways can be found to help them deal with it. Anything that comes from this study will not be able to be traced back to them directly and I will try and get some feedback to them if they are interested. Are there any questions?

Each person say who they are and what they are doing in the sixth -form.

1.40 -1.50

In two groups with a piece of flip chart - on the back can you put your names and ages, then:

Brainstorm the word stress

1.50 - 2.00

Share with the group

2.00 - 2.20

In pairs, with a piece of flip chart - names on back, divide paper in 2

Talk about the things that:

- a) you find stressful, and
- b) the ways in which you deal with them

This will be between the 2 of you and me - no-one else will know what you have said

Gather that in

2.20 - 2.30 In pairs, with a piece of flip chart - names on back, look at the things you find stressful and try and think of as many ways as you can that you feel you could either help yourself to manage your stress better, or be helped to manage it e.g. some-one to talk to, more help with assignments, more say in how your day is organised etc.

2.30 - 2.40 Break Write down all the words used to describe stress.

2.40 - 3.05

Working individually, look at all the words that have been generated and put them in groups that make sense to you e.g. some words may be positive some negative etc. Names on sheets.

Again working by yourselves, can you look at the list of people I have given you and pick 3. Say in which way two are alike and one is different and then at the side write it down with its opposite, E.g.

+ + - uncaring/caring

Example of a repertory grid

Age.....

Mother/mother figure, father/father figure, brother, sister, liked teacher, disliked teacher, boy/girl friend, best friend, someone you can talk to, someone you can't talk to, successful person, unsuccessful person

Constructs

Appendix C - Raw Results from Study Five

Results from a "Personal history and stress."

Subject -B1 (Age 15)

1 *Some things I found stressful were:*

Helen's mum died. School changed. Road accident.

2 *Choosing one of those experiences, the thing/things about that experience that I found stressful were?*

Not knowing why school changed - what was wrong with it? New school teachers, kids etc. Not belonging, being known, popular etc.

Part 2

1 *The first time I can remember a similar experience was when?*

Dad was ill.

2 *I was age?*

9

3 *The feelings I remember I had at the time were?*

I laughed and told people. I got into trouble, fear, resentment. I wanted a proper dad- had to be quiet etc., no holiday.

4 *The thing I most remember about this experience is?*

Thinking it was funny

5 *I coped with this experience by*

Telling everyone, feeling special

6 *My most recent experience of stress was*

Not wanting to meet my boyfriends kids

7 *I coped with this experience by*

Talking, telling people, seeking approval

8 *It felt similar to when*

I wanted Dad to be normal

9 *The most difficult stress for me was the stress of*

Family disapproval/not understanding

10 *It was difficult because*

I assumed they would think badly of me. I just wanted a normal relationship/Dad etc.

And something I have discovered from this exercise or experience is

You have to approve of yourself, be comfortable etc. - then you don't assume others will disapprove.

J1 (Age 13)

1 *Something I found stressful were?*

Friendships/boyfriends

2 *Choosing one of those experiences, the thing/things about that experience that I found stressful were?*

Friendship - fear of hurting my friends, fear of being left out or deserted, worried about what they thought of me and whether it would last.

Part 2

- 1 *The first time I can remember a similar experience was when*
A group of girls at primary school stopped speaking to me - we had all been friends
- 2 *I was age*
6
- 3 *The feelings I remember I had at the time were*
Distraught that they were ignoring me - didn't know the reason
- 4 *The thing I most remember about the experience is*
The teacher being unsympathetic and me not being able to do anything about it
- 5 *I coped with this experience by*
Crying and then talking to them until they made friends with me
- 6 *My most recent experience of this stress was*
Last year when a previous best friend told me she didn't like me
- 7 *I coped with this experience by*
Searching for reassurance from family, other friends, boyfriend
- 8 *It felt similar to*
Losing something very special, sort of inside me
- 9 *The most difficult for me was the stress of*
Questioning and searching my own personality for things that were not nice
- 10 *It was difficult because*
There were things I didn't like about myself which I could not change but had to accept.

And something I have discovered from this exercise or experience is
This experience at 6 when people who had been friends ceased to be so has resulted in my lacking confidence in friendships. I wonder why this is?

R1 (Age 14)

- 1 *Somethings I found stressful were?*
My parents, school, boyfriend
- 2 *Choosing one of those experiences, the thing/things about that experience that I found stressful were?*
Parents and school was stressful because of the expectations that were put on me

Part 2

- 1 *The first time I can remember a similar experience was when*
I started school
- 2 *I was age*
6

- 3 *The feelings I remember at the time were*
I felt anxious about disappointing somebody
- 4 *The thing I most remember about that experience is*
Not living up to expectations overall
- 5 *I coped with this experience by*
Pretending I did not care
- 6 *My most recent experience of this stress was*
At the moment/present time
- 7 *I coped with this experience by*
Pretending that it is not as important to me to pass the exam as it is
- 8 *It felt similar to when*
I finally decided school was no longer for me and so I started to truant
- 9 *The most stress for me was the stress of*
Other people being disappointed in me which meant I was disappointed in myself
- 10 *It was difficult because*
It becomes difficult to form lasting positive self concept

And something I have discovered from this exercise or experience is
That I have to try really hard to be positive about what I do and who I am

M1 (Age 15)

- 1 *Some things I found stressful were*
Relationships, revision, exams. "O" levels, sports hall, Mrs. Atkinson
- 2 *Choosing one of those experiences, the thing/things about that experience that I found stressful were*
English Literature "O" level. My exams had gone very well, expected to get an A in Literature - very confident, enjoying the exam. Mrs. Atkinson smiled at me, feeling of panic, nearly cried realised I'd done the wrong question. Adrenaline, panic, had to write 4 answers in 3 hours. Couldn't wait to get out. I was upset, everyone saying I'd get 90 odd % - knew I'd messed it up. Ended up on tablets till end of "O" levels. Fear of failure, embarrassed, first time I'd really doubted myself

Part 2

- 1 *The first time I can remember a similar experience was when*
I moved from junior to senior school
- 2 *I was age*
11
- 3 *The feelings I can remember I had at the time were*
Fear and upset - scared of the future
- 4 *The thing I most remember about that experience is*
Walking towards the classroom
- 5 *I coped with this experience by*
talking
- 6 *My most recent experience of this stress was*

- Waiting for AA assignments back, need 60 % - deciding degree classification - again fear of failure, not living up to others expectations
- 7 *I coped with this experience by*
Decided it was too late. Talked again
 - 8 *It felt similar to when*
Sometimes fear of death - wake up in night. Fear of having to tell parents I'm dying.
 - 9 *The most difficult stress for me was the stress of*
All stress is difficult - emotional/ telling others
 - 10 *It was difficult because*

And something I have discovered from this experience or exercise is

I am often stressed about things but the things that affect me as a person is future - whether I'll pass exams, do as well as I expect, others expect. People being disappointed.

W1 (Age 11)

- 1 *Some things I found stressful were*
Big building, new beginning, being vulnerable, fear of being picked on by teachers, not having a best friend, feeling alone, feeling small, feeling new, not good enough
- 2 *Choosing one of these experiences, the thing/things about that experience that I found stressful were?*
Not having a best friend - Having to face things on my own, feeling no one's there for me, panic about would I have a best friend, fear of doing things wrong, worried about silence.

Part 2

- 1 *The first time I can remember a similar experience was when*
Moving to Leeds from Sussex
- 2 *I was age*
5
- 3 *The feelings I remember I had at the time were*
I was tiny, everything was huge, dirty, strange
- 4 *The thing I most remember about that experience is*
Standing up in the car, looking around
- 5 *I coped with this experience by*
- 6 *My most recent experience of this stress was*
When mum died
- 7 *I coped with this experience by*
Still feeling alone - crying, reading her letters, talking about it, hiding in bed, going over it again and again.
- 8 *It felt similar to when*
I don't know - what comes into my head is my first year of teaching.
- 9 *The most difficult stress for me was the stress of*
Being powerless

10 *It was difficult because*

I felt small and unable to cope and was seen not to cope
And something I have discovered from this exercise or experience is
Making links

K L (Age 22/14)

1 *Some thing I found stressful were*

Friends, growing up, exams, school (doing well), PE (doing too well)
gym competitions.

2 *Choosing one of those experiences, the thing/ things about that experience that I found stressful were?*

Gym comp. - Fear of being on show, forgetting my routines. Showing my knickers through my leotard, falling off the beam, getting beaten by a friend, getting low scores.

Part 2

1 *The first time I can remember a similar experience was when*
I had bad dreams

2 *I was age*
3 or 4

3 *The feelings I remember I had at the time were*
inadequacy, confusion, fear - thinking I was different

4 *The thing I most remember about experience is*
I passed

5 *I coped with this experience by*
Eventually talking to someone

6 *My most recent experience of this was*
losing my hat - feeling my life was out of my control

7 *I coped with this experience by*
vowing to take control of my life

8 *It felt similar to when*

9 *The most difficult stress for me was when*

Finding out something that had happened to my mother during childhood

10 *It was difficult because*

It changed my perception of her and her family - changed everything really

And something I have discovered from this exercise or experience is

Really don't know as I get older I become more and more confused.

M S (Age 37)

1 *Some things I found stressful were*

Feeling different to my peers, yet not wanting to be like them

2 *Choosing one of those experiences, the thing/things about that experience that I found stressful were?*

I felt that I must be odd, since my peers all conformed voluntarily to the unwritten code of dress, social life, interests etc. It was a crisis of identity before I had determined my own when others were trying to impose one on me.

Part 2

- 1 *The first time I can remember a similar experience was when*
I moved to boarding school
- 2 *I was age*
8 and again at 12
- 3 *The feelings I remember I had at the time were*
That who I was and what I wanted accounted for nothing
- 4 *The thing I most remember about that experience was*
The feeling of exposure and isolation, powerless to change things
- 5 *I coped with this experience by*
Making friends with another rebel.
- 6 *My most recent experience of this stress was*
Joining a drama group and knowing I had to become one of the group, regardless of what I thought of them or them of me
- 7 *I coped with this experience by*
Making an effort and getting to know the members one by one as people
- 8 *It felt similar to*
I came here
- 9 *The most difficult stress for me was the stress of*
Being abandoned at boarding school at 8 years old
- 10 *It was difficult because*
No one would listen to me. I felt desolate
And something I have discovered from this exercise or experience is
Nothing new because I have thought it all through already.

CC (Age 13)

- 1 *Somethings I found stressful were*
I don't know, it's a blank, I just remember living day to day. I was certainly stressed about some things - e.g. exams, boredom
- 2 *Choosing one of those experiences, the thing/things about that experience that I found stressful were?*
Nothing specific
I think what it is is that there are no large events that stand out, that at the time I did not verbalise how I felt and until the VII th form I was very happy and unworried.

Didn't complete the rest of the questionnaire

C H (Age 22)

1 Somethings I found stressful were

Feeling lost, humiliated by people you knew. Having fewer close friends that I knew really well (unlike in junior school)

2 Choosing one of those experiences, the thing/things about that experience that I found stressful were?

When a group of friends were talking about something one break time. One girl wouldn't tell me what it was about as she said I would only tell my mum. I felt cut off from the group.

Part 2

1 The first time I can remember a similar experience was when

This incident

2 I was age

11

3 The feelings I remember having at the time were

Anxiety, rejection by friends

4 The things I most remember about that experience is

The way the girl spoke to me

5 I coped with this experience by

Withdrawing more from my parents - trying to get acceptance from peers

6 My most recent experience of this stress was

In my 6th form

7 I coped with this experience by

Becoming increasingly involved with boyfriend and family

8 It felt similar to when

I was ill and wanted to be liked/ accepted

9 The most stress for me was the stress of

Feeling drawn into a relationship that wasn't satisfactory but made me feel involved with something - not wanting to say no.

