CHAPTER   IV

Interpretation   & Discussion

The aim of the present investigation was to study the

effects of age, sex differences, sex roles and social class on

ego identity, purpose-in-life and present and future self-concept

of adolescents.

4.1.   Age

4.1.a.   Effect of age on ego identity.

A non-significant effect of age was found on ego identity

(table 21) indicating that the younger and the older subjects did

not differ significantly in their ego identity achievement. A

probable reason for this could be that the subjects in the

present study belonged to the same cohort and hence had been

through more or less similar experiences. Their roles,

expectations, attitudes, and the life-styles were also more or

less homogeneous and so did not have the differential impact on

their ego identity achievement. Since ego identity achievement

involves exploration of ideas and commitments it is possible that

rather than the chronological age per se, a challenging

interpersonal environment is more likely to have an impact on the
establishment of and stabilization of ego identity. The college
environment for example, is a more complex and important social
setting where open communication of ideas and minimal
restrictiveness of search for roles are involved. It especially
provides more complex encounters with the outside world and a
diversity of experiences by exposing individuals to a wide
variety of people, situations, attitudes and values and in turn
results in a greater and more diverse perspective taking skills
on part of the individual. During these later years, new friends
must be made, a variety of teachers and their expectations must
be accommodated, and new intellectual challenges must be
confronted. Hence, the individual is presented with a continuous
opportunity to examine himself in various roles, within various
spheres of activity without fear of catastrophic failure of
premature commitment to an identity.

4.1.b. <u>Effect of age on purpose-in-life.</u>

    A non-significant effect of age was found on purpose-in-
life (table 23) indicating that younger and older subjects have a
similar purpose-in-life. A probable reason for this could be
that the subjects in the present study were all nearing the end
of high school and hence may have been too young to have formed a
clear-cut purpose or a goal in life or may have been in the

process of formulating a purpose-in-life. With increasing competition and demands from the education system, the adolescents apart from regular attendance at school are also required to attend extra tuition classes and are constantly on the move. They are under tremendous pressure to perform well in school and get an admission in colleges and pursue further studies of their interests. Hence, the adolescents might have been too preoccupied to really give a focused thought to their purpose-in-life.

4.1.c. Relationship between age and present and future self-concept.

Chi square analysis (tables 6 & 7) revealed a non-significant relationship between age and present and future self-concept indicating that self-concept is fairly stable during adolescence. It is likely that the subjects in the present study were too young and might not have acquired the cognitive skills necessary for self-perception and introspection. The cognitive developmental theory suggests that it is the cognitive changes during late adolescence that makes it possible for adolescents to reflect critically on themselves, on their ideals, their past, present and future, and on their social experiences. In fact, a development of the sense of self over time is not possible until the adolescent reaches a formal operation stage of cognitive development since this stage enables them to think about

themselves, to become self-conscious and introspective. Thinking

and being aware about oneself requires introspection and

awareness of oneself as well as others' perception of him. The

subjects could have been too young to have given any serious

thought to aspects of the self. There is also an increasing

amount of evidence that emergence of formal operations thought

structure is not characteristic of all individuals. It is likely

that many subjects in the present study had not reached that

level of formal thought and hence were unable to reflect on their

selves.

4.2. Sex differences

4.2.a. Effect of sex differences on ego identity.

A significant effect (table 21) of the sex of the subject

on ego identity was found indicating that the process of ego

identity achievement is different for men and women. The notion

of sex differences in ego identity achievement has evolved from

Erikson's theory. According to Erikson (1968), female identity

emerges from an anatomically derived sense of "inner space" and

manifests itself in finding a mate and in a family orientation.

Erikson sees a woman's reproductive role as the dominant force in

shaping her personality. For males, an active "outer space"

orientation to identity is considered appropriate for achievement

and career establishment. Following body morphology, male

intrusiveness is manifested in such concerns as career and political choices and mastering the external environment, while female intrusiveness emphasizes the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships and therefore, it is likely that identity and intimacy coexist for most women.

In the present study, the girls were lower in their ego identity achievement than boys. It could be that intimacy is more closely related to identity achievement, especially for girls in India. Interpersonal relationships are more important to women and hence, the woman achieves her identity through intimacy i.e. in a close relationship with a man, whereas a man attains his identity through satisfactory work performance, after which he is ready to establish intimacy with a woman. The young woman's identity process tends to remain incomplete until she merges with a man in marriage. Although cultural values are changing in India, and career interests are becoming more common in girls, the overwhelming majority of adolescent women still expect to marry and have a family, and this goal is generally regarded as their primary one. The clear and firm message transmitted by parents, relatives and friends to the adolescent girl is that academic excellence and thinking about careers are fine, but marriage and maternity are paramount.

Support for the above explanation comes from Douvan and Adelson's (1966) suggestion that for women the psychosocial

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crisis of "intimacy" may be closely related or even be concurrent with the psychosocial crises of "ego-identity." Schiedel & Marcia (1985) have shown a significant relationship between identity and intimacy for women. Their results lend support to the notion that women deal successfully with intimacy issues prior to identity issues, while men tend towards a more step wise developmental pattern viz., identity first, then intimacy. Hodgson and Fischer (1979) similarly conclude that "issues of intimacy are intertwined with female identity development" (p.49). Erikson also seems to agree with this when he claims "...that something in the young woman's identity must keep itself open for the peculiarities of the man to be joined and of the children to be brought up" (Erikson, 1968; p.283).

The pattern of sex differences evidenced in ego identity development could be supported by a number of empirical studies (Hodgson & Fischer, 1979; Matteson, 1975; Waterman & Nevid, 1977). Many researchers have recognized that ego identity achievement is a more complex and difficult task for young women (Denmark & Goodfield, 1978; Falk & Cosby, 1978).

4.2.b. Effect of sex differences on purpose-in-life.

The present study did not show a significant effect of the sex of the subject on purpose-in-life (tables 23) which indicates that boys and girls show similar purpose-in-life.

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Purpose-in-life tends to make individuals more aware of their potentialities in terms of work, experiences, etc. Currently in India, industrialization and urbanization along with their concomitant socio-cultural changes have started affecting men and women differently. The growing awareness and consciousness of women as individuals in their own rights, a condition spurred by the women's liberation and equality movements seems to result in similar life purpose between the sexes. Since the number of women defining themselves in less stereotypic ways has increased in India, the differences between males and females has naturally decreased in terms of their conforming behaviour, attitudes, values, potentialities and the amount and the kind of work. For example, in a recent study Nurmi (1986) found that boys and girls had similar in terms of their occupation, profession and education. Hence, as many more people are coming to perceive the equality between men and women, it is leading to a blurring of the formerly sharp division between men and women based solely on biological sex, and women and men are starting to come closer together in their personality make-up.

4.2.c.   Relationship between sex differences and present and future self-concept.

Chi square analysis (tables 10 & 11) reveals non-significant relationship between the sex of the subject and the present and future self-concept which indicates that adolescent

boys and girls define themselves in markedly consistent manner. It seems that in contemporary India, industrialization, technological advancement, changing roles of women, changing family system and the impact of media have brought about more egalitarian thinking and attitudes, especially in the urban and semi-urban population. Higher percentage of girls are now going to schools and colleges, more women are entering the work force, and many more women are going back to continue their education and pursue an occupation even after marriage, thereby becoming financially independent and gaining a positive confidence in their abilities to deal with the outside world. All this has resulted in lack of differentiation in boys' and girls' perception of present and future self-concepts.

4.3. Sex Roles

4.3.a. Effect of sex roles on ego identity.

