

# A Lens of the Unknown: Exploring the Unconscious of Childhood Self-concept

Daryl Niko Cempron<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Central Mindanao University

July 15, 2021

## Abstract

The core of the study is looking into the self-concept of the selected informed informants and interpreted it through Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory on mistrust. The prime and intense assumption that the results magnified is that, *"direct consciously observed self-concept of mistrust is the product of unconscious feeling of frustration activated right at the onset of the child's early years which could be naturally repressed but never fades as it can always be projected once ignited."*

## Introduction

Self-concept, by its very own logic, is the understanding of a person about him/herself. This understanding is influenced by certain dimensions that are both coming from the internal and external elements of the environment. Urie Bronfenbrenner in his *'bio-ecological systems model'* proposed that these factors could be categorized into certain systems ranging from the ones that have direct influence to the elements that have indirect relations on the person growing up, such that the understanding of the self is a continuous process of development regardless of its flows and progression- 'continuity and discontinuity. Bronfenbrenner labeled the systems as *amicrosystem* , comprising the immediate influences of the child's spectrum i.e. family, school, friends, etc.; *mesosystem* , acting as the interrelationships among the components of the child's microsystem; *exosystem* , the indirect environments like mass media; *macrosystem* , social ideologies and values of cultures and sub-cultures; and *chronosystem* , or the time and historic influences (Elliot & Davis, 2020).

Because of these complexities, varied theorists and theories have established concepts that set up torches to understand the matter resulting in great variations of claims that are piling up. Among these theories, the top of the list placed the psychosocial development theory of Erik Erikson that had become one of the cornerstones in the study of personality development. To wit, in his work on *"Childhood and Society"* which won a Pulitzer award, the Eriksonian psychosocial development theory highlighted the influence of one's environment, particularly on how earlier experiences gradually build upon the next and result in one's personality. Delicately, it delved into how personality was formed and believed that the earlier stages served as a foundation for the later stages (Feist, Feist & Roberts, 2018).

This study had evolved from personal insights gained from rigorous study and lectures of the Eriksonian theory for seven years in the university in which it has been noticed that it always ignite interest among the students as it dealt primarily on how their personalities have become and are becoming beginning from infancy to the present stage they are in, and as it tackles the relationships they have had with the significant persons in their lives- their parents, guardians and/or carers.

Given that self-understanding predisposes its ultimate relevance to all persons, this study involved 10 informed individuals through naturalistic observations and individualistic interviews in which questions were patterned from that of Erikson's theory. Such that throughout the papers Erikson's theory acts as a pedestal of exploring and capturing the meanings of the data collected on the matter of the informants' self-concept.

## Objectives

The study had sought to explore the self-concept of selected informants to which it specifically analyzed and interpreted the meanings behind their experiences through in-depth naturalistic observations and individualistic interviews.

## Scope and delimitation

This study had not been undertaken to predispose the Eriksonian psychosocial development theory. It did not test nor dispute Erikson. It merely used the theory in looking into the self-concept of the chosen informants. By doing so, it studied the responses through understanding and explaining them embarking in the context of the said Eriksonian psychosocial development theory. Moreover, the study eclectically collected the positions and concepts of other personality theories and does not have any intention of siding one over the other, rather its direction is gearing towards the so-called ‘meta-theorizing’ that is discovering a theory out of theories.

## Methodology

The study is qualitative by its nature, for which the data collection was done through naturalistic observations and unstructured interviews, such that the responses given by the informants were the insights of their self-analysis of personal experiences and observations from a vantage point of view. From the transcripts, thematic analysis was done in which significant statements were highlighted.

The preceding part of this paper gives a lucid understanding that self-concept is a sequential process of which along its way certain elements may or may not disrupt its progression. As it is the study dealt with the current self-understanding of the selected individuals.

Having the Eriksonian psychosocial development theory as the theoretical baseline greatly utilized the concepts of ‘*mistrust*’ and the ‘*unconscious*’. As they are on the early onset of such conflict it has been deemed important to account their present state on the matter of intimacy and isolation (not under the impression that their concept on such is complete, after all, they are still in their early 20s- some may have been sowing their wild oats).