10 It was difficult because

I felt in conflict, I didn't say no to things I didn't really want because I wanted to be involved/loved.

And something I have discovered from this exercise or experience is

That my family are the only ones that will always be there no matter what we have said/done to each other in the past.

Raw Results - S/ He and Stress

Imagine you are watching yourself experiencing the stress you have been describing. Write an account in the third person as if it was a character in a play experiencing this.

W1

The stress I am going to write about is my 1st day at comprehensive school and not having a best friend.

She was scrubbed shiny new, pony tail, blue striped blazer, brown brogues, white ankle socks.

She looks really fresh, keen, eager to please, slightly tense, she looks as though her parents care about her.

She doesn't look very happy but rather tense a bit unsure, frightened.

She's sitting on the edge of her seat behind an old wooden desk, waiting, always waiting for something to begin.

She's not looking forward to playing tennis all she wants to do is go home.

She's so keen and determined to get it right. she has to prove that she can do it even though she failed her 11+, even though she's in the lower class. Poor little W, 2nd class.

A failure, failed her parents. Yet so shiny new. And it's taken her till now to feel that she's not lower band or failed. It's the fault of all those stupid fuckers who didn't realise her potential and didn't help her develop it.

J1

She is very upset and confused about why this group of girls aren't talking to her. The teacher is unsympathetic, expecting them all to sort it out and be friends again soon. It seems that the girls have just decided to break friends - it will happen to each girl in the group eventually.

She feels like she cannot trust friends not to hurt her and continuing experiences reinforce this. She thinks that it is her fault but doesn't know why. she is beginning to accept that some friendships do not last forever.

M1

She appeared relaxed began answering questions and was enjoying it. Knew that she had been warned the poetry section could have unfamiliar poems on. Began to write using thought rather than knowledge. Finished question I have left for 1 question. Turned page another poetry section, pressure inside, stomach to back of throat, breathing hard, tears. English teacher smiled, can't smile back, warned tears. Adrenaline takes over, remember can leave an essay in note form if you can't finish it in time. Work to pass - not to get an A. Work to pass then get out, can't cry in the exam because you'll never finish.

B1

She is asking for help. She is saying most people don't have to go through this, so she doesn't know how it is supposed to feel, but she doesn't want to be different, special etc. She wants sympathy/empathy because she is having a hard time, but also wants to be normal - the same as everyone else - it's no big deal having a sick dad, a boyfriend with kids, but then when she can't cope she needs someone to say you're doing OK. She wants to talk, but then when things are OK feels she shouldn't have said anything - people don't need to

know about that but now you've said something they'll treat you differently, but at the same time she needed to talk.....

CH

- girls standing around in a group talking.
- C comes up to join in conversation.
- One girl says " You'll only tell your mum"
- C feels embarrassed humiliated, wants the ground to swallow her up.

Feeling upset, not knowing what to do now, who to talk to, where to go. Alone unliked by peers.

CC

The teacher, Mrs. H, asked her to come to the teachers desk and gave back her English book and told her off. English was her favourite subject and it was a brand new book. There was the mark C-, but worse underneath a comment she did not understand saying that the essay was " superficial ". Later at home she had to look up the word. The meaning stabbed at her and every time she opened her book it jumped out at her on the first page. " Not a very good start to the year. " She felt self conscious, embarrassed, shocked, acutely uncomfortable. I'm not sure if she was stressed and she certainly lived through it.

MS

She entered the room with watchful eyes, she watched the girls who were sharing their news; she thought they bragged as they preened their hair and talked about daddy. She sat on the edge in silence. She answered in monosyllables. She wasn't one of them , nor did she want to be. Not for her the black velvet jackets, the neat blue jeans, the black patent bags with gold chains. She wore a wide pinafore with prehistoric animals all over it, her hair hung loose and wild. She would not conform to them but not to, hurt.

KL

The stress begins a long time before the competition, probably a month maybe more. During this build up time the feeling of fear and panic hounds. It is hard for her to understand and she can't exactly put her finger on why it is happening. It's not as if (she tries to tell herself) it's really that important. She doesn't have to do it, it's not like an exam at school. She thinks perhaps that might be part of it - what's exactly wrong with her putting herself through such possible public humiliation. As the competition draws nearer she can think of nothing else. she even begins to wish she had an injury (which could actually be made quite plausible) so that she would be unable to compete and would actually escape the situation with dignity and even sympathy. However the fact that she might do well is the part that stops her doing this. the last week is a nightmare, training sessions are a right off. She just can't stay on the

beam and daren't do anything without a crash mat- whatever will she be like the next day?

The day of the competition is worse, she throws up her breakfast. Once actually there she maybe begins to settle down. the stress becomes an exhilarating experience, more than a destructive one - except for the beam. When she actually gets on it, she can feel her thighs shaking, but is relieved to know she can do it without a crash mat...

Raw Results from Rep Grids

Type 1- Stressful experiences

CC

Elements

1. Splitting with my boyfriend
2. Ex-boyfriend moving in with new girl friend
3. Going to a new place
4. Exams
5. Moving out of house having lived in for 2 yrs.
6. Having an accident
7. Having an operation in hospital
9. Job search
10. Being ill
11. Choosing what to wear
12. Missing friends & past

Constructs

1. In my control
Out of my control
2. Looking to future, how I want to project myself
Past, nostalgia
3. Physical - time to recuperate
change you
Nostalgic
4. Both relate to not doing well enough
Fear there won't be a job
5. Sense of loss
Immediate trauma
6. Both are personal tests you have to do
Don't like hurting people
7. Both painful and out of my control
Not emotional
8. Not related to personal indecisiveness
Personal indecision
9. Upset of physical surroundings
Short term event
10. Both show my need for people
Academic, to do with me

11. Out of my control

More in my control, chance to make an impression

12. Something that happens to you

Personal choice/indecisiveness

R1

Elements

1. Assignments
2. Deadlines
3. Relationship with partner
4. Appointments (having to be at a certain place at a certain time)
5. Daughters expectations
6. My own expectations
7. Unexpected events i.e. somebody close falling ill
8. Friends and their expectations
9. Having to think of meals to cook

Constructs

1. Both involve me and my expectations
Choose friends
2. Limited control
I control
3. Time limits
Friends constant
4. Both have needs
Take or leave
5. Both unpredictable
Predictable

K L

Elements

1. Exams/work
2. Driving test
3. Interviews
4. App for ms (?)
5. Meeting people
6. Travel
7. Responsibility
8. Housemates
9. Illness -others
10. Religion -to go to church or not
11. T.P.
12. Growing up i.e. being an adult

Constructs

1. Both win/lose short term situations
Not
2. Part of long term future identity
Short term
3. Not in control of situation. Could go wrong
Worry is what they think of you
4. Worrying about other people
Personal indecision crisis
5. Must behave a certain way
Worry about what they think
6. Short term
Long term
7. Things I get myself into and then get annoyed and indecisive
No personal dilemma involved
8. Relate to future, being adult, responsible
Just happens, beyond your control
9. Directly pressured by presence of other people
Got no direction. Abstract
10. Outcome totally reliant on me
Just happens and have to cope
11. Win/lose
Long term
12. Have to sort out myself
Just a step taking at the moment

M1

Elements

1. Revision
2. Money
3. Dissertation
4. Mum
5. Paul
6. Asthma
7. Job hunting

8. Walking home
 9. Exams
 10. Teaching Practice
 11. Unfamiliar situations
- Fear of illness - terminal

Constructs

1. In control, no fear
Out of control, fear associated
2. To do with expectations and letting others down
Nothing to do with anyone else
3. In control, feeling of inadequacy/imperfect
out of control, able to prove myself
4. External influence situations
More in control through personal defences
5. Totally out of my control
Within my control
6. Time consuming/ for others enforced
Personal time
7. Cause
Consequence
8. Can't prepare
Don't need to prepare
9. Want to see / spend time
Don't want to
10. Actually happening
Irrational fear
11. Materialistic/security
Interested - can do when I want
12. Thrust into the unknown
Time to be familiarised, Preparation time

Type 2- Times when I feel:

CH

Elements

Things that made her feel;

1. Glad = being organised
2. Sad = others being upset
3. Threatened = teacher sitting in a lesson
4. Valued= phoning home
5. Useless = bad lesson
6. Frustrated = T.P.
7. Not valued = friends not contacting me
8. Interested = geog lectures
9. Frightened = thinking about frightening situations
10. In control = resolving problems
11. Happy = doing well at work
12. Anxious - exams

Constructs

1. Both need input from me - like things I enjoy/ am good at
2. Am out of control / due to someone else
3. I feel that I should be able to cope with these on my own
4. Feel satisfied by these
5. Involve people I don't have a close relationship with
6. Make me feel successful
7. I could do something about these situations
8. Make me feel happy, valued
9. Can make me feel inadequate/not good at anything
10. Can be satisfying in the end
11. Can be emotional/upsetting personally
12. Get personal satisfaction

M S

Elements

Things that made her feel;

1. Glad = praise
2. Sad = quarrels

3. Threatened = people misusing authority
4. Valued= being asked to join in or help
5. Useless = ignorance (mine)
6. Frustrated = inability to change things - i.e. powerless
7. Not valued = being ignored
8. Interested = when things seem relevant
9. Frightened = flying, sailing, being lost
10. In control = when I have a plan
11. Happy = on a beach , nothing to do
12. Anxious - assignments

Constructs

1. Praise and quarrels touch ones soul
/ more superficial level
2. Imposition of others external forces
/lack of any imposed direction
3. Two can be blamed on others
/first is my own fault - guilt
4. With 2 one has matters in ones own hands
/the other is beyond control
5. One is to do with skills
/other with relationships
6. 2 are done to you
/one is ones personal involvement
7. 2 are beyond my control
/I am in control
8. Can't see connection
9. 2 share a sense of inadequacy.
One is made to feel more than adequate
10. 2 are connected because one can lead to the other
/I can't change frightening situation
11. With two there is inequality between people, one being you, however this
could also be said about quarrels
13. With two of them I feel independent.
The other is imposed by others
(Comment on above by subject: "Strange dichotomy here/ needing people
and not needing or wanting them")

J1

Elements

Things that made her feel;

1. Glad = seeing my boyfriend
2. Sad = being ill
3. Threatened = seeing an ex friend
4. Valued = being welcome in someone's home
5. Useless = my mother's snapped Achilles' tendon
6. Frustrated = people not listening
7. Not valued = being ignored
8. Interested = talking about people/relationships
9. Frightened = being alone on a dark night
10. In control = talking about things I understand
11. Happy = seeing my friends
12. Anxious - exams

Constructs

1. Positive , enjoyable
Negative, not me
2. Feel threatened, not sure what is going to happen, personal reaction
Valued
3. The way other people treat me
Something that has happened
4. Make me feel confident, perceptive
Makes me feel weak, shouldn't have to be frightened
5. Things that have happened to me
Under my control
6. Make me feel valued and wanted
Needed - like having a role
7. Feel inadequate
Feel intelligent
8. Feel valued and supported
Alone, vulnerable
9. Make me feel out of control
In control
10. Vulnerable
Safe, secure

11. Affect me mentally - own perception of self
Makes me sad

12. Feel confident / good
Makes me feel undervalued

B1

Elements

Things that made her feel;

1. Glad = finishing a piece of work
2. Sad = hurting my Mum
3. Threatened = People asking me about my boyfriend
4. Valued= being asked advice
5. Useless = someone talking over a problem with someone else
6. Frustrated = not being able to work - focus mind
7. Not valued = hearing about my sister
8. Interested = something I can comment on
9. Frightened = not knowing how others will behave
10. In control = someone behaving in a way I would have chosen
11. Happy = talking about a problem and reaching a solution
12. Anxious - not knowing the truth