A significant effect of sex roles on ego identity was found (table 21). Androgynous and masculine subjects were found to be significantly higher in their ego identity followed by feminine and undifferentiated subjects (table 11). This could be due to the fact that a well developed ego identity is a dynamic, self-created structure and is open to the changes in the society and to changes in the relationships and since androgynous

individuals are less traditional, more autonomous and self-sufficient, they were high in their ego identity. Androgynous individuals need not restrict their behaviour on the basis of cultural stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, and therefore have a wider range of strategies for dealing with diverse situations than do sex-typed individuals. Such individuals can be dependent or independent, aggressive or submissive, expressive or instrumental, depending upon which is most effective in a given situation.

Sex-typed individuals on the other hand, are more traditional and have a limited repertoire of behaviour and limited strategies for dealing with the society in general. The sex-typed person is motivated to keep his or her behaviour consistent with an internalized sex role standard i.e. he is motivated to maintain a self-image as masculine or feminine, a goal which is presumably accomplished by suppressing any behaviour that might be undesirable or inappropriate for his or her own sex. Because of this pressure to behave in accordance with their traditional roles, the sex-typed individuals seem to be more concerned about how people are reacting to them, whether they are pleasing or shocking them. Feminine-sex-typed individuals are especially characterized by traits such as anxiety and dependency, they lack concern for their own needs as individuals and view their fate as determined by the action of significant others and hence have a more diffused identity. Such

individuals tend to cling, to confide and depend on others for decision-making.

It is interesting to note that undifferentiated subjects were lowest in their ego identity. As in other researches (e.g. Della-Selva & Dusek, 1984; Flaherty & Dusek, 1980) it appears that to be sex-typed is better than to be undifferentiated. Just as viewing the self androgynously is related to higher ego identity achievement and consequently optimal development, viewing the self as traditionally sex-typed seems to aid ego identity achievement though in a somewhat limited way, because it allows one to view the self positively in some ways and because it insulates the individual against viewing the self negatively. An undifferentiated sex role orientation permits none of the flexibility associated with androgyny, tends to be associated with low personal integration, and diffused goals, values and aspirations and diffused ego identity. Undifferentiated individuals are characterized by absence of crisis and absence of commitment because they are incapable of the introspection and integration necessary for identity formation.

The above findings are also supported by Matteson (1975) who showed that since androgynous individuals can show feminine and masculine characteristics at the same time, they are higher in their ego identity achievement. Orlofsky (1977) also found androgynous subjects to be high in ego identity achievement.

4.3.b. Effect of sex roles on purpose-in-life.

A significant effect of sex roles was found on purpose-in-life (table 23). Androgynous subjects have a significantly higher purpose-in-life, followed by masculine, feminine and undifferentiated subjects (table 13). A probable reason for this could be that purpose-in-life means to perceive an integrated pattern of goals and values in life and since androgynous individuals are characterized by a strong sense of ambition and responsibility and are also endowed with a strong sense of confidence in their ability they have a higher purpose-in-life. Androgynous individuals have a high integrative ability, show reversibility of perspectives and are self-determining which helps them set high standards for themselves in anything they undertake. Because they are more resourceful, and more enterprising they tend to strive more for the actualization of values and fulfillment of commitments which helps them set and achieve a higher purpose-in-life. Sex-typed individuals while they show effective sex-typed behaviour, they also naturally select a more traditional set of options in terms of their attitudes and life-choices and this lowers their purpose-in-life. Sex typed individuals are known to have lower overall intelligence, lower spatial ability and lower creativity (Maccoby, 1966) which reduces their effectiveness in day-to-day functioning and they hence set a lower purpose-in-life for themselves. Lower intelligence also leads to disorganization of

thought and personality and such conditions give rise to feeling of inadequacy, incapacity and helplessness. They hence are unable to have well-defined purposeful goals. Undifferentiated individuals are characterized by inflexibility in their thinking and behaviour and do not have a crystallized personality organization and hence, they cannot integrate their lives very well around purposeful goals.

4.3.c. <u>Relationship between sex roles and present and future self-concept.</u>

Chi square analysis reveals significant relationship between sex roles and present and future self-concept. The tables (14 & 15) and the graphical presentation of the data (see figures 3, 4, 5 & 6) for the present as well as future related items further reveal that higher percentage of androgynous subjects have a positive self-image, followed by masculine, feminine and undifferentiated subjects respectively. The reverse is true for negative self-image. Highest percentage of undifferentiated subjects have a negative self-image followed respectively by feminine masculine and androgynous subjects.

Androgynous sex role, since it encompasses both masculine and feminine personality characteristics, leads to a broader self-concept due to a greater flexibility in behaviour. A probable reason could be that the androgynous individuals'

Figure 3.

Proportions of each Sex Role group expressing Positive Responses to Sentences related to the Self in the Present
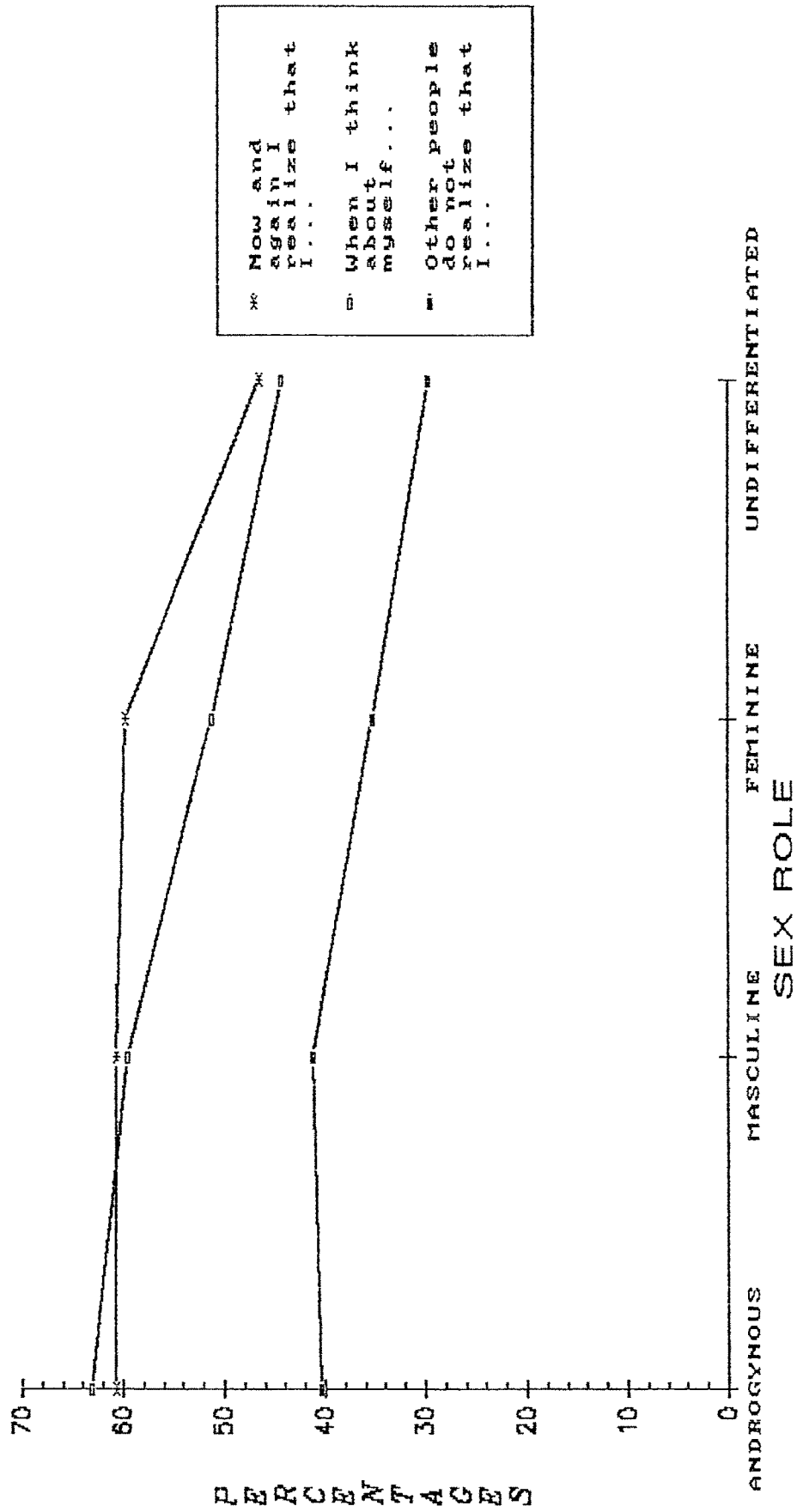

Legend:
* Now and again I realize that I...
□ When I think about myself...
■ Other people do not realize that I...

