

2011

# An examination of the present and future selves of adolescents: Investigating possible selves and self-esteem in relation to gender and attachment

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McClelland, C. (2011) 'An examination of the present and future selves of adolescents: Investigating possible selves and self-esteem in relation to gender and attachment', *The Plymouth Student Scientist*, 4(2), p. 104-130.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/13952>

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The Plymouth Student Scientist  
University of Plymouth

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## Appendix A

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Charlene McClelland and I am currently a final year psychology student at Plymouth University. For my final year project I am studying the development of possible selves in adolescents and the influence their relationships with others may have on this development.

The study will involve pupils carrying out three questionnaires. The first questionnaire will look at the different types of possible selves adolescents generate. For example, a hoped-for possible selves may be 'I hope to go to university' and a feared possible selves may be 'I don't want to mess up my exams'. I will also look at the likelihood they believe them to come true and how much they hope or fear they come true.

The second questionnaire will look at your child's relationships and their social networking. For example, they will be asked to rate what statements are most like them e.g. 'It is easy for me to feel close to people' or 'I find it hard to ask people for help'.

The final questionnaire will look at your child's general self-esteem and will ask them to rate how much a statement is like them. For example, they will be asked to say whether the following two examples are like them or not like them 'Things usually don't bother me' 'I have a low opinion of myself'.

Please be aware that all the information provided by your child is non-identifiable, it is also strictly confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study. The study will take place within the school grounds with a member of staff present.

I have full ethical clearance from the University of Plymouth, as well as a clear Criminal Record Bureau check.

The pupils will be asked to take part in the study as part of a lesson, so if you do not wish to allow your child to participate in the study then please fill in the return slip below and return by ..... If the slip is not returned by this date then it will be assumed that you give consent for your child to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me on the email below. Alternatively you can contact my supervisor at the school of psychology.

[charlene.mcclelland@students.plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:charlene.mcclelland@students.plymouth.ac.uk)

Many thanks

Charlene McClelland

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I as Parent/Guardian of ....., do not wish for my child to take part in the research study being carried out at Lipson Community College by Charlene McClelland from the University of Plymouth.

Parent/Guardian signature .....

Date ...../...../.....

**Appendix B(1)**

Pupils Questionnaire pack

Please fill in the following:

Today's Date:...../...../.....

Age:.....

Gender:    Male    Female

Year Group:.....

.....

**Participants 16 years and over only:**

Please sign below if you have read the brief and give your full consent to take part in the study.

Signature: .....

**(B2)**

Possible selves questionnaire- Cross and Markus (1991)

Possible Selves Instructions

When you think about the future you may think about what you would like to become as well as things you are afraid of becoming. Thinking about what is possible for you in the future is called 'possible selves'.

Now take a moment to think about what you hope for the future, for example 'I hope to become a parent when I'm older'.

Some of you may have lots of hoped for selves whilst others may only have a few, don't worry just put as many as you can think of in the table below.

1. For each hoped for possible self you list, rate how **likely** that possible self is for you.

2. Then, rate how much you **hope** for each possible self to become reality.

You do not have to fill up the table just list all the possible selves that come to mind. If you need an extra sheet of paper for more possible selves please raise your hand.

| Hoped for possible selves you imagine for yourself | How <b>likely</b> is the possible self<br>1 (not at all likely)<br>7 (extremely likely) | How much do you <b>hope</b> this possible self becomes a reality<br>1 (not at all hoped for) 4 (very hoped for) |
|--|---|---|
|  |   |   |

As well as having hoped for possible selves, we may also have images of ourselves in the future that we fear.

Again some of us have a large number of feared possible selves in mind, while others may only have a few.

In the table on the next page, please list the feared possible selves that you currently imagine for yourself and rate in the same way as with the hoped for selves.

If you need an extra sheet of paper for more possible selves please raise your hand.

| Feared possible selves you imagine for yourself | How <b>likely</b> is the possible self<br>1 (not at all likely)<br>7 (extremely likely) | How much do you <b>fear</b> this possible self becomes a reality<br>1 (not at all feared) 4 (very feared) |
|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |

(B3)

## RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

### PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS!

1. The following are descriptions of four general relationship styles that people often report.

Please read each description and **CIRCLE** the letter corresponding to the style that *best* describes you or is *closest* to the way you generally are in your close relationships i.e. parents.

- A. It is easy for me to feel close to people. I feel okay asking people for help and I know that they will usually help me. When people ask me for help they can count on me. I don't worry about being alone and I don't worry about others not liking me.
  - B. It is hard for me to feel close to people. I want to be close to people, but I find it hard to trust them. I find it hard to ask people for help. I worry that if I get too close to people they will end up hurting me.
  - C. I want to be really close to people, but they don't want to get that close to me. I am unhappy if I don't have people that I feel close to. I sometimes think that I care about people more than they care about me.
  - D. I don't care if I am close to people. It is very important for me not to ask for help, because I like to do things myself on my own. I don't like it if people ask me for help.
- 

2. Please rate each of the following relationship styles according to the *extent* to which you think each description corresponds to your general relationship style.

