CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Evolution in knowledge is often marked by a change in perspectives. Changes such as these often entail a revision of man's conception and vision of himself, of the universe, and his place in it. Gergen (1973) argues that not only do people change as culture changes but also that theory and research "are firmly embedded to historical circumstances" (Gergen, 1973, p 315). Smith (1978) in his Presidential address to the American Psychological Association proposes 'selfhood as it has emerged through the millennia of biocultural evolution is always phrased in the terms of a particular temporally dated culture (Geertz, 1973) and these historical-cultural versions of selfhood, as of the world, may be radically different" (Smith, 1978, p 1056). He cautions that however well other aspects of psychology may fit the ahistorical ideal of Newtonian and post Newtonian science, psychological accounts of selfhood have to be scientifically adequate and that they cannot be timeless like the laws of physics.
In a historical perspective, Karlins and Andrews (1978) observe that:

"man's opinion of himself has been on the decline; According to early Christian thinkers, man ruled the best planet in the most important part of the universe. When Galileo, Kepler and Copernicus came along, the earth was demoted from being the centre of the universe to a mere satellite of the sun. Darwin dealt a further blow to man's self-esteem... and once proud man, already relegated to the corner of the universe, was shown to be descended from animal ancestors. Freud delivered the final/de grace. Extending the notion/coup of scientific determinism to include even human behavior, he boldly declared that all man's actions, even his noblest deeds, were the inexorable results of blind physical forces. It has been said that 'with Copernicus man lost his throne, with Darwin he lost his soul, and with Freud he lost his mind'" (Andrews and Karlins, 1971, cited in Karlins and Andrews, 1975, p. 83).

Today, more than at any other time, society is characterized by a constant and often unpredictable flux having nevertheless a certain distinctive configuration. Various epithets have been used to capture its predominant affective overtones. As Conger (1981) aptly remarks this is 'our characteristic predilection' for attempting to find simple terms to describe complex phenomena. In this vein, the present age has been labeled as the 'age of anxiety', (Auden, 1947, cited in May 1950) the 'age of suspicion' noted in a New York Times editorial (cited in Rotter, 1980) and the new narcissism' or the 'me decade' (Lusch, 1979 and Wolfe, 1976; cited in Conger, 1981). This is interpreted by some as indicating a greater preoccupation with the self and diminished concern with the needs of others.
particularly strangers. Karlins and Andrews (1975) observe that man's image of himself is reflected in the daily use of such expressions as 'alienation' 'disillusionment', loss of faith and lack of self-respect. They feel that the evolution of the computer, the growth in population, the ability of psychologists to control behavior with increasing accuracy— all serve to lower a person's sense of worth, his self-reliance, and his sense of autonomy.

The above noted anomaly has served to increasingly bring into focus the individual, his mind, his body and his self in a renewed and invigorated attempt to alleviate his self-worth and increase his potency in the confusing world in which we live today (Conger, 1981). This prevailing Zeitgeist has given further impetus to the study of the role of the individual's view of himself, that is, to his self concept. As McGuire-Padawer-Singer have stated, "This continuing fascination with the self concept is easy to understand: what we think about ourselves is probably the central concept in our conscious lives" (McGuire-Padawer-Singer, 1976, p 743). Simultaneously, there has been a gradual shift in perspective in the study of the individual which this is well brought out by Schultz who observes:

"A radical change is occurring in the way in which some psychologists are viewing the human personality .... Growth Psychology attempts to expand, enlarge, and enrich the human personality" (Schultz, 1977; preface iii).
This increasing emphasis on the self, which incidentally is one of those amorphous constructs that has become a catchcall for a dozen different theoretical perspectives has been to some extent well brought out by Wylie (1961; 1974; 1979). It is interesting to note that she has examined well over 4,500 references in the course of preparing her second volume (1979) and concludes that 'constructs concerning self play some role in all personality theories' (Wylie, 1968; p 730).

This preoccupation with the self is pervasive in psychology and perhaps the meeting ground for the two major social sciences of Psychology and Sociology. Holland (1977) expresses the view that the concept of self is a fertile ground for an interdisciplinary approach, further,

"...it is of sufficient breadth in its implications to pose the even bigger question of the relations between all the social and behavioral disciplines—what might be called for the moment, and with admitted postponement of issues of definition, the human sciences (Holland, 1977, p 11).