PERCENTAGES

SEX ROLE

ANDROGYNOUS   MASCULINE   FEMININE   UNDIFFERENTIATED

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Figure 4.

Proportions of each Sex Role group expressing Negative Responses to Sentences related to the Self in the Present

Legend:
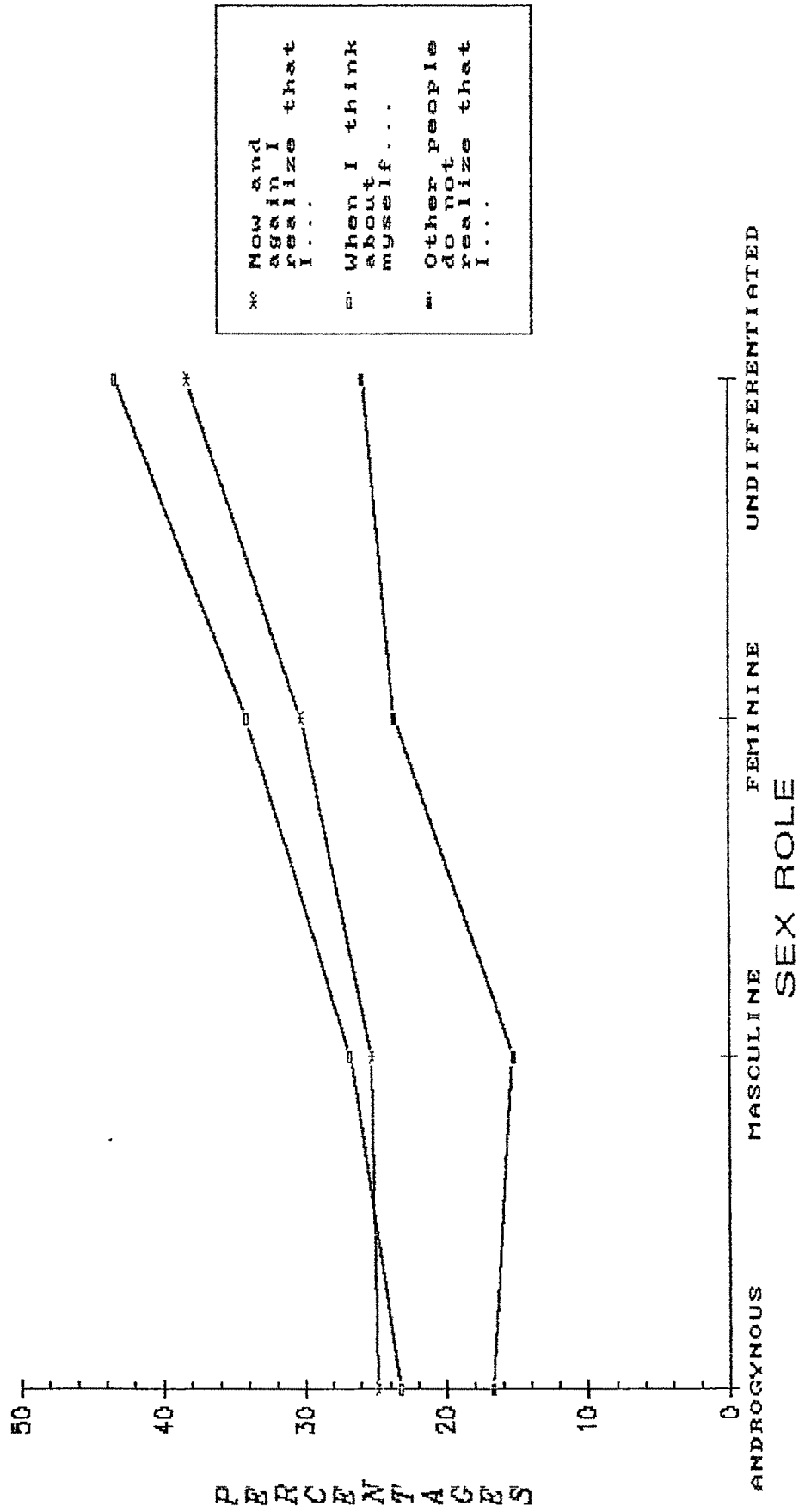* Now and again I realize that I...
□ When I think about myself...
■ Other people do not realize that I...

PERCENTAGES

50 — 40 — 30 — 20 — 10 — 0

SEX ROLE

ANDROGYNOUS   MASCULINE   FEMININE   UNDIFFERENTIATED
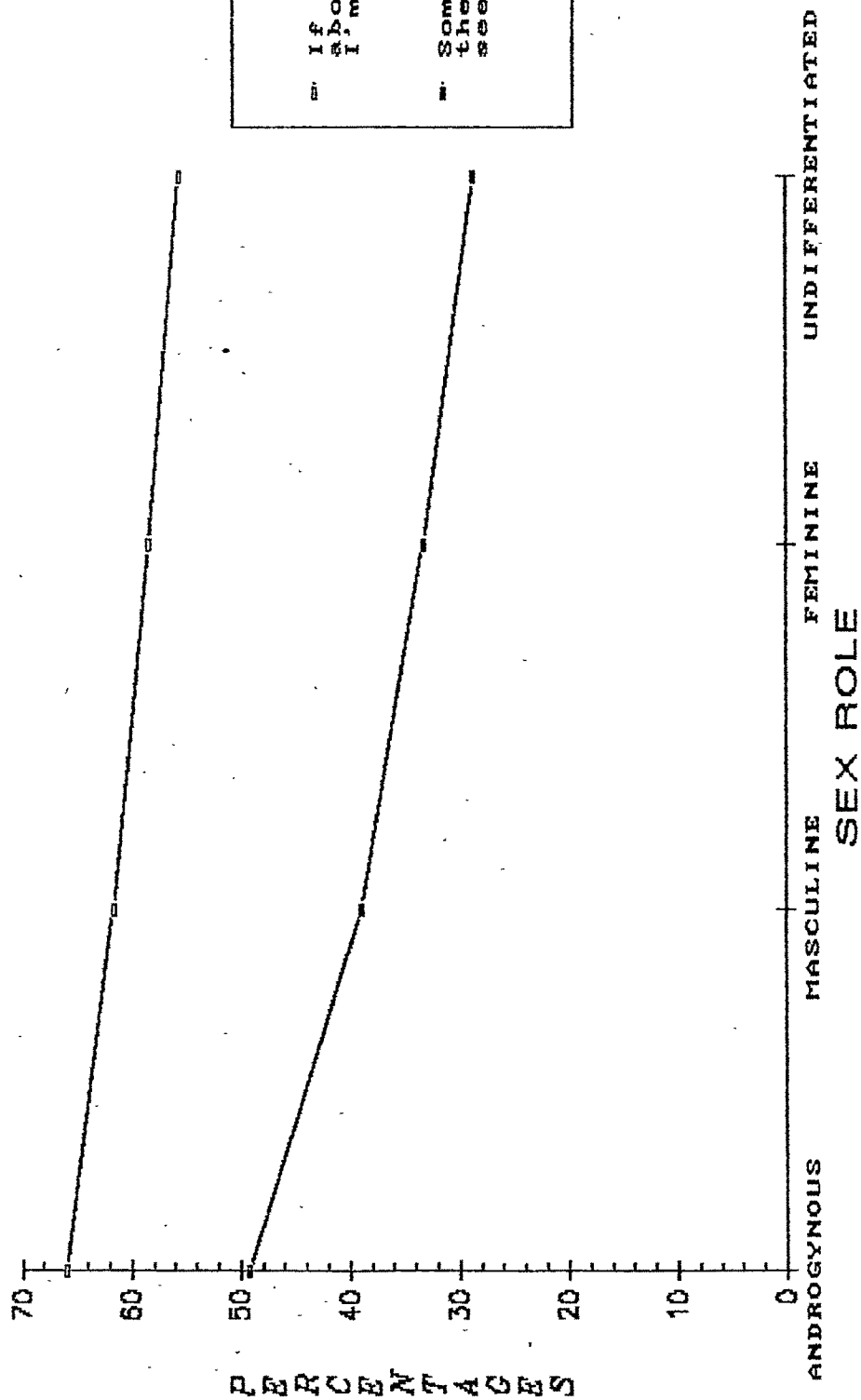
Figure 5.