Constructs

1. Both make me feel competent/ successful
Let people down

2. Unsure of what to say
I control

3. I don't matter
Work does not matter

4. Me feeling in control
Not in control

5. Not valued
Somebody judging my approach

6. Being valued
Just a requirement

7. I'm bad
I'm important

8. People trusting each other
I don't care about you

9. Both threats
Me being counterfeit
10. Ignorance is frightening
Me being secure
11. Expected disapproval
Me perceiving disapproval
- 12 Both have positive outcome
Assumed disapproval

Appendix D - Results of Categorisation and Memoing in Study Six

Victoria

Unit of Analysis	Transcript	Categorisation	Memoing
1	V Well, I gave a lot of thought over what I would discuss with you because I really didn't want to discuss anything that was going to um cause me any trouble for the rest of the day because I've a lot of work to do. Um, but something that was really stressful once I thought about it, was um my problems with um eating as a child and it's been brought up in my mind because I'm doing a paper on anorexia	Restrictions on work Warning not to probe Defensive Attempt to keep on a 'head' level In the past	Feels like a warning and left me de-skilled in the sense that I felt as if I'd had my hands tied
2	M Right	Encouragement to continue	
3	V and although I'm not anorexic, I do have an eating disorder and I believe it was caused from um well my childhood and how my parents perceived food and how that was instilled within me. And every evening at supper time um, the meal would be prepared we'd all sit-down at the table and um, I wasn't..I was a particularly fussy child when it came to eating and my family just, everybody else just loves food and I was, it was insisted upon me that I sit there and eat every last bit and if I didn't eat I sat there and I sat there and it would be bedtime before I would leave the table and I was very stubborn about it and I refused to eat and so I've had this thing with food (laughs) all throughout my short life	Telling the story An explanation Self blaming	This feels like an exploration which has been arrived at, that feels OK and is 'out there' - responsibility with parents- nothing to do with me

4	V and it's just now, now since I've married to someone with a healthy attitude towards food that I'm adopting a healthier attitude towards food. But I really believe it was from this reoccurring incident in my childhood.	Solutions	Feels like a solution on a surface level
5	M So right from being very tiny you um?	An attempt to place it in time	
	V Right, I was very tiny. I can just place myself when I was very small when I lived there and I can associate that very much with that spot and as I grew older I had more control of course, over what I ate and when I ate um	Memory associated with a physical place Reflections on relative power positions	A reference to physical environment - feels as if other feelings associated with that environment - do they contribute to the stress? Also refers to power - more control as grow older? - again to do with environment?
7	So it was a control thing? You said you were very stubborn earlier	Question to try and move to a deeper level Reflection	I'm not sure why I picked out 'control' she hadn't said it, only she was more in control - is this me or Stubborn - it felt as if she was proud of 'stubborn' & not really connected with her distress - was it an attempt by me to justify stubborn?

8	V Oh I was very stubborn, but I think it was more about seeing them and not wanting to be like them because they're all overweight and I'm the only one that's not. And I don't think at the time that's what it was about, but that's what it became. Um And my sister, what she would do, um because she wanted to play with me ,she's older, she'd want to play with me ,so she'd come to the table, sneak in and eat my food so I could go and play with her which looking back was really wrong because it compounded her weight problem and it just said to me that, you know, if I just stick this out, I'm going to get away with it, ', so it was really , you know (laughs, ruefully)	Being 'not like them' Change of meaning over time Role of sister Presumed motivation of others Actions of others Hindsight Learning messages from situation	Lots more strands coming in - differences between her and rest of family , sister
9	M So it was all centred on food. But it became more than just food it's..?	Summary Invitation to choose direction	This felt like an attempt to get a direction/focus - its interesting how often I don't finish sentences! Perhaps I ought to pioneer it as a counselling technique!
10	V Yeah, well, its distracted into different areas of my life now. My relationship with my sister is really stressed because she sees me as the thin one and she says it, verbally expresses it ' you know you were very lucky to have me when you were little, to get you off that' and I really kind of carry that around with me, that guilt, that well, if I had of eaten, had eaten my food then maybe she wouldn't have the weight problem that she does but of course that's not really my responsibility -we're each responsible for our own actions but still, as a young child, you know, you do what you can to get out of these things and whatever works, and you go for it.	Move from past to here and now Relationship with sister Focus on Physical attributes e.g. thinness Difference in moral codes of adults and children	The guilt about the sister doesn't ring true for me - it feels very powerful to be the 'thin' one Highlights different perspectives of the world a child has compared to those of an adult.

11	M Mm so has the guilt sort of added to the stressfulness of the food?	Reflection	Did I ask about the guilt because it didn't ring true? Still very much in the head and my intervention keeps it out there - was this because of the warning at the beginning of the session?
12	V I think, but that's just something I'm realising now. Um, I mean I hated eating, because I didn't want to go through the hassle every evening. It was always the same and the only time it didn't happen was when I went to my Grandmothers and she always made things that I loved and I always ate really well and my parents were always shocked at me because I ate so well. And they're thinking 'Aw, you know, you don't eat like that ' Well there is a reason because they were serving this food that I didn't particularly like.	Ability to exhibit different response Hindsight	So it wasn't the food, but the situation - again, the child has different perspectives to the adult
13	V But every evening was the same thing. It was very stressful for me, and I mean, as a child I didn't really recognise that as being stressful. It was just one of those thing that we go through. Um, but I really wish it hadn't have been about food.	Differences in perceptions of children	
14	M Mm so what happens about food now, do all your old feelings come back or ..?	Invitation to relate past to present.	Come on, prove my theory !

15	V Well I do control, very much, what I eat. Um and of course when I was pregnant I gave myself a leniency that I had never allowed myself before. And it was really nice because I made foods that I liked and ate what I wanted to and it was, it was just approving that yeah, OK you can eat now and like I said, I don't have um an excessive eating disorder, I do have one and I recognise that I can't let it become excessive.	Recognise need for control Ability to exhibit different response An explanation	There's 'control' again - perhaps I was right before, perhaps it is important? Different responses when felt different - pregnant - like at Grandmas?
16	M Does it....does it get worse at certain times?	Invitation to make connections	Prove my theory!
17	V Yes I think so, well, it does when I get home. It's um interesting that, just thinking about that, it certainly does. When I go home to my families house, that's where we vacation in the summer time, it's very much what they want to eat and um, I really restrict my diet and it's, I don't think its something about a control there. Um , well perhaps when I think about it , perhaps it is about control. (long pause) Well, it's their food and its their home and when you go into someone's home you follow their rules and eat what they put out before you and that kind of thing and whereas if it were my home I wouldn't eat those things and I wouldn't prepare those things and ..	Making connections to other situations Justification Seeking an explanation	This feels at a deep level - exploring new connections
18	M So, are they, you say it's about control , do you not feel you have other control is it just a way that you know that	Invitation to explore that concept Reflection	What an incoherent question - control doesn't ring true - have I suggested this? What's the pay off for controlling food?

19	V Not over that aspect when I'm with them. I really feel, um , you know, I've got to control it. Just like going to the grocery store. I don't particularly like going to the grocery store with my father. He does the grocery shopping. And my sister loves to go to the grocery store. And I can remember her saying ' Oh, you know, go with your father, it means so much, when you get interested and doing those things with him'. But I don't have any interest in going food shopping. I'll do something that I like um and it's intra. It's a very interesting relationship for me this thing about how food has interfered with that relationship and with my sister, with my relationship with my sister. But it seems to be so much a part of the whole family. But I think it goes back to when we were young ,Mum and Dad didn't have a lot of money and every once in a while they'd really treat themselves to something really extravagant and the big joke was 'I wonder what the poor people are having for supper tonight!' and we'd all laugh, ha, ha, ha, but in essence, in fact, that was the essence of the whole. It was that relationship between not having good food, and being poor and having good food and not being poor. It just transcends the whole...	Relationship with sister Relationship with father Expectation of certain behaviour	Feels like a lot of pressure from the eating thing and feels very powerful. Ooohs - getting very heady again -'transcends whole..'
20	M It was a rejection of the poverty?	Interruption Invitation to make connections	Is that why I interrupt? How non directive!
21	V Mm	Thinking time	
22	M As well as a rejection of food	Invitation to make connections	

23	V Right. I wouldn't go to the extreme of calling it poverty, because there I mean there wasn't, but it certainly was a part of a whole.	Partial rejection of a possible explanation	- although she's agreeing, it doesn't feel a very meaningful connection for her - let's go with the gut & onto 24
24	M When you talk about it, it sounds as if you were quite different to the rest of the family	Empathy	
25	V Mm	Thinking time	That's got her thinking! - its interesting how the process slows down at these times.
26	M They were together and there was you.	Reflection Empathy	
			This session feels like an exploration at various and deeper levels - we go off down one track, dive and then surface and then go on another - it feels like a roller coaster. It fits into the idea of perceiving at different levels - conscious - deeper - but what about the unconscious. Wouldn't it be interesting to do a 'Groves' with her - Oh, no, I'm supposed to be drawing this Ph.D. to a close - but

27	V 'Well I've always felt like the black sheep of the family but that, I think that goes to another area when there was just the two of us and I always felt that if it was me I should have been the boy of the family and it was well known in our family they'd tried to have other children but there was many miscarriages after me and there weren't any other children so I thought that if I had of been a boy instead it would have been a little easier and I took a lot of responsibility on myself for that , and I don't think that was intended of course but when people walked by on the street and they'd said to my father 'living with three women, that must be really terrible'. And what does that say to a little child? I'm not so terrible but the fact was, 'Oh you don't have a son' And because I was the second last one well I took that with me more that I should have been '	Feelings of separateness from the past Wanting to be someone else Perceived to be valued more if someone else	
28	M Did that have connections into how poor you were? Did it have anything.....	Invitation to make connections	28. I don't really understand why being a boy was important - economic reasons?
29	V No, I don't think No. The relationship between the economic state of our family just had to do with my parents starting off, because now they are quite well-to-do. When they started off they did have two small children and just starting into careers. But it was kind of inevitable that, you know, years ago when you got into a career, you would be there, and it was just going to get better and better. So I don't think that money had any association with that. What I remember feeling as a child, that was very stressful on me as well. I think children take a lot of responsibility on ... that we don't realise the time that when we are so small, our parents or as parents we don't realise.	Relationship with father Rejection of a connection	This feels like a rejection of the poverty as an explanation of the stress. It feels as if she has a definite knowledge of the causes/connections but not on a conscious level.

30	M Is that how you felt you had to be for your father?	Invitation to make connections	Lets try this! - this is all in the past, what's happened to the here and now?
31	V Yeah and it was funny, because I really tried to fulfil that role ... going curling with my father, and going to the fire station, playing ball in the park, and just doing these things, you know, and I was never a tomboy, but just doing things that I would necessarily do.	Finding an explanation that seems to fit	
32	M in the normal way of things	Empathy	
33	V Yeah. Just to make him feel better I guess. You know, having daughters and being an all female family isn't so bad, you know, we're pretty good.	Acting a part	
34	V No, I just I don't think that there was a real in being honest with myself, I don't see that there was a relationship between my being responsible for so many things and food aspect	Finding an explanation that seems to fit	34. We do seem to know what's true for us and what's not.
35	M You said that you feel responsible for all sorts of things	Invitation to make connections	35. So what about this responsibility - does this have a connection - feels as if we're exploring another road and another possible link.