## Ethical Annotations

This inquiry had obtained consent from the informants; more importantly, had respected their time and discernments. They were selected primarily based on their profound interest to which the basic information of the study most especially their rights and the process of ensuring the privacy of their identities and confidentiality of their responses were discussed, gave ample time for them to decide whether or not to participate in the study and letting be aware that should there be any unpleasant happenings especially emotional troubles that may take place along the way, that they would be provided all the help they that they would need. The ethical considerations were anchored from the principles of autonomy, beneficence, justice and research merit and integrity including the measures of ensuring safety and protection of privacy and confidentiality in the interview site (Cervone & Pervin, 2015), such that the data collection had been conducted in a safe space. Before the data collection, nevertheless, the study had been ensured to have adhered to the doctrines of research ethics, thereby had complied with the guidelines required by the Central Mindanao University Institutional Ethics Review Committee, as cleared.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Naturalistic observations had been done on the informants, magnifying their behaviors in the natural habitat such as in the classroom. They have individually interviewed in which questions had their way of making them look back certain episodes in their childhood, for as long as they can remember, and were encouraged to ask certain questions to their parents as to how they were when they were still infants and toddlers, considering the natural inability to recall experiences during such human development stages or what we call as ‘*infantile amnesia*’. Erikson contended the role of parents’ affection on the personality (vis-à-vis

self-concept of a person). The degree to which this affection is translated on rearing the child becomes an element of creating a balance between what we call *'syntonic and dystonic'*.

The thematic analysis had been done in analyzing and interpreting the collected data, utilizing the Colaizzi method (Mackey, 2005) that had been influenced by the Heideggerian interpretive approach (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In doing so, *'epoche'* or bracketing had safeguarded that personal judgments and assumptions did not spoil the process of collecting the data, upon which data saturation took place in the occurrence of redundancy (Faulkner and Trotter, 2017).

*Figure 1. Data analysis procedure*

## Results and Discussion

The unconscious un-gratifying of affection unconsciously demanded by the child from the parents is the building block of mistrust

The affection comes in varying degrees, when translated to actions towards the child and when it's being the child itself. It's relayed as caring for the child as it came out from the mother's womb, it is at most indicated by the way the mother held the infant and provides the needs. It must be noted though that infant's language is through crying no matter what and how it feels- feeling hungry, uncomfortable, uneasy, or just merely wanting to say anything but is only limited to crying it out due to the natural inability to utter words at this state. Hence, the emotional state of the mother at this point is of utmost critical for if it's positive then the actuation of the said affection wouldn't be absent or limited and that the infant unconsciously feels that it gets the degree of affection demanded from the mother. However, if the disposition is the other way around for reasons like the said pregnancy had been a troubling episode all along for the mother may it be physical or emotional, and then it would create problems on translating the kind of affection that had been demanded.

This demanded affection unconsciously becomes the building block of the development of trust in the child (trust towards people, trust within the self). If the kind of affection demanded by the infant had been responsively gratified and delivered by the mother, it gives an impression on the child that s/he would be secured all along because there is someone who gets him/her and by extension, someone s/he could confide every time there are certain needs that at least one person can give. This builds the capacity to trust someone or certain people and him/herself later on in approaching the real world, that whatever may happen there is someone to rely on. However, if such affection has not been felt, then it unconsciously creates a block, in rippling effect, on the capacity to trust, making the person withdrawn and isolated and eventually develop extreme self-reliance all along, for it gives the impression that no one out there is going to get him/her- what s/he wants and demands from people as an individual, like in the case of Informant 1.

*"My mother was in college when she became pregnant. She comes from a very poor family with 10 siblings. Being one of the elder ones, she had the responsibility of helping the family. Her education was a sort of charity from her aunties as a working student all along, transferring from one aunt to another just to make her education possible. Then she met my father, as one of the tenants of her aunt's boardinghouse in Cebu, who was also her distant relative. For a time they developed a kind of closeness that later on became unorthodox. Then month's after my mother became pregnant. Certainly not the right timing for both of them especially to my mother and at the same time the shame that it caused for they were relatives. It was ultimately emotionally torturing for my mother. So by the time that I was born, my mother decided to go back to school and left me and carried on with her life as it happened, and only got me at that time that she felt she was ready."*

When asked about the matter of trust, Informant 1 vividly responded that he is extremely independent and relies on himself so heavily all the time, implying that he trusts no one but himself.