Proportions of each Sex Role group expressing Positive Responses to Sentences related to the Self in the Future

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Figure 6.

Proportions of each Sex Role group expressing Negative Responses to Sentences related to the Self in the Future
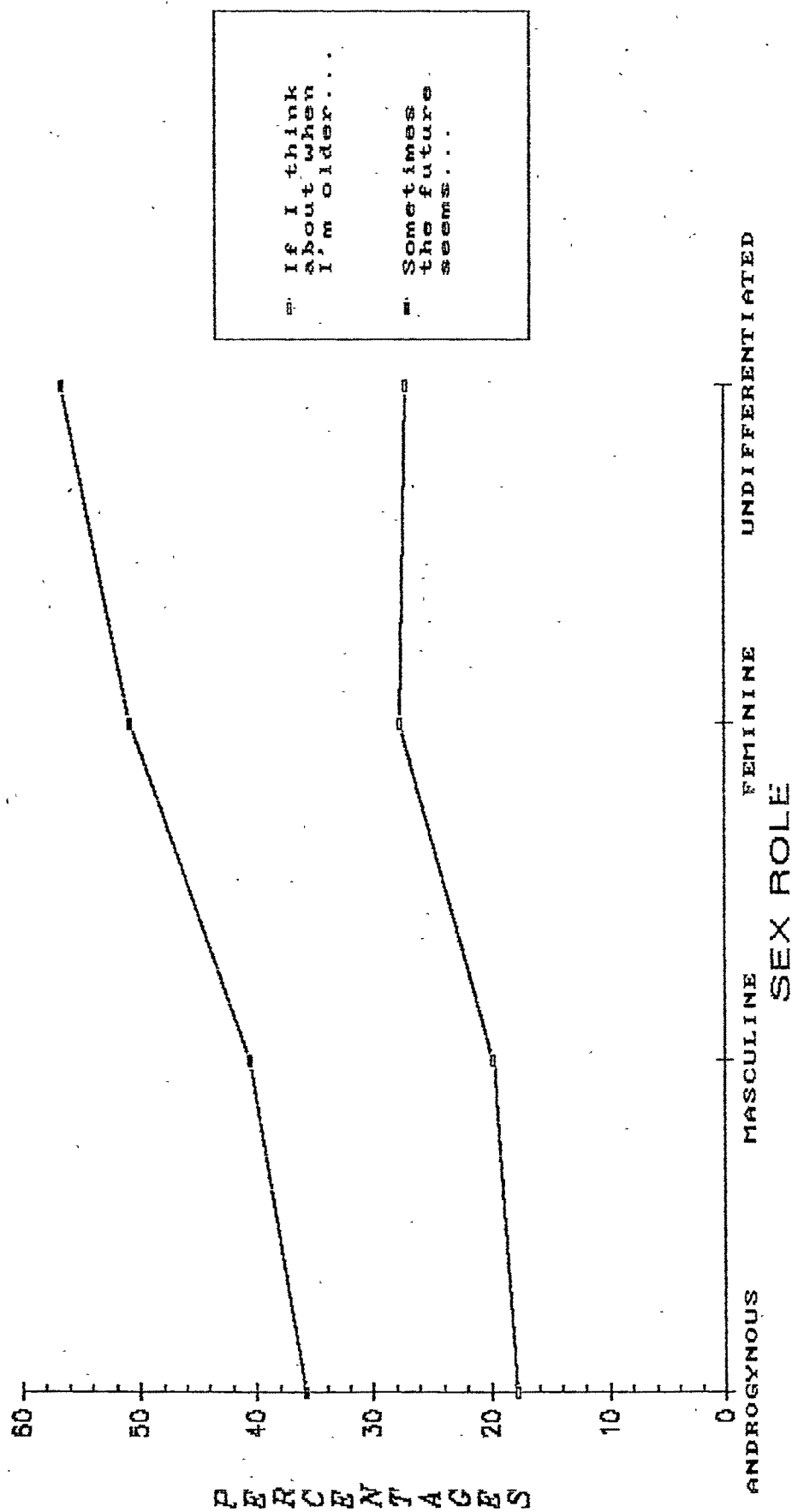
behaviour is less constraining and it allows them to engage more

freely and confidently in both masculine and feminine behaviour

in solving present problems and achieving future goals which

broadens their self-concept. Androgynous individuals have at

their disposal a larger and more diverse number of socially

approved behaviours that are available for problem solving

whereas feminine-typed person would inhibit behaviours that are

stereotypically masculine, and the masculine-typed person would

inhibit behaviours that are stereotypically feminine. Narrow sex

typing thus leads to restricted social competence and rigidity in

behaviour and hence lowered self-concept. For instance, low

achievement oriented behaviour in the feminine-typed individuals

contributes to a lowered self-concept. Undifferentiated   ,

individuals are less resourceful, and are not able to face

challenges and are socially less acceptable all of which leads to

a low self-concept. Since they lack ambition and confidence in

their abilities, they also have a low and pessimistic concept of

their future.

4.4.   Social Class

4.4.a.   Effect of social class on ego identity.

A significant effect of social class was found on ego

identity (table 21). Upper class subjects were significantly

higher in their ego identity achievement followed by middle and

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lower class subjects (table 16). A probable reason for the above findings could be that one's social class to a large extent determines the range and level of stimulation one receives and is a primary factor governing a wide range of interests and motivations. People belonging to different social classes experience different degrees of socioeconomic deprivation which accounts for differences in ego identity achievement among the various social classes.

Some ecological theorists (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979) suggest that sociocultural influences tend to direct behaviour of parents as socializers and disciplinarians of their offspring and thereby affect the development of the individuals. Parents direct their children into preconceived roles and commitments since they may feel that these roles and commitments might be more adaptive for their children. Family experiences thus, play an important role in total personality development. Lower class families in India especially, tend to be more concerned with maintaining hierarchical order. The atmosphere is one of imperatives and absolutes. The environment is invested with physical violence, too much tension from bickering, quarreling and overcrowding. In disciplining they also seem to emphasize physical punishment rather than verbal explanations and requests. Among lower class youths, physical, social and emotional emancipation from the family comes early and is often abrupt and

psychologically premature. This lower status may result in their being exposed to a narrower range of available occupational and ideological roles and commitments. All this leaves little scope for formation of an ego identity. This has been supported by several studies. Jordan (1971) found that members of identity achievers unanimously reported positive relationships with each other, while identity diffused adolescents reported experiencing a sense of rejection and detachment from their parents. Matteson (1974) found fathers of identity diffused adolescents to be inactive and detached. The lower class youth take themselves for granted – they are what they are because that is the way it is, and they have little capacity to introspect and reflect on it very much.