36	V *** and then there are some ways that I really looked out for myself, and that was one of them. That just exemplifies how I looked out for myself. No, I don't want to be like you people, I don't want to be overweight, and wanted to guard myself at all cost, and that means not sharing in our little outings to the grocery store, that's the way its going to be to preserve myself. So, maybe in that way there was a connection, just the opposite. Self-preservation ... I am not going to partake in this.	Being not like them	This has moved from the past - present - interesting!
37	V It was really that had such consequences on my ego part that worse for feeding. ***	Omitted as couldn't hear properly	It's frustrating to have lost the next bits as I don't understand 37
38	V Oh, I was always starving when I was little. I don't, there isn't a time when I don't eat but if I feel like I'm gaining weight or ... and its weird, its not ... I don't have the scales or anything like that, but just, you know, feel it, then that's it. There's no sweets or any extras for the next day and then I'll feel better, and then I go back to what I normally eat. And whenever it happens again, I control that aspect.	Differences in moral codes of adults and children Description of present world Back to 'control'	Still in the present.
39	M and how does it feel when you do that?	Invitation to reflect on feeling	
40	V Well, it's control.	Avoidance of feelings	
41	M It's control.	Reflection	The being 'not like them' has returned - it's obviously important but I'm not sure why.. - first time I think she's mentioned her feelings

42	V Yeah. Its me controlling all the extras that I have. Its ... It was quite devastating to me after I had my last daughter because I had gained so much weight, because I was, you know, really testing on all these different kinds of foods, and after I had her I was left with, you know, thirty pounds, and I thought 'Oh, God!'. And of course that control and then leaving it, it just didn't work it had to be control, control, control, all the way down the line. So, I'm still struggling with that but I'm much more content in myself than I ever thought I would be because it was so important to maintain this image that wasn't like them.	Being 'not like them' Back to 'control'	
43	M It's important not to be like them.	Refinement of meaning.	
44	V In that way, yes	Refinement of meaning.	

45	V My sister and I were going to school. Of course you can imagine the comments and *** and all that stuff that children do to each other all the time. And I really felt that I should protect her, but in the same sense she felt that she should protect me in all the other ways, and I was really protective of her. People were quite shocked when they would look at her and look at me, we're both sisters, and think they were verb..would say, how can you be sisters, she's so different. And it was just society just, you know, compounds these things and say yeah, what you see is what you do, that's right. Because, I mean, there it is. So really I really felt responsible and taking it further into my adult life, when I became ... when I learned to sew in my teenage years, I started making clothes for my little sister and then I took design in school, and then it just I continued making all the clothes for them, and I really feel responsible now, being away, that I can't be there to make them all these pretty things. Instead, they are going to the shops and buying all these ugly things, and its, again, that responsibility to them that, you know, I've got something I should be sharing with them because they don't have that.	Attempt to keep on a 'head' level Relationship with sister Compensatory behaviour Responsibility	- connections here between emotions and behaviours - wanting to compensate by making clothes, echoes of wanting to compensate father for not having been a boy.
46	M There's some guilt there?	Guilt re-visited	Why have I gone back to guilt? I seem to be generating less in the categories section - am I getting tired or is this the beginning of more of a focusing?
47	V Yeah, and it's all because of food	Back to food	
48	M It's very.....something of an awkward feeling, isn't it?	Empathy	
49	V Yeah	Agreement	
50	M Something of a duty?	Empathy	

51	V And, I mean that was distilled in me, and not by my family but by other people, because I was always counted out, you know. Oh, well that's your sister. Oh, aren't you a sweet thing or similar. And I really felt guilty because she wasn't getting attention and I carried that. That was my burden, you know, and I would always say, Oh, but my sister you know. She was really good at this or that.	Guilt re-visited Duty bound	
52	V Its interesting that you find out about outward appearance, because I have always tried to point out to other people how wonderful they are on the inside and that the outward appearance isn't that important. I think I could do that because my own outward appearance is much more accepted. It comes from someone who is thin. You say, oh, you know, well ordinary people, you know, they can be nice people too. I know. And it just ... it was just that fed *** through so many different aspects.	Focus on physical attributes e.g. outward appearance more accepted	
53	M Do you feel very different from the people around you ***?	Potential rejection of a possible explanation Tension between feeling rejected & having lots of friends	

54	V Well, I know when I got my allowance ... My parents were always very generous with our allowance. They always felt it was important that we didn't feel that we were any different from any other children, but in doing that they gave us just an outrageous allowance that really they probably couldn't afford. That became a commodity for friends and all types, you know, just going to the store and ... What would you like? What would you like? What would you like? What kind of ***? You know, mum and dad gave me my allowance. It was just outrageous. But it worked. And it said, as a young child said to me once, if you've got money then you can buy friendship, but I really didn't need it because I had very good friends. And it was just an extra that kind of thing. I don't know if I answered your question.	Defensive Being 'not like them'	- the question at the end jars - it feels like she took responsibility - it was her story - and then gave it back to me - no, it's yours. Also, there seems to be a very mixed message from some of this:- I'm accepted, my sister isn't therefore I will try and make people like her I have that power because I am thin and I can be magnanimous I had what I see now as an outrageous allowance which enabled me to buy friends but I didn't need to. - feels like a shaky sense of self worth Thinking about the differences between this and 'Georgie', it seems as if the 'source' of the stress in the environment for Victoria was about whether she was/wasn't valued, and for Georgie it was a specific event which shattered her assumptive and social world • transition theory
55	M Yeah, yeah, but it feels as if there is a sense, a very strong sense when you were young that you didn't...that you were torn between wanting to look after your family and making them feel that you loved them and cared for them, and that actually that was going to happen ***	Reflection of ambiguity	

56	V Well, I mean the food is just such an important part, and if I could instil within that just how important it was, I mean it was everything. It was for bodily maintenance, and then it became a show, if you eat well then you have money, and just ... its just something I did, you know. I don't give a lot of credit to beauty. Its just not something that I was talking with John, he says, you know, well food's just not for bodily maintenance, you know. We talked about the enjoyment aspect. No. I really don't enjoy eating, but that's changing ... and I'm wondering what its going to be like when I go home next time, because it will be two years since I've been away from home for such a distance. And it'll be interesting to see how the relationship changes. When I was home this summer I was much happier than I had been going home for a very long time. I felt that I had a ... I don't know, I wasn't just that little girl to my parents. It was a there was a respect, or ... just an acceptance of who I was and it was really comfortable, I really enjoyed being there ... until my sister came in. We are very competitive. Although I love her dearly, and I look out for her, we're very competitive, even of our ages and how big the distance between us, once we get with our parents. This, that attention grabbers. When I was eighteen I had my first child, and I was on the edge, and that played into that guilt. That I thought I would be taking something from my parents that wasn't being shared between my sister and I. I was soaking up their attention and their wealth and... my sister would state that to me, so it was, you know, oh, do you really think that? The more it was said, well then it must really be true. So I have to cope with that as well. You know, I wish it was so much of wanting to be willing to be just who you are.	Attempt to keep on 'head' level Relationship with sister Acceptance of role of food in relationship with family	This feels like a very important section & moves from a 'head' contemplation of food to an acknowledgement of its importance regarding relationship - the first time she has felt accepted for who she is by parents, how her sister threatens and competes for attention in that relationship.
57	M Instead of who you are supposed to be?	Empathy	

58	V Yeah, I think it's very difficult as a child because you're to be directed, and you should follow, and I ... I don't think that as adults we realise how much of an influence that we have on the children, and how much they really carry with them. And I've just realised now talking to you how important it is to respect children as individuals because it really is very damaging.	Attempt to keep on 'head' level Acknowledgement that she didn't feel accepted	This again feels important - a child not accepted for who she is - then straight out into an intellectual level. It feels as soon as it gets too close to the deep hurt, the defence of the intellect cuts in.
59	M So it was a way of making ***		What did I say? Thinking about the ambivalence of the messages given out:- I have an eating disorder / it's not serious/anorexia I could buy friends/ I didn't need to Physical appearance doesn't matter/ I have to be thin to be an individual and valued seems to be a connection between outward appearance being all and keeping all the nasty emotions hidden - as long as it looks all right, it is all right. I notice there's not much feeling stuff in here and a lot of intellectualisation - is this defence so that the unacceptable material stays safely in the unconscious?
60	V Yes, I think I was responsible for that myself. And I don't know why I recognised it and I don't know why I chose to make that ... that cutting reflection. I mean, it was really strong, at such a young age and I don't remember anybody saying anything. There probably was but I don't recall any specific influence, but at such a young age wanting to be an individual, to be my own person.		

61	M And to be different, and to have a concept that you were overweight.	Reflection Empathy Back to food Food refusal as a way of making herself an 'individual' Sensed this need very young	
62	V Yes	Agreement	
63	V Yeah, you really have to be quite up on it, and things that ... I guess its quite amazing now, I just put all those connections together at such a young age, and I'm talking like, three, four, five years, very young. And I don't know exactly when it started, but I would have been very young.	Trying to enter her world Food refusal as a way of making herself an individual	
64	M Yeah. Is your sister a lot older than you?	Trying to enter her world Who is this for?	
65	V No, there was just eighteen months between us.	Clarification	
66	M But she always seemed bigger to you. I get this picture of your family all being big, and you as little.	Empathy Trying to enter her world Sensed this need very young Important perception of self	
67	V Yes. But I always refer to myself as the little one, and I like to refer to myself as the little one because, God forbid the day that I become the big one. Aaaah. I really, I don't want that actually.	Important perception of self	
68	V I like being the little one. I guess there is some heartfelt fear because it's being the odd one out here.	Important perception of self Being 'tiny' made her the odd one out	

69	M The special one, the odd one out, but the special one too?	Trying to enter her world	
70	V I guess so. I always looked at it as being the black sheep, because I didn't conform to their family rules, or have their family associations.	Being 'tiny' made her the odd one out	
71	M but it had some costs along with the benefits, did it?	Invitation to make connections	
72	V Yes. I ***. It's still very much there. My sister is very envious in more ways than one, not just my physical side, but she is envious of my relationship I have with my husband and my children and ... its funny because I have always envied her lifestyle. She's single and she doesn't have any kids, you know. I guess that physical appearance is just so overwhelming in her life. That's because if she would have that, she would have everything. Its ***.	Relationship with sister Focus on physical attributes Back to food	
73	M Do you have ***underlying***		
74	V Yes. More so now than before, because I was a smoker before I became pregnant, and I think I used to turn to the cigarettes because that would help me control. The more I smoked, then I didn't want to eat, it really affected my appetite. And now, when I'm not smoking, its more difficult to say okay, I'm not going to eat or, you know, cutback. I'm sorry, I've forgotten your question, ***.	An exploration	
75	M When you are stressed, does food play an important part these days?	Trying to enter her world	

76	V: Yes. Its funny. I was thinking, a couple of days ago, because I don't want to talk through this, but I want to go home for Christmas, and I really don't like being there because of my family. Anyway, my husband really doesn't understand because his family aren't close like my family is close, which I think is a tragedy, but anyway, and I was thinking, Oh, you know, I would really like to show them, I really want a chocolate bar. Oh, I'll just go and have that. No, I'm not going to have that and I play these mind games with myself. No, I'm not going to have that because if I don't have it then, you know, maybe I won't feel very good and then maybe Richard will take more attention. So, its definitely ... but then I'd say, No, that's ridiculous. So I have these conflicts within myself. Yes, no, yes, no. But my logic self wins out fortunately. I don't take it serious. I'd say, Okay, I'm going to starve myself so that you will pay me more attention.	Attempt to keep on a 'head' level Making connections to other situations	This seems to be an explanation at a different level. It seems as though we need to make sense of things to ourselves and are always amending/deepening and incorporating - • schema theory Feels like the new categories are drying up now and we're into consolidating and incorporating new self knowledge.
77	M So it's still a control for attention	Trying to enter her world	
78	V Yeah. I went through it once when I was a child, to get their attention. 'Cos I never thought of it as an attention theme before, but more of control for me to be different from them. There had to be attention from that, but I just don't know I don't think of negative attention as being attention. If you're down *** yourself ***. But I guess it is a form of attention.	Way of getting attention	
79	M some kind of a starved of attention	Trying to enter her world	
80	V I love the word 'starved'. Yes, it does. I think I play that game with my husband, or I wish I could play that game with my husband, if I would let myself go down that road, because I do have those thoughts in my mind.	Making connections to other situations Acting a part	Wow! The power of choosing the 'right' word for the moment!