*"I prefer to keep everything to myself. I don't know but it's just that I'm comfortable that way. It's like I just think that people have ways of ruining things."*

Observably, Informant 1 most of the time isolates himself from the rest of the group, and when asked why he simply responded that he's shy. He thinks that people may not understand him or judge him as he believes to himself that he's different. At first sight, he certainly is not a confident type of person, and at all situations, as he added he could not control doubting himself in all situations, and this has been constantly indicated in-class activities like the way he presents himself during recitations and report presentations. He always sounded as if he's unsure of his answers than even his ideas in those moments that he is asked to share.

Informant 1 described himself as an unseen character, and for him, he's comfortable that way. Interestingly he added that there are types of people down the road- the winner or those people who keep on winning at everything; the wanters, those who keep on wanting even it means stamping people on the feet; the lucky ones, whom he described as the lucky ones who get things without even doing anything; and the unseen characters, those which people tend or choose to not see.

*"Summer of 2011, I came to my father's house for a visit. His wife and children (my half-brother and sister) were kind enough to welcome me at home. So I took a visit and agreed to spend the night. It was awkward, but it wasn't just that. At the table during breakfast the morning after which was our first decent encounter because he kept on going in and out of the house when I came, he asked me about how I was at school and anything just to start a conversation, but then he said 'Medyo ipagahi lang nato gamay atong inisturyahan' (Translation: Let's just be a little stiff when we talk a little bit). They all laughed as it was like a joke or something, but I never felt that embarrassed about all my life. You see, Sir I'm gay, and being soft-spoken and modest is my nature. I was so ashamed of myself at that moment, and even now I still do. So right after breakfast, I wanted to go home while outside the house he just said 'naa ray motor diha huwati lang' (Translation: just wait for a motorcycle there) then he turned his back, and the memory of that keeps on haunting me since. Every time I remember that I still feel the hurt and how it crippled me."*

These confessions implied that Informant 1 did not receive the kind of affection he unconsciously needed from both of his parents, beginning at that time that his mother was too young and unprepared to rear him given the delicate situation there was plus that first and last personal interaction with his father indicating that he did not feel accepted for who he is as a person. All these have their way of negatively influencing him distrusting other people resulting in withdrawal and preference to isolation and the constant doubting of his very own self, seeing his very own self as the unseen character. When asked how it feels growing up with his mother, he described his mother as someone who controls his behaviors and worries too much about him, which turned out to be his ultimate reason for wanting to live separately ever since college, as such is suffocating as he described it.

*"When I went on for college, I took it as my chance of finally getting rid of her (his mother). So I do not go home that often compared to my board mates and friends, except if it's Christmas, you know out of respect and I cannot bear staying at home for more than 3 days with them. I'd rather just be on my own."*

Similarly, Informants 4, 5, and 6 also find it difficult at establishing trust in people. As they looked back, like Informant 1, their parents have also let them down during their childhood.

*"I don't trust people easily. When I was a child, I have a painful experience with my father. I assumed that he would protect me but he was very cruel instead."*-Informant 4

She further added that as a person she is dominantly cautious, that most of the time she weighs things as it could and consider if things would be beneficial for her which sometimes she finds herself creating her set of criteria on what she considers as right or wrong. Observably Informant 1 is very reserved and only interacts with a few people in the class. And when asked if she could rate as to how much she knows herself, she gave a rating of 6, adding that for most of the time, despite being too reserved and cautious, she remains unsure about her personality. As she described her parents, she shared that all along as she grows up her mother's attention has been seemingly devoted to his brother, making her find solace in her playing all by herself. She always feels no affection from her mother and her father is too strict which gives too many restrictions over her.

*"I do not trust a person easily. It takes time for me to trust a person because I feel like I have to know them better first and know their qualities for me to assess if they are to be trusted. Because I'm a bit of an over-thinker and will think that they are just going to break my trust. That is why I became self-reliant."*-Informant 5

He thinks of himself as dominantly cautious, that although he always says to himself that he should not care at all because it won't matter but as he described it he could control his mind of contradicting it. He feels like someone is always watching him when he is in a crowded place fearing that people will judge him in anyways.