Piaget acknowledges that one's social environment can accelerate or delay the onset of formal operations and in fact, in extremely disadvantageous conditions, formal operations might never take place. It has been found that very few socio-economically deprived adolescents achieve formal thought if ever, than do their more privileged counterparts. Ego identity achievement also presupposes a cognitive apparatus capable of perceiving, selecting and synthesizing both external and internal stimuli. It is therefore possible that ego identity is established more slowly and depend upon adolescents having reached the formal operation stage of cognitive growth and development since it enables them to explore alternative ideas

and courses of action. Lower social class culture does not encourage advanced levels of cognitive thinking probably in part because there is not a great need for it. Leadbetter and Dionne (1981) studied males and females who were identified as being in one of Marcia's four identity categories. Results supported the notion that individuals in the higher categories (achievement and moratorium) exhibit a more sophisticated use of formal operational thinking.

The above findings are also supported by a study conducted by Srivastava (1981) on Indian adolescents between 17 to 20 years. It was found that adolescents of socio-culturally advantaged group scored significantly higher (p <.01) on the ego identity scale than adolescents of the disadvantaged group. Some other studies on lower class subjects (Lott & Lott, 1963; Reismann, 1962) have also revealed that a major consequence of a low social status is confusion of identity.

4.4.b.   Effect of social class on purpose-in-life.

A significant effect of social class on purpose-in-life (table 23) indicates that subjects belonging to different social classes differ in the way they attribute meaning and purpose to their life goals. Upper class subjects were significantly higher in their purpose-in-life followed by middle and lower class subjects (table 17). A probable reason for this could be that

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the attitudes, values, life-styles and goals of people are different by virtue of their status in the society. Man is not free from his existing conditions - be they biological, psychological or sociological in nature. The society or the environment in which individuals grow up have an important influence on their overall development, relationships, adjustments and roles, and help determines their differential future goals or their purpose-in-life.

Differential socioeconomic class structures and the related ethos create differential patterns of social ambience for the child. Through learning (i.e. role modeling) the children tend to seek their identity in consonance to that of their parents. For instance, the learning environment in the middle and upper classes seem to be aimed more at setting long-term goals, and they emphasize a stronger sense of control over events and a greater optimism as to the realization of one's future goals. According to Murray (1938) lower class individuals work under greater degree of heteronomy which constricts the availability of alternative modes required for seeking identity, meaning and life goals which are most meaningful to them. The lower class individuals seem many a times to be forced to compromise with situational and societal demands which are different from personal demands. Sultana and Joshi (1977) reported that the greater the enrichment and wider the range of

experiences the higher will be the possibility of combination of experimental pattern to produce original elements and life-goals.

4.4.c. Relationship between social class and present and future self-concept.

Chi square analysis reveals a significant relationship between social class and present as well as future self-concept. The tables (18 & 19) as well as the graphical presentations (figures 7, 8, 9 & 10) further reveal that higher percentage of upper class subjects have a positive present as well as future self-concept followed by middle and lower class subjects.

Self-concept is a set of knowledge one maintains about oneself. Individuals come to show different habits and behaviours, and also define themselves in terms of their own qualities. The socioeconomic and other environmental factors are found to be major sources of individual and social pathology which leads to overwhelming accumulation of psychological deficiencies and consequently a low self-concept among the lower class individuals.

Straus (1971) in his linkage theory hypothesizes that parents inculcate in their children the skills, capacities, feelings about self and the personality needed to cope with the typical life circumstances which the child will face as an adult. For instance, the socialization practices of the upper and middle

Figure 7.

Proportions of each Social Class expressing Positive Responses to Sentences related to the Self in the Present.
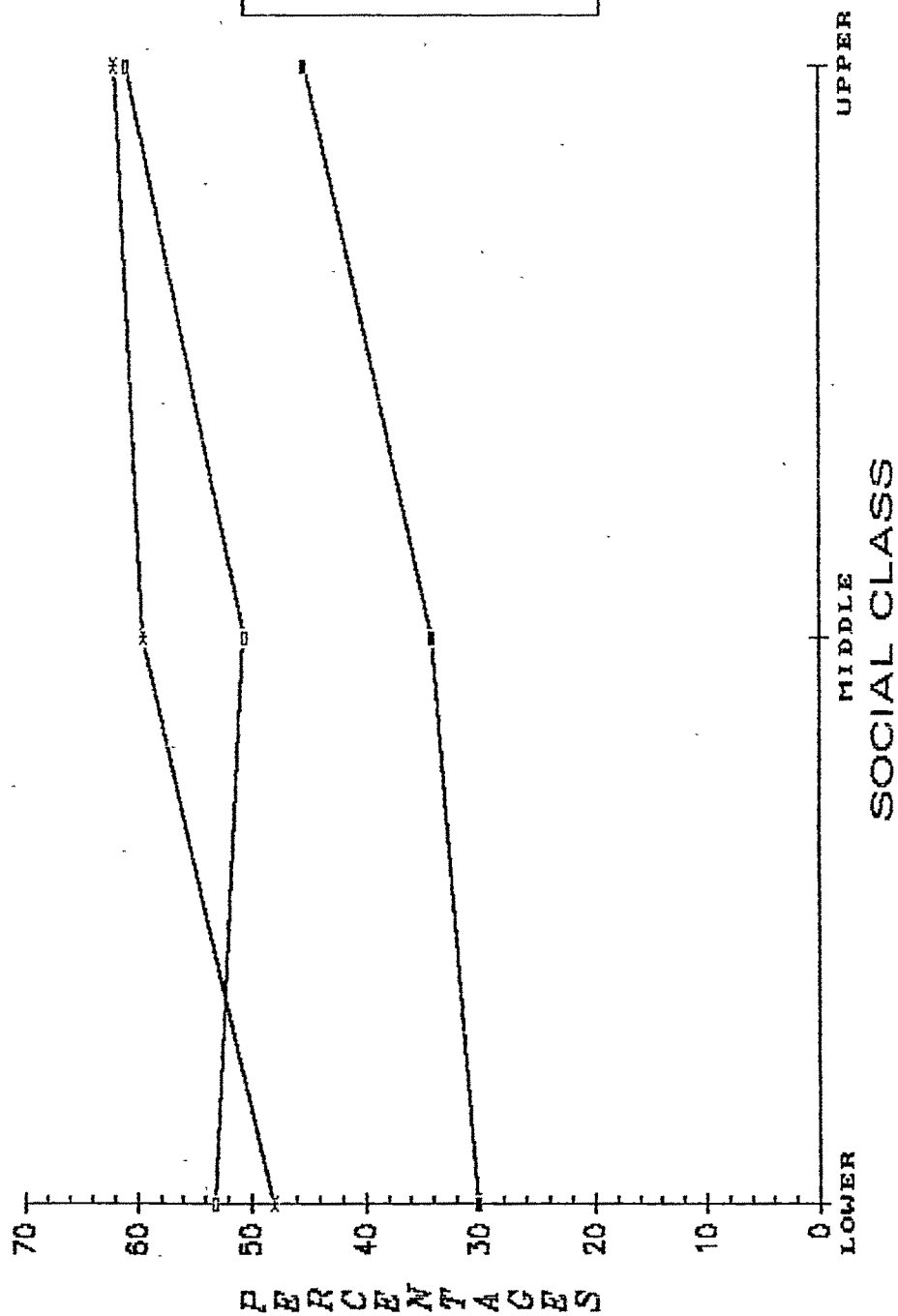

Legend:

* Now and again I realize that I ...

□ When I think about myself ...

■ Other people do not realize that I ...

Y-axis: PERCENTAGES (0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70)

X-axis: SOCIAL CLASS (LOWER, MIDDLE, UPPER)

Figure 8.