81	V Last Christmas when I was, went home and I was the smallest I'd been for a very very long time. I was 20 pounds lighter. My clothes were hanging off me and I didn't see it, and I wasn't anorexic, I wasn't purging or anything like that, I just ... I thought it was because I was living in the wrong way and eating strange food that I mean I really didn't like it, and it was just eat enough to get by, ... a lot of bread. It was terrible. And I thought, oh, you know, its just because I'm too displaced, nothing is familiar to me, it's really stressing me out. But when I got home, I mean, everybody was commenting, Oh, you're so thin, you're so thin, Oh my gosh, you're so thin, and of course at the time I was pregnant and didn't ... and hadn't yet, no, no. The attention was there. Its really interesting. I'm really starting to think about it now as an attention thing.	Finding an explanation that seems to fit Invitation to explore another path	
82	M It sounds like crying for help, for nurture	Reflection	
83	V Yeah. I really like to be nurtured. I know that. I really like...., you know, to be cuddled	Finding an explanation that seems to fit	
84	M And it's a parallel, this feeling of the nurture and feelings of rejection and feelings of being jealous.....	Invitation to make connections	
85	V Yeah. Maybe it was....maybe not eating was the attention thing for me. And.... I mean, it was a physical thing that had nothing to do with me against them, it was me against me. Does that make any sense?	Finding an explanation that seems to fit Invitation to explore another path	
86	V Yes, but in a very, you know, I'm not going to let myself be like you people physically, but if I do this maybe you'll keep giving me attention, anyway. And even though, you know, I rejected the *** itself, ***.	Finding an explanation that seems to fit Invitation to explore another path	

87	V That was it leads right into the other thing that I could have talked about but I decided I wouldn't talk about ... was as a child I was always referred to as the sucky one, which was the emotional one, crying ****, that kind of thing. And I would, and I can't. I was, and I still do.	Finding an explanation that seems to fit	
88	M It's a very difficult ***		
89	V Well, I was going to say, you know, with all this thing about thinking about Christmas and wanting to be home, and	Finding an explanation that seems to fit	
90	M And Christmas is a big nurturing time ***	Trying to enter her world	
91	V I have been telling my husband that I'm going to be really, really miserable, so you'll have to give me a lot of attention and lots of hugs and, oh dear	Invitation to explore another path	
92	V Yeah. So, I was the emotional one. I need lots of attention.	Finding an explanation that seems to fit	
93	V Yes. I was always the creative one and that always fetched a lot of attention, as long as I was being creative and inspirational and all these things I was producing were really horrible. You know, when you're a kid, I mean, its just natural. Oh God, they really put that on the 'fridge? Yeah, so that was another thing for attention because my sister hasn't a bone of creativity in her body. My father's family were very artistic and talented, and I guess I just benefited from that.	Finding an explanation that seems to fit	
94	V Other than that, I think there was always the competition between my sister and I vying for this attention	Invitation to explore another path	
95	M And are there times when you were scared when you were a child?	Me setting the agenda!	Where has this come from? - it's probably mine

96	V I'm trying to recall when I *** home because there is And then there was the time when I fell out of a car. I assume that I was scared, but I ... that's just from stories because I really don't remember it for myself. I really don't think as a child with her, I really felt scared. I really felt protected. With all the negative things I am thinking. I am thinking of now and my family, they are just so supportive, and ... it was a tragedy for me to find out that my parents were human, that they made these mistakes. When I realised this association with food, I was just devastated, they weren't as perfect as I was ***.	Not wanting to explore this, family wonderful	- this feels like a clear message to back off - family wonderfully supportive - I think this has closed her down
97	V They were right, you know. They were right, and I think I don't think there will be many children that would say, you're wrong, you just don't know any better. And ... part of my education that I had before coming here was on nutrition, and it was then that I realised, Oh, my God, you know, you're the source of all my troubles. No, but you know, you just don't do that. If you're going to have rows, you don't do it around food, because its such an important part of your existence.	Defensive	

98	V I'm thinking now of a time when I was really frightened of my father and I remember feeling really frightened, because ***, and we had a neighbour come over with matches when we were very young and the field was just all dried reeds and shrubs, and he was lighting little fires, and I can see my sister and I running around putting out all these little fires, and one got away from us and we were having this argument, Well we have to get my father to go and get the fire department, I remember, that would be the logical thing to do. And we were having this, I'm not going, you go/No, I'm not going, you go, and it was that, you know, I really don't want to take responsibility for this and my sister always did. You know, she was always the one who had gotten me out of all the trouble and if I ever did anything wrong then my father decided that it was time to get spanking or something, then she would always be the one who would take responsibility for what had happened, and she would be the one who would get the spanking. When I was very very little, I don't think he ever laid a hand on me.	Defensive Focus on physical attributes	
99	M Right, but you saw her get the spanking?	Finding an explanation that seems to fit	
100	V Yeah. And at the time it was like, Oh, you know, this is great. I didn't have to go through that. But then ... now, I really feel quite badly about letting it go like that.	Ambivalent	This feels ambivalent & perhaps a new area to explore.
101	M So there was a difference in the way you were treated as well as a difference in your physical size?	Finding an explanation that seems to fit	
102	V Yes. There was. But I don't know why she felt this immense responsibility to take care of me and still to this very day, you know, she wants to take on this caring role, and I'm really trying to tell, you know, look hey Sum(?), I'm married now, and I've got my husband and I can't do all those things that we used to do together ... and she just sits and gasps.	Focus on physical attributes	

103	V Well ... yeah, but in a much different way. In a way that, I mean, she's not possible. She wants there to be a physical closeness. You know, this thing about going home for Christmas. She doesn't understand why I would want to stay here with my husband because he can't come. So the decision was to stay with my husband or to go home. So she doesn't understand why I would want to stay, why I would pick staying over going home to be with them, and she takes it as a really personal thing.	Finding an explanation that seems to fit Focus on physical attributes	
104	M Mm, as a rejection of her?	Empathy	
105	V Which of course it isn't, but I just can't make her see that. That's something she's got to come to terms with. I always thought we had such a normal family.	Ambivalence	
106	V No, its not normal. But its funny, you know, its like I would never pick another family.	Ambivalence	
107	M Mm. Because its yours isn't it?	Empathy	
108	V Well, it was pretty darned good. I think with my husbands family I'd just think, how terrible, and I really feel sorry for him, that he didn't have the environment that I had. Yes, it was twisted. And at least I don't think mine were, and they are always there for me. I don't think his were ever there.	Finding an explanation which seems to fit Rationalising	
109	M ***the food?		

110	V His? Oh, mine. Yeah. I still wouldn't change because I think you have to come to terms with ... that people aren't perfect and, I mean, you just don't know what's perfect in these things. You don't get the chance to relive it again. I mean, I think they did a pretty good job under the circumstances. You know, its one of those terrible, terrible things. Having to say what's right and having to say what's wrong. I mean, there are things that will probably change whatever you do. Some things are perfect, some things are not. That's just me coming to terms with that. But I have always know since I've had this realisation about the food connection like, you know, if they'd only not pushed me, you know, then that's making them something that they're not and that's just not possible.	Rationalisation Ambivalence	
111	M But it feels as if it was a very *** at the time	Empathy?	
112	V Yep, I guess it did.		
113	V It's funny how we can construe things too. Food being nothing but *** my resistance	Finding an explanation which seems to fit	
114	M ***your own children?	Taking control of the session!	Whose agenda is this supposed to be!
115	V No, I really I don't put any stresses on food. My daughter eats things that I wouldn't even dream of eating. And that comes from my husband, because I would never have brought them into the house, right, and at her age she eats green peppers and onions and tomatoes, all these things that, when I was little, I peas...Ugh! All those things that I just they were grown up food, they weren't something that was ***, and she really enjoys it. So food is not a...	Explanation and rationalisation	

116	V My father? Well right now its very difficult for usually she comes up to me and gives me a hug, and when she does that I know she really does it for attention, I am cut pretty thin these days with the course and the baby and my husband, and the *** are very close, *** family. I always make, set aside, specific time for her, because she's always ... before Cousin (?) came along, she's *** and as the years go by her time with me gets thinner and thinner and I recognise that its got to be rough on her. She sees our time together disintegrating, so I try to make as much time for her that doesn't include anybody else. She's very reasonable but she *** more easily because she is so young, you know, she's really not ***. I really wonder if she does or if she's just saying that because that's what I want to hear.	Exploration, explanation and rationalisation	What on earth is this about - I really seem to have high-jacked the session here - perhaps it's as well I can't make out my interventions! Very interesting use of words 'thinner and thinner' to mean time is becoming more precious - I wonder if I noticed that at the time.
117	M ***We're going to have to stop in a minute,	Warning that session is nearly over	
118	V Right. Oh yes I'll go through this, you know, another, what's Christmas? Thirteen days. I'll go through it twenty six more times before it ends. No, its really an emotional time for me. You know, even when I'm home this is an emotional time for me because I just ... I'm one of those people that get all caught up in the feelings and, you know, watch the gathering. Christmas carols are on TV and I just sit there and cry. Oh, isn't that lovely! ... And I'll just sit there and, you know		This seems to have gone off on another tangent - to what I was warned off at the beginning?
119	M It's a really home-y thing?	Empathy	
120	V Yes. We don't have a big family but its it all comes together on Christmas, and talk about Christmas.		
121	V I let myself. I say, Okay, its not going to that much fun, and that's all right.	Permission to be miserable	
122	M And that's all right too?	Checking out	

123	V Yes, I allowed myself that. I told my husband, beware, because I'm just going to be miserable.	Permission to be miserable	Interesting how the session has ended by talking about the very thing she stated quite clearly at the beginning that she didn't want to talk about. This happened as soon as I said it was nearly time to finish.