Franks and Marolla (1976) point out that the concept of self esteem which is often used interchangeably with self concept has found an eminent place in current psychology. As Wegner and Vallacher (1980) note the need to study self-concept as providing important insights into the principles underlying one's emotion, motives, thoughts and actions in the healthy as well as mentally ill individuals is gaining momentum in
contemporary researches. Edell (1975) goes a step further and concludes that negative self-perception is a primary source of alienation within the self system, between individuals, between individuals and society, between groups, and among human beings. More specifically, from the standpoint of pure research, its correlates have been found to have theoretical relevance. For example, self esteem is consistently found to be related to performance behavior (eg. Wattenburg and Clifford, 1969; Diggory, Klein and Cohen, 1964; Coopersmith, 1967; to acceptance of others (Shibutani, 1961; Gergen, 1971) and to susceptibility to social influence. (eg. Gergen, 1971). The self concept is also an important factor in information processing (eg. Markus, 1977; Rogers, Kuiper and Kirker, 1977). Applied researchers, especially in evaluating programmes find it an useful outcome variable. Winne and Walsh (1980) point out that the self concept of students is gaining importance in educational research and evaluation studies, both as an outcome sought for its own value and as a variable moderating other relationships (eg. Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton, 1976; Marx and Taylor, 1977). Improved self concept also has appeared as an intended product of innovative educational programs designed to benefit minority and disadvantaged groups. Its utility as an intervening variable (Rosenberg, 1965) as well as its association with other major social and psychological variables make it of interest to positivistically oriented sociologists and Humaninst's find it relevant
to such concerns as human dignity, autonomy and ability to perform in democratic style. In the clinical setting the concept of self suggests a base for understanding patient dynamics as well as generating treatment implications (e.g. Brissett, 1972; Rogers, 1951, 1959; Bugental 1952, 1965; May, 1967; Ellis, 1974; Beck, 1963). Fitts, (1971, 111, 1972, v) proposes that the self concept expresses an individual's true raison d'être and is a supramoderator of his functioning. He observes that knowledge of the self concept provides an index of an individual's state of self-actualization, and a core set of data for predicting his behavior' (Fitts, 1971, 111 p 9).

At this juncture it may be of interest to note that Fitts conceptualization of the self concept incorporates the dual approaches of adaptation and growth. Rogers (1961) self-theory also indicates the same and he refers in detail to the attributes of a 'fully functioning personality'. Maslow (1954, 1968) gave a great impetus to this approach to personality i.e., growth, by delineating the nature and characteristics of the self-actualizing individual. At present there are a multitude of ways and frameworks from which to view positive mental health wherein, in some instances, a relativistic conceptualization of its characteristics is implied. Coan (1977) has made an eloquent plea that the characteristics of the optimal personality is a value-laden
choice and has proposed a multidimensional view of this construct as opposed to the earlier unidimensional approaches. However, at present, this concept and its nomological network is far from having reached a satisfactory conclusion.

In view of the relevance of the different approaches to positive mental health and the pivotal position of the self in both pathology and optimal health it may be said that the basic framework of the present study is envisaged. Self concept, self actualization and such constructs have been empirically studied in various samples ranging from normals, mildly disturbed to the severely disturbed psychiatric cases in an attempt to further understand these groups. Thus, keeping in mind the contemporaneous trend and the relevance of the study of self concept in its varied aspects, the present investigation was planned which had as its focus clinical entities with the normals serving as a backdrop for purposes of comparison. This necessitated the incorporation of tools from both the adaptive and growth perspectives.

It was thought that this broad objective, that is a study of the abnormal and normal from the adaptive and growth oriented approaches would probably further sharpen and clarify to some extent our understanding of these phenomena and consequently be of some utilitarian
value to the clinical psychologist. Goodstein (1977) draws attention to the fact that clinical psychologists are being called on to work in a variety of new settings and that this necessitates the continual development of new skills as well as the utilization of existing ones. That this is an urgent call of the hour is further underscored by Barlow (1981) who recently observed that at present clinical research has little or no influence on clinical practices and that:

this state of affairs should be particularly distressing to a discipline whose goal over the last 30 years has been to produce professionals who would integrate the methods of science with clinical practice to produce new knowledge (Garfield, 1974; Leitenber, 1974; cited in Barlow, 1981: p.147.)

The self oriented approaches as well as the planning of the present investigation need to be viewed with reference to the above comments also. Consequently, for the designing of this research, whose broad objective was already stated it was imperative to undertake a thorough review of the literature as accessible to the present researcher. In the subsequent pages an attempt will be made to provide a relatively focussed review of this endeavour in accordance with the main aims of the present study.