Proportions of each Social Class expressing Negative Responses to Sentences related to the Self in the Present
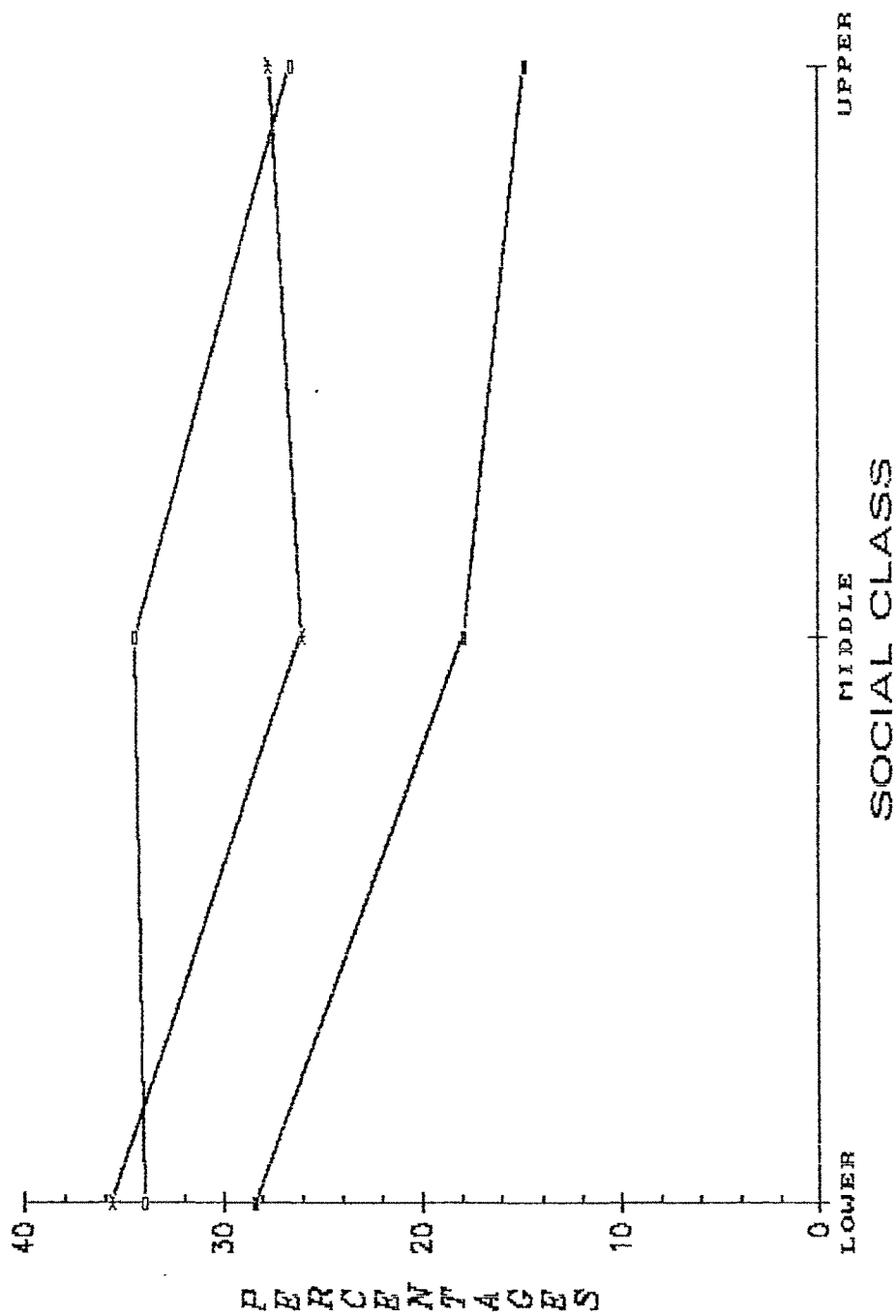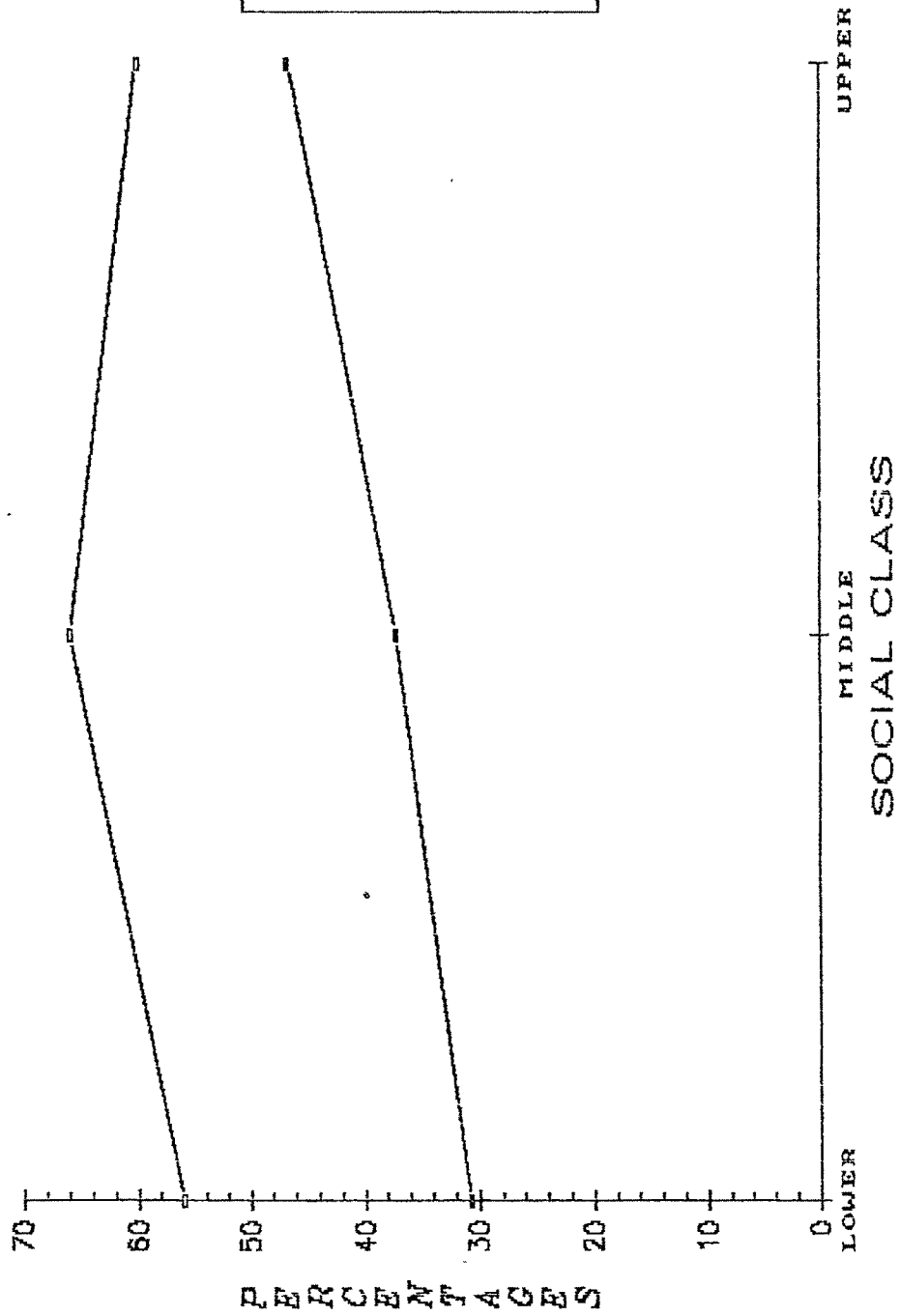
Figure 9.