Georgie

Unit of Analysis	Transcript	Categorisation	Memoing
1	M Okay, Did you have a	Invitation to begin	

2	G Yeah. When I was twelve we moved up north, you know. Everyone considers this to be the north. I kept telling them, No its not. Inverness was north, but I give up. So we moved up to Glasgow from being here and it was really hard, because it was the point where my life was starting to get together and I did things, I had lots and lots of friends, I had one year in a new school and it was really exciting and new, interesting friends. We had to leave them. I was high up in the Guides and I was going places, and that was all actually left behind to go to somewhere that is very beautiful and looks great but not where I wanted to be ... And it was funny, because a friend and I were watching a television programme the other night on *** Royal, which was the hospital where I used to work in, in Glasgow. And she went to the School of Art and she really misses Glasgow panning across Loch Lomond, 'cos people kept killing themselves in it and she's going, "Oh, isn't it beautiful, doesn't it make your heart wrench?" And I'm going, "Yes, its very beautiful but no it doesn't make my heart wrench ", and I don't miss it like other people seem to do. I much prefer being here, being back, and ... living here in the North East. I get a much bigger thrill going over the Tyne Bridge than I do sailing down the Clyde or whatever, so ... its *** and moving away. I don't know any of my friends that I left when I was twelve, and I'm sure a lot of them are still here, but I have no way of contacting them, who I have really been out of touch with.	Telling the story Beginning to talk about feelings Focusing on differences	Begins by telling the story, seems quite unemotional
3	M So you found it very stressful the actually move, and actually moving out of the area.	Trying to enter her world Attempt to explore feelings	I'm trying to understand her experience and enter her world

4	G And it dragged on as well. It was about the March time we were told and we didn't sell the house till the October and were supposed to start school at the end of August, but we couldn't go, so I had to go back to my old school for a month before we could actually go. So in a way there was two breaks. The one at the beginning of the summer when I actually told my friends, thanks for being my friends, and then the actually going in October.	Telling the story Adding more detail	
5	M So you'd already said good-bye in July and then had to ...	Reflection	
6	G ... and then had to do it all again. Plus, we my Dad started work at the beginning of the summer and lived up here in the Holiday Inn when he came home at weekends. So that was quite stressful and my Grandma lived down here in Newcastle, and we had to leave her. Because she really looked after us. It was routine that every Wednesday and every Saturday and my Granddad came up on Sunday, because Grandma went out and that all had to end because we weren't there for her, and like they didn't have the telephone so we had to wait 'till he went to the pub on a Sunday and 'phoned us, and said, Oh, I'm in the pub, will you phone me back, just for a chat.	Telling the story Adding more detail Beginning to talk about feelings Describing the behaviour of others	Talks about Gran as stressful, but again seems almost unemotional
7	M So you had to leave your home, you had to leave your school, you had to leave part of your family that were very important to you	Reflection Trying to enter her world	

8	G Yes. And go somewhere that was foreign. It was really different, really unusual. And the school was different because I had got used to being in an all girls' school and to go to a school where there was boys as well was really, really stressful because they're horrible to people like us. They were just really aggressive and pick on you, and tease you, and I found that really hard to cope with ... and just the whole framework was wrong with different schooling and everything ... and because I had missed so much school up here ... it was hard to fit in because everyone had made their friends ... it was their first year and the short few weeks I'd missed ... so they all had friends, they all had niche, and the other people who knew.	Telling the story Adding more detail Focusing on differences Describing her experience Describing the behaviour of others	
9	M That feels very lonely	Reflection of feeling	The reflected feeling isn't picked up, she still seems to need to tell the story
10	G Yeah. And it wasn't an area where you could pop into town. It was six miles out and it was quite a big deal getting on the train for twenty minutes and going into town and, although being eleven, I'd gone through Newcastle, the centre of Newcastle, I went to town and like been in town I coped ... but it was the difference between having things like the lift to go into the centre of Glasgow and go shopping ... and so actually getting around was difficult. My Mum didn't drive, and it's a very ... quite a wealthy suburban area and you basically needed a car to get out of.	Expanding on the difficulties Focusing on the differences	
11	M Can you remember what sort of feelings were around you then, when you first heard you had to move.	Attempt to explore feelings	

12	G I remember being in the kitchen when my Mum told me, and just crying and crying and saying ... but I do this here, but I do that ... and I think the feeling was probably very, very selfish, sort of I've got to leave, and why do we have to go? I kept saying to her, and she kept saying ... "Well, Dad needs a new job in a few weeks and the money and things."	Talking about feelings Describing behaviour of others	Can almost hear the child speaking but still no emotion showed - talks about rather than feels?
13	M And you just didn't really understand why your whole world was going to be turned upside down.	Empathy Trying to enter her world	
14	G Initially not, but she sort of talked me into it and understanding that Dad needs work and we weren't very well off. We always used to struggle. And this was the break he was looking for ... because the job came with so many bits and extras.	Justification Describing the behaviour of others	Sounds as if a small child is repeating what Mummy said without really believing it.
15	M And that sounds like a mature, reflection on it.	Trying to enter her world	
16	G Yes. Possibly it is. I can't really remember the feelings, what I was thinking, just being incredibly upset and crying and crying. But it was all going.	Describing feelings	I hadn't noticed at the time, but Georgie feels as if that little girl is trapped in time - she can talk about how she felt and acted, but quite dispassionately
17	M And yet you couldn't stop it, it was out of your control.	Empathy	
18	G And it was going ahead whether I wanted to or not and I liked their house, I liked where we were. Going somewhere else was really difficult.	Describing feelings Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	
19	M And it feels as if it was something that was done to you that you had no part in or control over.	Empathy Trying to enter her world	

20	G No, never sort of said, Dad's looking for a new job, he's been offered this job and he's accepting. It wasn't anything to do with us. It was sort of Dad's got a new job up North and that was it. But its always been like that, and I imagine it still would be if he got a new job tomorrow. Dad's got a new job ... sort of, well.....	Describing her perceptions Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	
21	M Is there any resentment or anger ?	Trying to enter her world Attempt to explore feelings	
22	G There was initially. There was a lot, but now its not the resentment and anger at the people it initially was. Initially it was "Mum and Dad, why are you doing this to me?" and now its projected out on the people around me who made it stressful for me when I got there, who made it difficult for me when I got to Glasgow.	Explaining feelings and changes	This seems very insightful - how she projected her anger and resentment onto those around her - defence mechanism?
23	M Was it possible to actually show your Mum and Dad how angry you were?	Trying to enter her world	Why didn't I follow 22 up?
24	G I think I did when I cried, when I showed them how upset I was. But they kept packing, they kept, sort of ... "It'll be good, we'll have a new start, you'll go to a new school, you'll have lots of new friends ... "and that probably lifted us up, but going back and talking to them about it, my Dad was very, very miserable. My Dad he had a really, really hard time at work, and suffered the same things that I did. And the taunting, the teasing and the bias..	Describing her feelings Describing her perceptions Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	
25	M But separately, you all did it separately.	Reflecting Trying to enter her world	

26	G Yeah, and we were never told about this. Because it was protecting us because he knew we were having a difficult time. It was hard for all of us I think. Not so much, I think, for my little sister but for Mum and for Dad and I. The four of us on our own in the house, didn't know anyone, Dad was out at work having a hard time, I was out at school having a hard time, and Kate ... just punched people who gave her a hard time, so she coped much better than the rest of us	Telling the story Describing her perceptions Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences Describing behaviour of others Comparison with sister	
27	M So there is no anger ***	Trying to enter her world	
28	G Yeah. But the thing about Kate was, she was very very miserable in school in Newcastle and she went to I've been, sort of, like head girl at the school, been quite high up in the class because I was brainy as well, and Kate didn't live up to the academic side that I had, and the Headmistress was a mental nun, who I'm sure was unstable and she used to taunt Kate and stuff and actually said to her when she was leaving the first time ... "Well, I'm glad you're going because we're sick of you ..." So when Kate had to go back for that extra month, it made it really, really hard for her, so I think she would have gone anyway, but back to St. Charles. So I think it was her break, it was she was looking for then to get out of a rut that she was getting herself in and possibly if she had stayed she wouldn't have worked in the confusion and feeling miserable, and it would have been difficult for her, so from that point of view	Comparison with sister Describing behaviour of others	

29	M You say that you thought you had selfish feelings.	Attempt to explore feelings	This, with hindsight, seems to have come out of no-where. Perhaps, in a good light, I was attempting to move from 'other' to 'self', but it does seem, looking at it now, that I wasn't listening to what she was saying about Kate
30	G Initially, yes.	Agreement	
31	M ... and that feels selfish...	Attempt to explore feelings	
32	G Yes. Because it was right for the family and all I could think of was, but my life was okay, and I didn't realise Kate's life was hard, and I didn't realise how hard it would be for Mum as well, being an only child and leaving her family, and how hard it was for Dad at forty to turn around and start again. I was just thinking of me.	Understanding others Justification	A lot of this seems to be about others - I wonder where Georgie is
33	M And you were made to feel that was selfish?	Attempting to explore feelings	Feels like we'd gone up a blind alley and here I was, trying to get at underlying feelings
34	G No. I don't ever remember being made to feel like that. It was It'll be all right. Come and have a cuddle. It was sort of I remember my Mum crying with me as well, so possibly I knew that she was sad and it was going to be hard for all of us.	Justification Understanding others	
35	M And there was a lot of loss wasn't there?	Trying to enter her world	

36	G Yes. A lot of them. Leave them behind. The biggest bit was probably Grandma and Granddad because they were always elderly grandparents. So when I was twelve, oh they were well into their seventies. So....because Granddad would have been sixty five when I was born and Grandma was sixty so that was the loss, the real loss I think, because they'd been such a big part of our lives. And the tortuous bit was my Grandma said to my Dad, "Come over for lunch on the morning that you go," and I remember my Mum just throwing a dinger at my Dad saying "I can't do that, you know what I'm like, I can't go and "It was at that point that I realised that their loss was just as huge as mine.	Telling the story Understanding others	There seems to be an awful lot of reported speech in this whole session. I wonder if it's because she's still trapped at the age she was when she moved and it's still in the present?
37	M And how was that? Was that a bit scary at the time ?	Attempting to explore feelings	
38	G Yeas. Because, sort of, its your family as well, and its suddenly realising that Mum and Dad were vulnerable and you never realise something until you see your Mum and Dad sad. Well, that was quite bad.	Understanding others Describing feelings	'That was quite bad' feels important but she doesn't follow it up - it's almost as if as soon as she comes close she has to dive off again
39	M You lost the sort of childhood idea that your Mum and Dad were there and would protect you from everything, and be strong and safe and?	Empathy Trying to enter her world	
40	G Yes. There was some of that around, I think, but at the same time they kept pulling themselves round and saying, "But we're gonna have fun, and Grandma will come and see us, will come and stay with us for weeks and things", which was novel because she had always been there. She'd always been a day Grandma and Grandpa, so having her stay. I kept saying, "You'll come up soon, and you'll come and stay with us and we'll do this for you and send you this," and trying to bring out the good bits like ... you'll have new friends, you'll have lots of new friends.	Describing behaviour of others Trying to look at the bright side	She seems to have tried to look on the bright side - emotion - focused coping?

41	M Though it didn't happen like that, did it?	Trying to enter her world	
42	G No. It didn't. It was different. It was all just so different, and it was difficult to imagine a place three hours up the road but that was so, so different.	Focusing on differences	
43	M It was a new culture, new country, new ways of behaving ?	Empathy	
44	G New ideals and new priorities as well. It was always the religion that got me, because Northumberland is a very Christian place, We go to Bamburgh and places, and there's Columbus and all the rest of it and Holy Island. And when we went back, last year when I graduated, I said to my Dad ... Well, were they Catholics saints, or are they C of E, and he said they're Christian ones, its a Christian thing. And when you get up there its Catholics and Protestants, blue nose and tim. Don't wear your green school uniform when there's an Orange march on, you know, and this was very very difficult to cope with. And you don't I didn't realise until last summer how entrenched really it had become, and how important it was to say to people ... which school did you go to, and have them saying well I went to St. Alloicious or I went to Beau-Clare of Cagney, so that you know what religion they are, and what you say and don't say. And I told people sort of straight up which school I went to, and it means nothing down here, absolutely nothing. It takes a while to realise and you don't fully comprehend what it means down here, or how dangerous it is. You know, its an old firm's game on between Celtic and Rangers, and Orange parades and everything. Its a really scary concept.	Focusing on the differences Adding more detail to the story Describing the behaviour of others	'Dangerous', 'scary' - seem important
45	M That's a way of keeping safe isn't it? To identify.	Trying to enter her world	This seems very 'heady'

46	G And you still, still do it. It just doesn't happen down here. Its just not there. Nobody's interested. It just doesn't matter but it does up north. And its...there's some really, really heavy vibes, and the Anti-English was really, really heavy as well. You don't get, we hate the Scots down here, there's a lot of them hanging around somewhere, but you don't get it. But you do up north. And its like you personally have done something to them. Its just the way of thinking.	Adding more detail Describing feelings	
47	M Yes. If I understood it, it had an effect on you. It felt a very scary time, that you lost a lot of that it was out of control.	Empathy	
48	G Yes. It was ... I would be a very different person if I had stayed if I had stayed, if it hadn't happened and coping with it has made me a different person I think, than actually ... the event of moving itself ... because its tainted right through my life the fact that I had to leave what I loved and I enjoyed and my Grandma as well, and more now because she's been gone four years now, and I'm being a sad person at the minute ... because I'm so close to Newcastle and I've had really hideous problems with my other Grandma over the past few months I have actually been able to slip into a dream world where I go to Long Benton in Newcastle and see my Grandma. Now, its not a memory, its ... I'm physically doing it inside my mind and that is very scary and I feel I've missed some time because we were away, from her and ... that's the bit that, I think, really affected my life. I could cope with boys at school and its all gone and I can put that away, and it doesn't matter ... but that Grandma ***isn't ... it's lasted over the years.	Describing her perceptions Explaining feelings and changes	This feels very important - effect of life events - ripples and stress not coming from the actual event, but from consequences - leaving what she loved - death of grandparent. It seems very intuitive - important for the study to be able to reflect upon effect of past experiences
49	M That you've been cheated somehow out of something that was precious?	Empathy Trying to enter her world	Why didn't I pick up on the feelings about her Gran's death more overtly?