*"I always fear change and doing something different. I always feel guilty even if I made nothing wrong and it was another person's fault."*

This had been indicated by the way he behaves himself during group works. Mostly he slouched when I make the class groups select a leader. And at one time that he was selected, he seemed to bother right at the start of the work till it was finished. Growing up his parents have too much restriction and too little affection towards him, sharing that they always demand him to follow everything that they say. It was suffocating, he said, despite that at some point he tried his best to understand them. Looking back, he believes that he missed a lot in his childhood and teen-aged life (comparing his self from others).

*"I don't trust people easily. Because I think that people don't take me seriously, I seem so unimportant to them. They find me uninteresting. Actually, I can sense it, when I'm around their actions are limited, they become more cautious and sometimes I feel like I'm the center of their conversations, that's why I often distance myself from people. I always tend to limit my actions because I'm more concerned about how people will react. My consciousness tells me I'm not worth it and that I lack something that will make me achieve more success."*-Informant 6

In the case of Informant 6, his mistrust is rooted in his personal belief that he's different and that no one seems to get her, given the kind of behaviors portrayed by people when she is around, resulting in her being very cautious of her actions and behaviors worrying of how people would take it, implying that her self-esteem is low. When asked about the way her parents deal with her, she then shared that they impose too many restrictions and that playing with other children outside had always been limited. Of such, it could be drawn that perhaps because of this kind of restriction that growing up Informant 6 becomes unsure of her very own behaviors in dealing with people fearing that it may not be accepted as she is unsure of how people outside their home behave daily and that in anything that she does her parents are the only ones who could validate. But arguably, parents could not stay with her at every second by the time she's going to school, and such solitary behavior is often associated by teachers as a desirable behavior of behaving, not realizing that unconsciously there's no in the room that no can say that in any behavior she choose to exhibit, no one is there to validate unless she's at home. But at home, her parents are already used to her behaviors, and that there is no chance at all to do validation.

The developed mistrust stays permanently

The so-called mistrust, which emerged from the ungratified affection from the parents during the child's early years, will remain engraved in the person's psyche. Over time, as the child starts to put him/herself out there in the society as an individual s/he then would be capable of making his/her own choices, interacts with people as s/he relates to them daily, e.g. his/her classmates, peers, fraternity mates on his/her preference. For a time and for another time unconsciously such 'mistrust' will be repressed regardless of its ways of being translated into actions. But like any other repressed feeling, it has its way of regressing in forms of feeling betrayed, feeling unseen, fear, inferiority, and hatred. It acts like drug addiction, while it wears off it has its way of coming back that haunts the person no matter how capable s/he is of moving on. But as it may seem s/he will never get over it. Unconsciously it reflects who s/he is. Perhaps there would be ways of managing it. But it will always be there like a hallmark of his/her own identity as a person.

Given the deep conversation with Informant 1, when asked how he is now after all of those deeply emotional

life episodes he experienced when he was in his early years as a child, he took a pause and confessed:

*"I don't know, Sir. I'm living, that's for sure, trying my best to fulfill my ambitions. But I always feel it. It's always in my head. Believe it or not, I've tried so many ways already of you know forgetting it and move forward, and no matter how countless I attend praise and worships it's in me. It's not like I'm depressed about it or I need help for it, but it just as it is."*

When asked if he already has shared this to someone besides me, he said that there's no one else worthy of sharing such; asking him why he thinks that way, he continued:

*"I tried, but oftentimes those people upset me. I think a single behavior of a person speaks if he is capable of handling and keeping a secret. Maybe that's why I never had a best friend, and you know long-term relationships because I confront the moment I sense that things won't be alright, and choose to end it right away. You know I don't want to be betrayed or left out or feeling embarrassed."*

Indicatively, such feeling of fear being left out could be associated with those painful episodes that Informant 1 had experienced in his childhood, starting from his mother who constantly left him thereby making him vulnerable to certain painful experiences and that one time that his father turned his back on him, all making him feel that there is no one out there who can protect him, such that the mistrust is further translated to being calculative on other persons' behaviors that become indications for him as not worthy of his trust. And the ungratified affection he unconsciously demanded from his parents becomes acts of betrayal for him, as in the society ideal parenting is portrayed as giving the kind of love and affection that the child needs and deserves vis-à-vis accepting their child no matter what and that each child is a blessing, but for him, he never had this from both of his parents. Henceforth, it leaves him unconsciously feeling betrayed by them, for which his trust had been broken at that time that he was still unaware of what trust is, and by extension the feeling of not being chosen contrary to the ideal picture of a parent choosing his child. Because of this, he feels he can only trust himself and no one else. He will never get over that betrayal, the feeling of not being chosen. As he moves on with his life, such remains and acts as a constant ingredient of his choices, the kind of interaction or relationship he can give to anyone in his lifetime, and his very own self-perception. The delicate trail is that the future off moments such as disappointments and frustrations he may encounter in his life would be associated with these.