Proportions of each Social Class expressing Positive Responses to Sentences related to the Self in the Future
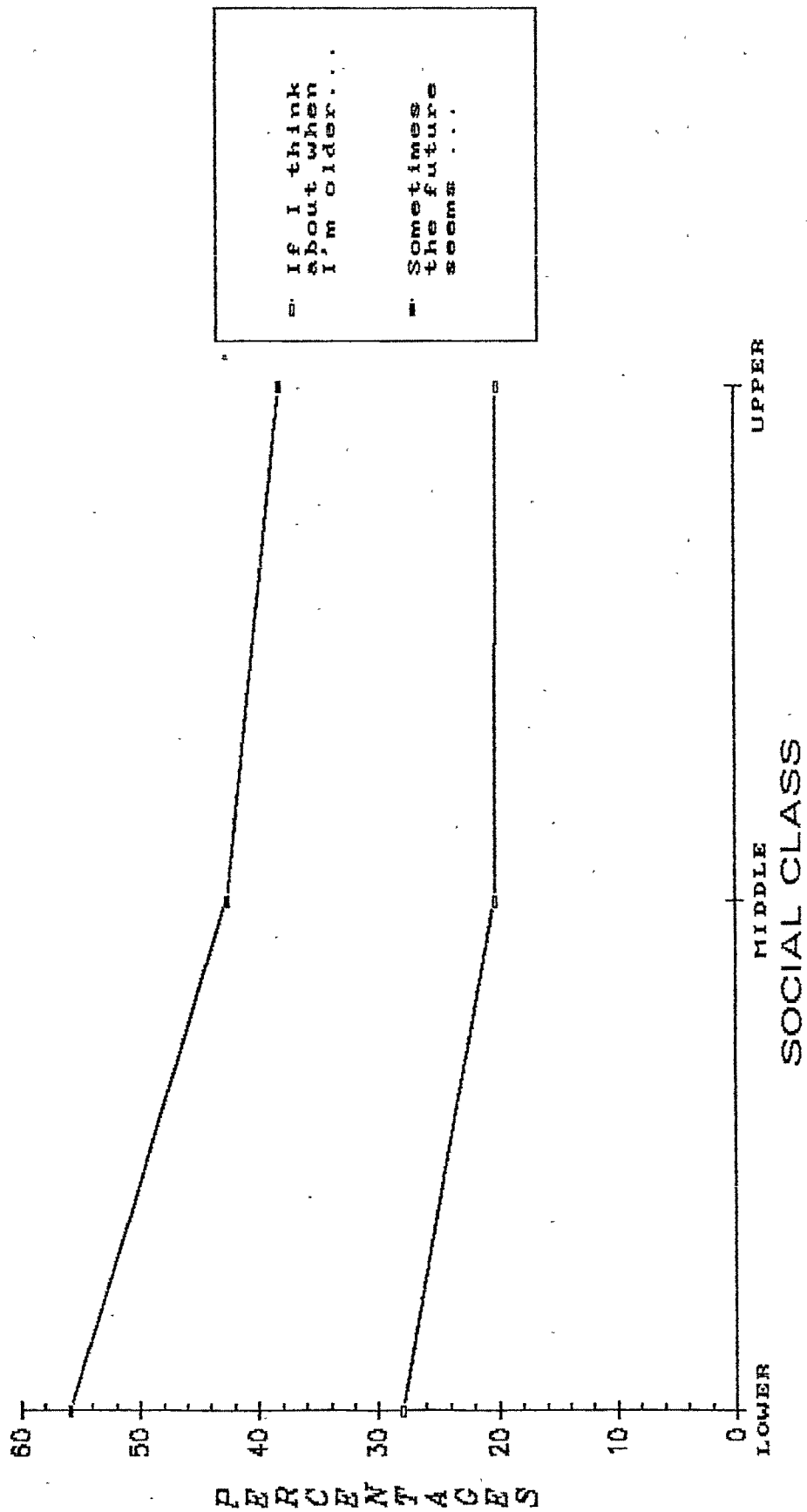

Legend:
□ If I think about when I'm older...
■ Sometimes the future seems...

Y-axis: PERCENTAGES (0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70)

X-axis: SOCIAL CLASS (LOWER, MIDDLE, UPPER)

Figure 10.

Proportions of each Social Class expressing Negative Responses to Sentences related to the Self in the Future

classes, are aimed more toward strengthening the self-concept, self-confidence and self-responsibility of the child (Pearlin & Kohn, 1966). They also encourage the development of supportive personality traits such as punctuality, honesty, respect for authority, good manners, religious observance, etc. Lower class parents on the other hand are sometimes too preoccupied or defeated by their own problems to give their children adequate attention and guidance. Many of the lower class youth are poorly educated due to financial constraints, and find themselves increasingly penalized in years ahead all of which results in a lowered or a negative self-concept.

Many of the lower class individuals seem to have a 'fatalistic' attitude towards life, an external locus of control and low feelings of self-confidence which also accounts for a lowered self-concept. The lower class parents are themselves externally oriented, and besides serving as role models for their children, their parenting style is itself conducive to the development of dependency, aggression, hostility and lower self-confidence. Upper and middle class parents are more internally oriented, have better control over self and the environment (Phares, 1965; Seeman & Evans, 1962) and are more likely to take responsibilities for their actions and to take steps to change aversive life situations. All this leads to the development of positive self-concept and a positive attitude towards their past and future.

One of the major characteristics of the disadvantaged according to Gordon (1965) is a low self-concept. Several other researchers (Ausubel & Ausubel, 1963) have revealed a low self-concept for the deprived groups based on considerations of ethnic membership and low socioeconomic status. Whiteman and Deutsch (1968) have shown a negative relationship between social class deprivation and self-concept. Lower class individuals are also more physically, emotionally and totally distressed than the middle and upper class individuals as a result of their lowered self-concept (Seth, 1979).

4.5.   Interaction effects.

4.5.a.   Interaction effect of age, sex differences, sex
         roles and social class on ego identity.

In the present study it was planned to see whether age, sex and sex roles of the subject, as well as the social class to which they belong have any combined effect on ego identity.

A significant (table 21) two way interaction effect of age x sex (A x B) on ego identity indicates that age along with the sex of the subject is dependent on each other in producing an effect on ego identity. The significant two way interaction between sex and sex roles (B x C) indicates that sex and sex roles are dependent on each other and jointly produce an effect on ego identity (table 21). Even though it is primarily the

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role of women that is undergoing change in India, many social forces are simultaneously influencing the roles of men and women and hence, sex when combined with sex roles jointly produce an effect on ego identity. The two-way interaction effect between age x sex roles (A x C), age x social class (A x D), sex x social class (B x D) and sex roles x social class (C x D) was found to be non-significant.

Significant three way interaction between age x sex x sex roles (A x B x C) and between age x sex x social class (A x B x D) indicates that ego identity is dependent upon the interactive functioning of age, sex and sex roles as well as between age, sex and social class of the subject. The interaction effect of sex x sex roles x social class (B x C x D) was found to be non-significant in its effect on ego identity. A probable reason for the non-significant two way and three way interaction effects in the present study could be the further categorization of variables in terms of their levels which reduced the sample size in each group.

A significant four way interaction between age x sex x sex roles x social class (A x B x C x D) reveals that ego identity is dependent upon the interactive effects of these four variables. A probable reason for this could be that while differential qualities of males and females are generally emphasized and reinforced since childhood, gender role

stereotyping seems to become sharper as age increases especially in the lower class families. The sexual separation in lower class in India is relatively more extreme and rigid than the upper and middle classes and in fact, most of the household activities are defined as either male or female. This may be due to more sex-segregation of adult activities and strong beliefs about the value of gender role stereotypes especially in the working class. In the lower class families, sex roles are less fluid and interchangeable and the family is predominantly authoritarian and patriarchal (Rao & Rao, 1985). The man is regarded as the "master" of the family in the occupational and public domains, whereas the woman is seen in the role of housewife and mother. Due to the prevailing differential division of roles and abilities the growing child is subjected to sex-specific role expectations and reinforcements through socialization process which influences his or her ego identity achievement.