- A. It is easy for me to feel close to people. I feel okay asking people for help and I know that they will usually help me. When people ask me for help they can count on me. I don't worry about being alone and I don't worry about others not liking me.
- B. It is hard for me to feel close to people. I want to be close to people, but I find it hard to trust them. I find it hard to ask people for help. I worry that if I get too close to people they will end up hurting me.
- C. I want to be really close to people, but they don't want to get that close to me. I am unhappy if I don't have people that I feel close

to. I sometimes think that I care about people more than they care about me.

- D.** I don't care if I am close to people. It is very important for me not to ask for help, because I like to do things myself on my own. I don't like it if people ask me for help.

|                 | <b>Not at all</b> |   | <b>Somewhat</b> |   |   | <b>Very much</b> |   |
|-----------------|-------------------|---|-----------------|---|---|------------------|---|
|                 | <b>like me</b>    |   | <b>like me</b>  |   |   | <b>like me</b>   |   |
| <b>Style A.</b> | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6                | 7 |
| <b>Style B.</b> | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6                | 7 |
| <b>Style C.</b> | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6                | 7 |
| <b>Style D.</b> | 1                 | 2 | 3               | 4 | 5 | 6                | 7 |

**Appendix C- see separate pdf**

**Appendix D**

Brief

Firstly, I would just like to thank you to you for taking part in this study which is looking at possible selves in adolescents. You may be wondering what possible selves are, therefore I'll briefly explain. Possible selves are the selves we think about for the future for example there may be some things you hope to be in the future as well as some selves you may fear becoming in the future. It will also look at how you perceive your relationships and social networks.

The study should last no more than about 30 minutes. In this time you will be provided with a questionnaire pack that contains three different questionnaires. There will be instructions at the top of each questionnaire however, if at any time you get stuck please just raise your hand and I will answer any questions.

Please complete the questionnaires individually without discussing them with any of the other participants. Try to answer the questions as honestly as possible and remember there are no right or wrong answers.

All information will be kept confidential and no one will be identified individually. You are free to withdraw from the study at anytime if you do not wish to carry on and your information will be removed from the study.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

## Appendix E

### Debrief

Thanks again for taking part in my study. I would now just like to briefly explain a little bit more about possible selves and the aim of my project.

At this stage in your life you are probably starting to think about your future and maybe even starting to plan what you would like to do once you leave school. By thinking ahead you are looking at your own possible selves. Some of the possible selves you may hope of becoming e.g. going to university. Whereas there may be others that you fear becoming, either way you are generating future possible selves. Possible selves are an important function in your life as they act as incentives to motivate you to carry out certain behaviours. For example, you may avoid certain behaviours to not become a feared possible self but also behave in other ways to achieve possible selves. Therefore, possible selves are acting as a link between what you are thinking, and how you are behaving to obtain a future goal.

One area I am particularly interested in looking at is the influence your parents may be having on your possible selves. I'm sure most of you are aware that your parents have been a big part of your life and helped you make decisions however, adolescence is a time in your life when you are becoming increasingly more independent of your parents so I would like to see the influence they are still having on your development at this time.

Now that you have carried out this study you have hopefully gained some awareness of possible selves which may help you to start thinking about your future if you haven't already and thinking about ways you are going to achieve your goals.

Once again I would just like to say that all your information will be kept confidential and will only be used as data for this study. If you wish for the data to be removed you can let me know at the end of the lesson.

If you have any further questions than you can see me once we have finished.

Thanks again

Charlene McClelland

## Appendix F

### Hoped and Feared possible selves definitions

General Success/Failure- Responses including general success in life. For example, achieving all goals set. As well as failure of one's goal's e.g. not achieving ones goals, going to prison.

Occupation- Responses that describe a desired job or career that one wishes to pursue in the future e.g. 'I hope become a midwife'.

*Relationship/Interpersonal-* Responses related to any aspect of relationships in one's life for example, getting married, having children, or just generally having people around who care. As well as any worries of losing significant others e.g. family dying or not being able to have children.

*Material/Financial-* Responses related to any general financial gain or losses such as being rich, winning the lottery. As well as any material desires such as a nice house, car, clothes etc.

*Education/Academic-* Any responses related to general learning or attaining knowledge through education. For example, success with exams in school, or going to University.

*General Health-* Responses that are related to one's own general health including both physical and medical. For example responses could be to do with physical illness or disease, as well as one's own death.

*Psychological Health-* Responses that are related to one's own emotional wellbeing e.g. I want to be happy, or avoiding mental health difficulties e.g. I don't want to become depressed. It also involves responses to do with addiction or abuse e.g. I don't want to become a drug addict.

*Personal appearance (This category is only applicable to feared selves)* -Responses that describe one's outward physical appearance such as gaining weight in the future.