This is partly true in the case of Informant's 7 and 10, although however, their experiences were different from that of Informant 1 as they both had a very strict father who bit them every time they do something that is against the rules their father had set.

*"My father has a horrible temper. I have 6 siblings, all of us are girls and I'm the youngest. Plenty of times when we were younger (even now) that our father would bit us whenever we do something that is not pleasing to him. For instance, I was I think Grade 2 at that time that I interrupted him while he was talking to our neighbors. I asked for 5 pesos for my recess at school. That day I was completely unaware that I upset him, but after school that was the time that he scolded me telling me that what I did was misbehavior. I said that I was just asking for a penny for my recess as I was leaving for school at that time. It got him even more furious so he bit me using his belt and I cried so hard. That was the first time that I felt that certain anger towards my father. It has then gotten worst when during my second year of high school when I came home very late because I hanged out with friends, of course, I lied when I asked permission from him that morning that it even made him so angry that he slapped me saying cursed words to me. That's why I don't blame why our eldest chose to marry so early and my other sibling left home after high school because we never felt loved by our very own father."*-Informant 7

When asked if they hate their fathers, their responses implied that what pissed them off is that they could not understand why. Being overprotective because they are all girls meant nothing to Informant 7, sounding that it's not enough reason for the way their father is being a father to them; and for Informant 8,

*"It's not only about the beating, it's the fact that it's being done to you by your father".*

Because of this, the fear that emerged during their childhood towards their father remains and is further

extended to Informant 7's fear towards men, that she never had a boyfriend and that whenever he sees a man with the same statue as his father she feels that fear right away. What's crucial in Informant 7's case is that she tends to associate men as figures like his father all capable of beating her, thereby unconsciously controls her behavior making her closed her doors and sets that wall on her, which is quite noticeable with her choice of friends who are all girls.

*"Our eldest and my younger sister were valedictorians in their respective batches, and my parents have always been outspokenly proud. We have so many medals in our house but none of those is mine. I'm not intelligent, not even an honor student. I remember how excited my parents were during my kuya's graduation in elementary, but during my time after that year, I only had one ribbon (the one that says 'graduate'). I never heard anything from my parents. They never scolded me for being a low achiever, but I could sense through their actions that it's different when they interact with my siblings. With them, there seems to be exciting but to me, it's just bland. At some point way back in high school, I tried to be on the honor's list but I was unable to do it, tried to have a placement in the student body four times but failed at having a spot; joined a quiz bowl once but didn't make it, my younger sibling managed to become the champion at that time. I'm not intelligent."*

#### -Informant 9

Informant 9's whole confession implied that she associated that affection she unconsciously needed from her parents in her earlier years and even now to achievements in school like what her siblings do. The thing that she could never be as intelligent as her siblings give her an impression that she could never get that kind of affection coming from her parents to her. As she added, she often feels intimidated by her smart classmates with the way she behaves during group works in which there was that particular activity in class wherein all groups would have to express their collective ideas about a certain topic, that it became suddenly apparent through her gestures that she wanted to add more to what their group leader shared. When her attention was called, she just said *"No further addition Sir"*. It felt at that time that she wanted to add something but was too hesitant to share, which normally happens to a lot of students. It did not only was noticeable once but throughout the semester with all of the group works, which is different from how compelling, aggressively opinionated she is in individual academic papers like she is a completely different person in her writings. It seemed that she is inferior to herself, that anyone acting smart becomes a reminder to her that she is no good compared to her younger siblings and that she is not enough. She has gotten used to the idea that she is not intelligent that she doesn't know her intelligence. When asked about her siblings' achievements she then shared that her elder sister was the editor-in-chief during their high school days and had competed in regional levels for campus journalism. The idea of her inclining writing appears unbelievable to her as her sister is blatantly good at it, not to mention the awards. It appears that her inferiority revolves around her self-established thought that there is no spotlight for her and her talent.