50	G Yes. I mean we did see her, and she did come up quite a bit, but at the same time ... I think that, the even sadder thing, I realised, was just before Granddad died, Mum would sort of say, Granddad would stay with us quite happily, Grandma was a come up for a week and go back person, but Granddad would stay, quite happily sitting in our corner, feeding the dog, watching the telly, going to the pub with my Dad at night, and talking to my sister and her making him laugh, but Grandma was either trying to give my Mum her own life or maintain hers and I feel sad but it was never her real home. You know, that's the bit that Whereas for Granddad, he would have just stayed and done it. But not Grandma ...	Agreement Describing feelings Describing the behaviour of others	A lot of her material seems to focus on others and very little on self - I wonder if this is a reflection on the power others have had in her life - things done to her?
51	M Has it left you with when things are stressful now, does it feel as if they are out of all control?	Trying to enter her world	This doesn't feel like a straight Rogerian intervention - my agenda seems to be in force here to make connections to childhood experiences

52	G I try and keep a tight control on everything, to the extent that nothing is out of control, and if it is out of control it stops. Um, I very rarely drink because that's out of control, Um, I maintain very very good diabetic control and I think this has all come out of things being out of control earlier and how everything has to belong to me now. Um, when things get stressful now, (silence) yes, they're stressful because they are out of control I tend to find. Um, I got stressed a couple of weeks ago because Grandma was giving hassle at home and I wasn't at home to find out what was going on, and no-one was telling me and my Dad was coming down for dinner and I got a letter from him saying "Oh, your Mum and I had to sit down but we talked through the problems now, they're now sorted". I said "What, what problems! you know, what, what!" He just basically said "Georgie, I'll tell you on Friday, it's too complicated now", and I was just like, no, no! And so things that are out of control are stressful but the stressfulness doesn't bring on an out of control, it sort of works the other way round.	Describing her perceptions Making sense of her experience Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	This seems to be yet another example of being locked out of decisions and experiences
53	M Right, right	Encouragement to go on	
54	G If I'm in control, I'm not stressful	Making connections	
55	M Right	Encouragement to go on	
56	G and I can sort myself out. Interviews and work wise I don't find stressful because I'm always on top of it.	Making connections Explaining her perceptions	
57	M Right	Encouragement to go on	
58	G and I control it	Making connections Explaining her perceptions	
59	M but this thing - being shut out from things which are going on	Trying to enter her world	

60	G that really gets me	Describing feelings	
61	M which is an echo back to when being shut out when you were a little girl. Is that how it feels?	Offering connections	This seems like a new connection - It's amazing how often people seem to re-experience the same experiences. I wonder if the non- integration of experience means that we develop patterns of responding to people and events which 'cause' the repeat of previous experiences.
62	G It does feel a bit like that, yeah, it feels..... very like that. It wasn't my decision at the time and I don't think very many parents would have sat down and talked to their nine and eleven year old about moving, and about Dad getting a new job. I never really feel that that was unfair, but just being told that was the way it was , the way it had to be, was beyond my control. Even if I'd shouted and screamed and punched walls and said I don't want to go, it wouldn't have stopped it, because it was well ,way down the line. Papers had been signed, and the house was up for sale.	Making connections Describing behaviour of others Describing her perceptions Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	
63	M and what you felt didn't count at all	Trying to enter her world	
64	G What I felt did	Describing her perceptions	
65	M but couldn't change anything.	Trying to enter her world	

66	G but couldn't change anything, they knew I was sad, and it was difficult and it was hard, but there were good bits and I had to look for the good bits and keep a hold of them. I knew we would all still be together and it made us very very close, the four of us	Rationalisation Defence Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences Looking on the bright side	It seems that she was encouraged to 'emotion-focus' cope and to rationalise her feelings. She seems to have to defend her family's behaviour but it feels as if there is underlying anger
67	M and is that still a part of how you operate, you look for the good bit	Trying to enter her world	
68	G yeah, and you block out the bad bits, you just go, yeah its there, but its sort of, stand behind me and I won't notice	Describing her perceptions	
69	M yeah, yeah and it feels like when you're talking that that's how you try and see the world, as being ordered and the bits that don't quite fit in well	Empathy Trying to enter her world	
70	G Just forget about it	Agreement	
71	M Yeah	Encouragement to go on	
72	G and very black and white and very sort of well I'll just forget it sort of thing. Some people call it naive sometimes, but it keeps me alive. I would rather just stay like that and while I have got control on it, it stays good.	Describing her feelings Describing her perceptions	This seems very deep - 'keeps me alive'. I wonder if part of her felt she was dying during the move - drowning and could only stay up by 'looking on the bright side'. Again other people figure quite strongly - 'some people call it naive'
73	M When things do become stressful and they get out of your control, what sort of feelings are around then	Trying to enter her world Attempt to explore feelings	

74	G There is a lot of sorrow and panic as well. Last week I'd been feeling quite sad about it and worried, because I can't do anything. Last week I didn't know how my Mum was feeling and the other thing is I started imagining. My Mum is a bit of bottle and keeps everything inside, but usually there is a trigger that just flips the lid off and so I had imagined my Grandma sort of being very angry with my Mum, my Mum coming of the telephone and being angry and this being a catalyst for goodness knows what, so my imagination then starts to go and I can build it up into a, I had her dying of something two weeks ago or I had her losing her job, so I build it up into this whole thing where its just Grandma being Grandma again, you know so, it goes and goes	Describing feelings Describing behaviour of others Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	These feelings seem very reminiscent of her feelings from the move - sorrow, panic
75	M but there is a lot of escape into your imagination isn't there	Empathy	
76	G Yeah, yeah	Agreement	
77	M you like going **		
78	G It used to be the same when Mum and Dad went away on holiday. I used to find that quite stressful 'cause she never phones. She just doesn't phone and she could go for a week. We were driving to Devon you know, for eight, nine hours in the car, they could be lying at the edge of the road somewhere, and my imagination goes then as well and I can create whole scenarios, I've gone to funerals I've gone through, where does he keep his will, you know, but never ever asked him these things. Never said to him 'By the way Dad, where do you keep your will and where's your life insurance polices, in case you die'	Describing her perceptions Describing her feelings Describing the behaviours of others Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	
79	M You go through them in your head and then what happens ?	Trying to enter her world	
80	G I cry and then its over.	Describing her behaviour Describing her way of coping	

81	M Right	Encouragement to continue	
82	G I lay down either in bed at night or just whenever and just cry it out and I'm all right. More recently I've talked and I just talk and talk and talk and I feel better for doing it, hearing me say it all the time, but "It's nice to hear to hear people say its all right", you know and at the time I have built it up into a crescendo of my mother being chronically ill or anything and because that's in the area I have an imagination either, so part of me has talked more about it, than actually crying. I cry and then I say to myself, don't be stupid, you know, she is actually sitting in the middle of Devon, having Dad make her breakfast. They are having a fabulous time doing their Cathedral tours, you know, stop being irrational, go out and enjoy yourself and I do	Describing her behaviour Describing her way of coping	
83	M Is the world a safe place ?	Trying to enter her world	
84	G certain areas. I have little black spots where I wouldn't go because I don't feel it to be safe, but yes I feel very safe here and I feel very safe in Glasgow. I wouldn't in London, but when I keep saying to people, "Well I fancy going to New York and work." They all get sort of horrified, and they say, "...but that's not safe ", and like yes it is, its perfectly safe, its you looking unsafe that makes it unsafe, and I like, but I am too trusting sometimes, I take everything at face value I don't see lies very well and I think its safe. Its sad but its relatively safe.	Describing her perceptions	Again, a reference to sadness - the grief she felt over the losses she suffered in the move?
85	M but its hard work	Empathy	
86	G Yeah, its also a bit depressing, but if you stay in the happy bit, which is as I am standing here at the minute I'm going to be all right.	Describing her way of coping	
87	M so there is a geographic happy place, that its not to do with you but to do with to do with outside of you	Trying to enter her world	

88	G Yeah, you don't know what's going on and wars and conflicts and things. I can very very soon forget about, if I didn't have a radio I wouldn't know what goes on in the world, cos I don't have a television and I occasionally read the newspaper, but you know I actually went for three months living on a Greek island not knowing what was going on in the world and I am sure there was a war going on at the time, but it didn't bother me because where I was okay and if where I am is okay, then I don't tend to worry about the other bits. Its only when they start digging into your life, like seeing an Orange parade and realising that people are dying in Northern Ireland over religion, that it really starts to be unsafe and really starts to rock a bit and if you can stop it rocking almost, then you're all right, you're safe and hearing people sort of die in America or on the tube trains and this man going in and shooting them all and he's sort of like that's just one lunatic, but its all right its all right.	Describing her perceptions Describing her way of coping	Interesting that there is a geographic 'safe place' in that her stress seems to stem from a geographic move
89	M so you can create a sort of safety as long as you feel in a safe place	Trying to enter her world	
90	G Yes	Agreement	
91	M and you said that you have your diabetes under control	Trying to enter her world	Again, this jars as not following the client's agenda but mine
92	G Yeah, I thought it was getting out of control over the past few weeks and I have been starting to panic about it, but it not, its perfectly all right and I really don't have anything to panic about at the minute,. I'm creating it	Describing her feelings	
93	M Right	Encouragement to continue	

94	G so that's always been under very very scrutinious control. My Mum has good control and only ever goes to the hospital every three years, when they say "Well we're not going to give you a new driving licence unless you go", so she knows she is got to go every three years for her driving licence. I troop along every three months and when they wanted me every week a while ago, I went because having the control I need is really crucial	Describing the behaviour of others Describing her behaviour	Behaviour seems to be very strongly tied to controlling stress
95	M Right	Encouragement to go on	
96	G and always being afraid that the control goes and something dangerous happens and its only happened once and I still don't know why it happened. I just woke up, woke up unconscious, went to bed, was peeling an orange, it was Burn's night and Mum and Dad had twenty five couples in the back room. They had served all the dinner and they were doing the bits and my sister said 'I want a video' and I said okay and I had driven the car with double vision to the video shop, got her a video and was sitting watching a video and I said to her "Is everyone in this video just one actor" and she said "No, there was only one of them on the screen" and I was seeing multiples of them right, so okay this is a bit strange and I just went to bed with an orange and the next thing I know, was this rather tired looking doctor standing next to me pumping me full of glucose and everyone was going 'Its all right, darling you'll be all right' and having a terrible headache and the memory of that sort of keeps you, well, I'm, I'm going to be all right and if I keep it under control that won't happen and because its never happened to Mum either, so you don't see it happening	Describing her behaviour Describing her perceptions	
97	M When did it start, were you born with it, or ?	Clarification	This feels like I'm looking for connections