*"My mother became different when my brother was born. I could not understand her in those days eventually even now as I often find myself loathing her. It was like she was always angry, irritable, and easily agitated that I even witnessed her a couple of times pinching my brother late at night for crying endlessly. Then woke me up blaming for it which made me feel guilty. There was even a time that she fought with my uncle that she just blurted out of proportion and screamed. And one thing that I could not seem to forget was that she slapped me for not being able to find the blanket that she asked me to find, that was the first; then another time when I could not find something (I can any longer remember what that was). Yes, my mother slapped on my face not once but twice when I was a kid. And I will never forget that".*

#### -Informant 10

The slapping moments left a certain wound in Informant 10 that till this day she could not seem to get over with, as reflected with her facial expression, *the sigh for a few seconds, and the blank stare for a moment*. The mark gave a lasting effect to her because her mother became its total opposite at that period when slapping is not normally being experienced by children as a form of punishment by the parents. When asked how long did that *'depression last'*, Informant 10 shared that she could no longer remember exactly when

since up until this point she still feels that seemingly repressed anger to her mother. She even added that if only she has a choice she would have wanted to get away and leave her behind. The thing about Informant 10 is that she never has gotten over the anger that she has had to his mother since that period of her life. Perhaps at that time, she was unconscious of that said anger because it could be sensed to her that she understood that her mother was going through a tough time in that period. But that anger elevated to a form of hatred that affected the way she sees and relates to her mother at this point of maturity.

Perhaps her mother was able to surpass it years after and is well now but she could not notice because of that engraved feeling she has towards her. What's critical is that where else would this repressed feeling be translated? And the possible impact it may give to her when she becomes a mother to her child or when faces a sort of vulnerability in the future. Upon conception, as the child approaches the world, the senses gradually activate as they process things vis-à-vis John Locke's '*tabula rasa*' theory, predisposing that individuals are born without built-in mental content, and therefore all knowledge comes from experience or perception (Duschinsky, 2012).

### The Lens

In this initial onset of life it's a known natural phenomenon for the child to be incapable of determining things e.g. specific words to utter in communicating and to use in describing and labeling things around, but what's certain in this phase is the capability of feelings for it's the emotion that fuels their existence which then is indicated by crying regardless of the levels and dimensions of feelings. Klein (2016) saw human infants as constantly engaging in a basic conflict between the life instinct and the death instinct. As the ego traverses integration, preference to gratifying sensations over frustrating ones becomes natural to the infant. In their attempts to deal with this dichotomy of good and bad feelings, infants organize their experiences into positions or ways of dealing with both internal and external objects. Furthermore, as to survive is innate and no less critical on the child, expressing a certain kind of '*demand*' in which the child feels necessary for survival takes place. This specific demand can be described as the need for a scaffold or support, protection, and security that whatever may happen someone is there however it must be noted that the degree and levels for which it must be granted are relative as they say '*one child is different from another*'. Now regardless, when this '*certain kind of demand*' is not being met, it would unconsciously engrave a feeling of being betrayed which then influences the thoughts and behaviors which all constitute the emergence of mistrust. The child grows to have trust issues within the self and with people that would be commonly translated to fears, insecurities, hatred, and feeling unseen.

The social and cultural conditions especially childhood experiences are largely responsible for shaping personality. People who don't have their needs for love and affection satisfied during childhood develop basic hostility toward their parents and as a consequence, suffer from basic anxiety. Horney (2013) theorized that people combat basic anxiety by adopting one of the three fundamental styles of relating to others: moving toward people, moving against people, or moving away from people. Normal individuals may use any of those modes of concerning people, but neurotics are compelled to rigidly believe just one. The '*basic intrapsychic conflict*' that emerges from compulsive behavior transcends either an idealized self-image or self-hatred. This idealized self-image is being expressed as a neurosis. Self-hatred, on the other hand, is termed and described as alienation from self.