98	G No, I was sixteen . Well, it is hereditary diabetes, Mum had it, and I think her father had it, but he died when she was very young, and it was, they thought ...I went on insulin but they discovered about eighteen months ago my control was so good, that my body must still be producing some insulin so they put me on tablets which stimulate your pancreas till its sort of bone dry eventually and its not going to work any more. So at the minute I'm on tablets and that should last about six , seven months, but I'm having eighteen months out of it. So this is why its always is it going down hill, is it	Telling the story	98 & 100 Other people again - Mum controls it, therefor hidden message that Georgie should? Others notice weight loss - is there a fear that others will take control?
99	M Right,	Encouragement to go on	
100	G ...and I had a day where I drank coffee and spent it on the toilet, last week and that's one of the signs that your pancreas isn't coping. Plus losing a bit of weight and people saying " Oh, you're looking a bit thin ' and I'm going 'Hm. No, No, No'. So, I was reassured when I went to the doctor and he went "Oh, you weigh 11 and a half stones" I said "Yes. that's OK, I can cope with that" So its been there for a while, but not for ever. So I've mature onset diabetes of the young, being a very complicated person.	Telling the story	
101	M but to maintain that control, does that give you an um (phone rings) it feels as if it gives you real way of controlling life	Trying to enter her world	Back to the importance of control
102	G Yeah, it gives you a buzz. I mean it really really does. If you can sit there and this man, who's supposed to be an expert, like a couple of years older than you, absolute like, no clue about what is going on and he says to you ' Well, you're doing fine ', and you can say to him, "Yes, of course I'm doing fine, what do you think this is' You know, and I'm in control, I sort this out, I do this, I do that, I'm all right. Then the buzz that can actually give you, is huge, but what you've got to go through to get it, is really hard.	Describing her feelings	This control feels really triumphant and connected with knowing better than a perhaps more powerful person

103	M Right	Encouragement to go on	
104	G It's terrifying, to be put down by this person as well. They say "Well, you're a bit fat, aren't you and um....you're going to have deformed babies, and all this that goes on throughout your life...its...	Describing her feelings Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	Again, a very powerful and out of control emotion - terror
105	M That's horrendous	Empathy	This seems very judgmental and very genuine!
106	G Quite stressful. Um, it's a stressful experience when everyone has a high and mighty attitude of you, and when I was ill in hospital, and I was standing crying in front of the nurses desk saying to them "Please, will you explain to me what is going on' because although my Mum had had it for sixteen, fourteen years, it hadn't really been talked about, and it hadn't been discussed, because that's the way Mum copes and we knew it was there but we knew very little about it. Um, and I wanted to know, and this nurse just said to me 'Shut up, and go back to bed. They're only old ladies, they're not going to hurt you' and I was like 'Well, I just want to talk.' and she said "Shut up" and I was like "OK" so that's been my experience of dealing with medical staff right the way through, and then being seventeen and being told well, you know, if you get pregnant unexpectedly its going to have deformed babies because your blood sugar won't be able to be able to be controlled and to have all that. I thought it was funny at the time because I was seventeen and hadn't had sex to hear a doctor talk about it. My Mum almost had a fit. She was going to 'phone them up and scream. So, to be able to control that situation's a real plus.	Describing her feelings Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	She seems to be minimising her feelings 'quite stressful' which is a long way from 'terrifying'. Again, a sense of being shut out
107	M So, that feels like an echo, of not being in control of something, isn't it.	Empathy Invitation to make connections	
108	G Yes,	Agreement	

109	M and there, there, it's happening to you, well, and unfortunately, you have to put up with the consequences	Empathy	
110	G Yeah, and the ultimate other thing is that if I don't have diabetic control, I die, and I don't fancy doing that just yet, and that's what really keeps you going. That's what really makes you pick yourself up and say 'Look, you know, you're supposed to be doing your blood tests, your supposed to be doing it, do it because I know its tedious and I know you've been doing it for six years ', but you've got to give yourself a little lecture because you know life is over and if you don't you have to be realistic. You can't pretend that its just going to go away, because its not. It's, it's really hard because it affects every area of my life. I can't lose weight very easily and being a naturally round person, it makes it very hard. Um, then when I go back on the insulin, they're pumping a growth hormone into it but you're not growing up then, so the only way you can grow is out.	Agreement Describing her feelings Describing her perceptions	Again, this feels very powerful 'I die' and to prevent this I need to be in control
111	M Right, right	Encouragement to continue	
112	G So you're weight gain is quite huge and when I went into hospital, I was 9 stone 2, two weeks later, I was 12 stone. So it was my body coping with it	Describing her experience Describing being locked out of decisions and experiences	
113	M There again, that feels like something huge, that you've had to to control	Invitation to make connections	
114	G Um.	Agreement?	
115	M and it affects how you view yourself	Trying to enter her world	
116	G Yeah	Agreement	
117	M Do you feel that you.. um are round and **** and is that how you view yourself **** school?	Invitation to make connections	

118	G Um, yes. Um I was, I've always been very heavy and I've very heavy bones and I've always been that. From the second I was born, I was known as chubby chops in the hospital. So, I can never be thin. I will never be thin and I know that and there's just coping. Going to shop and realising that you just look particularly stupid in that tight thing because you've got bulges and stuff and you think 'right, OK.' and its changed over a while as well. sort of . If I can be fit, I'm all right, now I've lost some bulk since I came here and I've probably lost a few pounds, but I've toned up and the muscle weighs heavier than fat so I'm probably in an awful lot better condition though I haven't lost any weight. So if I can maintain that bit I'll be all right. And when I came back from Greece, I was actually really, really thin, but I still weighed 11 stone because it was all muscle. It was toned muscle so it's just there.	Describing her perceptions Describing her coping	
119	M And do you feel how you feel about yourself changed when you moved, up north ? 'Cos it felt that the picture you were drawing was of a very confident sort of go getting little girl, who is very secure and very happy and then that was all torn away when you moved	Invitation to make connections	
120	G Yeah, it didn't bother me. I was called Thunder Thighs at Primary School and I was like Ha Ha, very funny, smack and it wasn't an issue really at secondary school because I had been big I was five foot two when I was eleven, I'm five foot one and a half now, that's a bit of strange concept, but	Agreement Describing her experience	
121	M you've lost half an inch	Clarification Empathy	

122	G I've lost half an inch somewhere, Yeah. But going up north and slightly bigger it was an area of taunt again and then I think then it started to, to become quite obvious to me, and it was difficult because everyone down south had worn the same school uniform, the same sort of skirt and all the rest of it. It was much more fashion conscious up there and I found that quite, quite hard.	Making sense of her experience	
123	M So you started to feel not quite good enough	Empathy	
124	G I think so. It is difficult to remember a time when I had felt good about my appearance and you know that was ten years , well I would have been twelve and its quite hard to think well yes, I reckon I was, probably was okay when I was running around in shorts and being all right about it, feeling okay, but not doing the kind of stuff I had as well. Not being quite so active either. I remember not running around, not playing on my bike, not going places that I had. Just not expending the energy I had and stuff. Perhaps I had got bigger, but now its difficult. I remember being sort of feeling big in a P.E. class, but I remember feeling big in P.E. class down south as well because it was gymnastics and I couldn't do that. I didn't mind the hockey bit, but the gymnastics down here, I had problems with, but up north it was everything	Exploring her experience Adding more detail	
125	M So it was just one or two things down here	Trying to enter her world	
126	G Yeah, and the thing about being down here was that we had communal showers and we had a couple of very big girls in our class and I was getting used to my body and other peoples' bodies and that wasn't encouraged up north, they had single cubicles, if you had a shower at all	Agreement Exploring her experience	
127	M Right	Encouragement to go on	

128	G Umm, whereas the shower had just been a room that we basically ran through, down here	Describing her experience	
129	M and the result I suppose there was also a big physiological change anyway as you were getting to be a woman.	Trying to enter her world	
130	G I was a woman when I went. At ten I had a chest and a bra and my periods started and everything, so that wasn't really a big bit because I had done that, I'd been there, I had the bits and pieces, but everyone else was changing and they were sort of catching up as well. They were growing, they were getting thinner, I wasn't. I was still the same and I really wasn't changing. So I think, I mean I look at pictures now and think you look quite slim, your hips don't look too bad then, God how did you ever get into those trousers and thinking well you know, what's happened since then and now sort of thing, but I just try to get on with it and live with it rather than worry about it. It's always been an issue. Not so much	Describing her experience	This feels like a new area and again seems remote and distant. The pattern that seems to emerge from this seems to be that the story is told, explored, explored in greater depth, connections made - some new - and then a new tack and repeat process
131	M We're going to have to.....	Warning that session will end	This seems very abrupt

132	G That's okay that's fine. Right, I don't how many hours I was chatting away for	Indication of loss of track of time - being somewhere else	She accepts closure readily although it would have been possible to continue for a little longer. She seems to have been unaware of time which suggests she had been somewhere else - with that trapped little girl? This resonates with my experience of counselling sessions both as a counsellor and a client where at the end I sometimes feel as if I've just emerged from somewhere deep although I hadn't been aware of it at the time

Appendix E - Ideas for Stress Management Programmes for Children

The guidelines below have been compiled from the reports of teachers at workshops (from 1990 - 1996) concerning successful methods for helping children manage stress.

General Guidelines for Helping Children Cope with Stress

1. Know your child. You will then, hopefully, be able to:
 - a) anticipate potential stressors
 - b) recognise when your child is stressed
2. Acknowledge and accept the symptoms of their stress. The pains are real.
3. Build into your programme time to be with your child/children. Some children find it difficult to share their fears and hopes using language, so, if appropriate, it may help to use other media to encourage expression. These could include such things as clay, paint, sand, water, using tape recorders etc.
4. Encourage the child to think through their concerns and generate several solutions. It is also important to think through the possible consequences of those solutions.
5. Give the child the power to choose their preferred solution if at all possible. Even very young children are able to make choices and this gives the child the idea that some things are in their control and they are not at the mercy of the whims of the world. It also strengthens their self image and helps them become more independent.
6. Prepare children for changes in their lives. It is often assumed that children already know what is happening or are too young to understand. It is important, in order to avoid confusion and feelings of insecurity, that the child understands what is going to happen.
7. Try and involve the children in decision making as far as possible. This is especially important if the decision made is going to affect them.

8. Make boundaries and have routines so that the child feels safe and contained. Some of these may be open to negotiation, but once established, must remain firm until re negotiated. If more than one adult is concerned with setting these boundaries, it is important that agreement is mutual.
9. Routines should include:
 - a) good diet
 - b) exercise
 - c) sometime for the child to do something for themselves
 - d) regular bedtimes and enough sleep
10. Respect your child's integrity.

General Guidelines for a Stress Management Programme for Groups of Children

This research has shown that resources for dealing with stress come mainly from within the individual, and this suggests that our role as stress managers is to put the children in touch with these resources. We also need to enable the child to be aware of support that is available to him/her in the form of friends, family, teachers, counsellors, health workers and other professional workers in this area.

A stress management programme needs to address the following issues:

1. What things do I find stressful?
2. How do I deal with this stress?
3. Are my coping strategies successful?
4. Can I think of other ways of coping that may be more successful? What will the possible outcomes of this be?
5. What resources do I have? Can I strengthen or increase these?
 - a) internal - personal strengths and qualities.
 - b) external - support from friends, family and professionals.
6. Can I plan ways of minimising the stress I'm under? This may involve looking at time management, prioritising and goal planning.
7. Do I have a healthy life style? Is my diet right? Do I get enough exercise? Do I get enough relaxation?

As has been seen from the findings of this research, the age of the child will dictate the methods employed in order to achieve these goals. It is often useful to offer as many different mediums for expression as possible. Some children will respond to poetry, some to music, some to talking, some to writing, some to work with clay or paint and possibly many more. Children also usually respond well to playing 'games'. These can be used to build self awareness and self esteem, as well as to explore other useful life skills and can be as varied as imagination allows.