The comprehension of the informants' self-concept in the context of the Eriksonian psychosocial development theory anecdotes and contends the cutting edge of these important tenets: First, self-concept development takes place according to the '*epigenetic principle*' i.e. one part arises out of another and has its own time of ascendancy that does not entirely replace earlier components; second, in every stage of life there is an interplay of the dichotomy- conflicting interaction between the harmonious element and the disruptive element, syntonik and dystonic respectively. For instance, as vividly expressed in this paper, during infancy basic trust (*syntonik*) is opposed to basic mistrust (*dystonic*). Both, however, are necessary for proper adaptation, whereas an infant who learns only to mistrust becomes overly suspicious and cynical; and third, at each stage, the conflict between the dystonic and syntonik elements although may produce an ego strength, noticeably on the testimonies of the informants when such is left too little i.e. a child who doesn't acquire sufficiency



of its demand e.g. trust will develop the antithesis or the opposite of hope (Erikson, 1993).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

It is normal for a child to unconsciously demand a certain kind of affection from the parents. This affection resembles that of tenderness, care, support, acceptance, or security. It is unconscious because certainly it doesn't have the capability yet of labeling or determining a feeling and hence not understanding what affection is in that particular developmental stage, and the degree to which this affection should ideally be felt by the child is relative. When this relative affection is not felt because it's not granted, it eventually becomes a building block of mistrust planting and developing within the child. It is further unconsciously translated by the child as a form of betrayal resulting in difficulty of trusting him/herself and other people, as trust has been broken before its being learned; or a trauma generalizing that all people are of the same kind as his/her parents are to him/her; or a source of inferiority that lives within affecting his/her established self-perception; or an uncured hatred affecting his/her interaction towards his/her parents, influencing his/her desires for him/herself.

The emerged and developed 'mistrust' stays within the child and exists dormant. Naturally, it gets repressed for a time and for another time as the child grows and his/her interaction systems expand, but such will always be regressed depending on the kind of instance that may trigger it. Perhaps there are ways of managing it, but it's always engraved and part of a person's psyche, affecting and influencing his/her thoughts, choices, and actions, and ultimately the way s/he carries him/herself and expresses his/her identity in the society.

Demanding a certain kind of affection from parents is innate and natural, starting at that time of conception and developing as infants to early years that such nature starts as unconscious which later becomes conscious. This affection as it comes relative i.e. the degree that one infant demands may not necessarily be the same as others stimulate that its complex in itself to measure and determine.

The ungratifying of this greatly affects the self-concept of the person. It emerged as a form of unconscious betrayal for which mistrust is an offspring i.e. mistrust of the self and other people. It arises and marks in the persona and influences the degree of making interactions, relationships, established self-perception. There may be ways of coping with it but it remains engraved, whereas it comes out when triggered characterized by feeling unseen, fear, inferiority, and hatred depending on situations that unconsciously the self chooses to associate it with, like in the case of the first informant.

The study captured that parenting is a whole world as its own filled with a lot of elements that interplay with each other and influence how the infant child becomes a person of its own. The study marks a sign of another in-depth understanding, and more importantly, serves as a reminder of how one affects another and how one becomes one.

In all that there is and everything that will be *"on the crossroads life happens before the self knows it"*.

### Recommendations

Given the complex nature of studying personality development, it is further recommended a continuous undertaking of the selected informants through a longitudinal inquiry which would be drawn from Gordon Alport's morphogenetic method.

Declarations of interest:

Central Mindanao University, the institution of the author, for the permission and patriotic support of this inquiry, inspired by its pillars at advancing the frontiers of knowledge.

### References

- Cervone, D., & Pervin, L. A. (2015). *Personality: Theory and research*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Duschinsky, R. (2012). "Tabula Rasa" and Human Nature. *Philosophy*, 509-529.

- Elliott, S., & Davis, J. M. (2020). Challenging taken-for-granted ideas in early childhood education: A critique of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in the age of post-humanism. *Research Handbook on Childhood Nature: Assemblages of Childhood and Nature Research* , 1119-1154.
- Erikson, E. (1993). *Childhood and Society* reissued. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Faulkner, S. L., & Trotter, S. P. (2017). In-Depth Interviews. *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods* , 1-2.
- Feist, J., Feist, G., & Roberts, T. (2018). *Theories of personality*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Horney, K. (2013). *New ways in psychoanalysis* (Vol. 16). Routledge.
- Klein, M. (2016). *Lectures on Technique by Melanie Klein: Edited with critical review by John Steiner*.
- Mackey, S. (2005). Phenomenological nursing research: methodological insights derived from Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology. *International journal of nursing studies* , 42 (2), 179-186.
- Smith, J., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. SAGE Publications.