4.5.b   Interaction effects of age, sex, sex roles and
        social class on purpose-in-life.

A significant two way interaction effect of sex x sex roles (B x C) was found on purpose-in-life which indicates that the realization and actualization of values and a philosophy in life is jointly dependent upon the sex as well as sex role of the subject. All other two way, three way and four way interaction

effects were found to be non-significant for purpose-in-life. A
probable reason for this may be the categorization of variables
in terms of their levels, thus reducing the sample size in each
group.

4.6.   Limitations of the study and suggestions for future
        research.

No study is complete by itself. On the basis of the
insight gained during the course of the present exploratory
study, certain limitations were felt. With a view to overcoming
some of these limitations, the following suggestions for further
researches in this area are offered:

1. The present study took into consideration adolescents
from urban area only. Since the city of Baroda as well as the
surrounding area is a highly industrialized, it was difficult to
get rural subjects nearby. A comparative study of the urban and
rural adolescents can be carried out since the social setting and
economic conditions are different in urban and rural areas.
These different life-settings would affect the adolescents'
personalities differently.

2. The present study was restricted to studying high
school adolescents between the between the ages of 15 to 18
years. Further research can focus on the significant factors

such as cognitive development, moral reasoning, etc. that influence ego identity, purpose-in-life and self-concept in school and college population.

3. The use of an overall ego identity score provides comparatively less information. In the present study the response to the identity crisis can either be identity achievement or role confusion. A more intensive investigation can be carried out in the future using "Marcia's ego identity status interview". Marcia's identity crisis interview ranges from identity achievement to identity diffusion with two more stages (moratorium and foreclosure) in between. Hence the individual can be at any one of the four stages.

4. The present study obviously has limited generalizability especially in view of the tremendous diversity in language, religion and customs in India. There is a need for further cross-regional research of this type in other parts of India and in other cultures to clarify the effect of sex roles and social class.

5. The present study took into consideration age, sex differences, sex roles and social class of the subject. The effect of other variables such as intelligence, family type, caste, sibling order, etc. on ego identity, self-concept and purpose-in-life can be studied.

4.7.   Suggestions for achieving a positive ego identity,
        purpose-in-life and self-concept.

Adolescent development occurs in a social context which

includes the family, peer group, the school and the society at

large. In a very real sense, adolescents live in two worlds, the

world of their parents and other adults, and the world of their

school and peers.It is hoped that the present research can be

useful in generating certain awareness, specifically about the

crises and experiences that the adolescents go through in their

acquisition of a positive self-concept and search for ego

identity and purpose-in-life.

Family

Within the family, parents can have a significant

stabilizing influence on the adolescent's personality. In order

for the parents to help the adolescent acquire a positive self-

concept, a sense of ego identity achievement and purpose-in-life,

the following suggestions are offered:

(1) parents should set up a democratic home environment

by showing unconditional positive regard for the adolescent, by

listening to his or her ideas, suggestions, opinions and points

of view be they idiosyncratic or revolutionary. Parents can

induce a meaningful dialogue with the adolescent on significant

issues like future goals and plans, their friends, their feelings

about their own selves, traditional and cross-sex behaviour, interest in the opposite sex, etc. Parents should be especially sensitive to the adolescent's needs and problems be they transient, recurrent or persistent;

(2) parents should acknowledge the adolescent's increasing need for autonomy and independence by allowing him the freedom to make decisions regarding their appropriate life-styles and life goals, selection of friends, selection of educational streams, etc;

(3) Parents should sensitize the adolescent to the uncertainties as well as the promises the future may hold for them by making the adolescent aware of the fact that future is essentially an extension of the present as well as past;

(4) parents should help the adolescent define reality and set up realistic life-goals thereby reducing the ambiguity and ambivalence towards both the self and the society at large during this transition period;

(5) parents should inculcate masculine as well asfeminine characteristics in the adolescent which leads to androgyny rather than traditional sex-typing. Parents can provide exposure to cross-sex behaviour through literature, folklore, mythology, cultural history, etc. in which the content, illustrations and photographs do not restrict the activity areas of men and women

in terms of traditional sex-typing;

(6) parents should make an effort to be consistent in disciplining their children. Parents who use clear, rational explanations to influence and control behaviour have a more positive effect on their children than those who use only external controls such as demands and physical punishment. Also, discipline should be consistent, both intraparent (within one parent) and interparent (between two parents). Erratic, incongruent and conflicting parental disciplining leads to an environment characterized by chaos, instability, ambiguity and ambivalence;

(7) parents should try to induce a healthy attitude towards human sexuality. Parents should adopt a liberal attitude towards the adolescent's curiosity and interest in the opposite sex and also try to impart sex education through discussion and relevant literature.

Peer Group

One of the most notable social phenomenon of adolescence is the marked influence of peer groups. Peers can contribute in unique and major ways to shaping the adolescent's personality, social behaviour, values and attitudes. The adolescent on his part, also comes to rely heavily on the peer group for support, security and guidance. Peer group can influence the adolescent

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by acting as a sounding board and by giving constant feedbacks, by reinforcing or punishing certain responses. The peer group instructs and/or trains adolescents in critical social skills such as how to interact with age-mates, how to relàte to a leader, and how to deal with hostility and dominance. Peers also function as a support system in helping the adolescent to deal with personal problems and anxieties. Sharing similar problems, conflicts, and complex feelings may be reassuring. It is important for parents, teachers and other adults around the adolescent to show a healthy acceptance of the adolescent's peer group instead of constantly subjecting it to criticism and blame.

School

The school is a social institution reflecting the culture of which it is part, and transmitting to the young an ethos and a world view as well as specific skills and knowledge. The main purpose of schooling is not only to teach cognitive and academic skills and impart information, but also to train children for life by learning rules of morality, social conventions, attitudes and modes of relating to others. The teachers in the school have a significant influence not only on the academic achievements of the adolescents, but also on their overall development. Some of the ways in which the teacher can guide the adolescent in developing a positive self-concept, a sense of ego identity

achievement and clear and realistic life-goals are as follows:

(1) the teacher should keep an open mind on various questions and issues pertaining to the adolescent and be open to the adolescent's different point of view. They should be innovative and flexible in teaching their classes so as to stimulate interest, enhance cognitive understanding and develop creativity as well as problem-solving abilities;

(2) teachers should remember that the adolescents of today are the adults of tomorrow and hence they should treat them with respect. The teachers need to have a real understanding of the developmental tasks of the adolescent period, and of the particular problems, adjustments, and interests of young people;

(3) teachers should assist the adolescent in acquiring and using adequate academic as well as social skills. They can also help the adolescent develop self-regulatory skills and coping mechanisms for handling varied situations;

(4) teachers can influence and control classroom behaviour by using a well-planned disciplining system based on the principle of reinforcement;

(5) teachers can encourage androgynous behaviour among students in the classrooms by providing opportunities for reversible role-taking and through exposure to selective literature, mythology, and folklores;

Mass media

The mass media, such as magazines, newspapers and particularly the television, have become powerful forces in our society. They are important socialization agents that influences adolescents' social and cognitive development. Since mass media has a direct as well as indirect influence on the adolescents' ego identity, self-concept and purpose-in-life, the media should take into account the following:

(1) the media can take care to screen programs which do not create choice dilemmas by offering too many alternative models of personality for the adolescent to emulate. The programs screened should be such that they not only limit violence and guard against glamourizing unacceptable or deviant modes of behaviour but also present desirable and appropriate models of behaviour. In fact, the media can screen programs which not only teach positive healthy behaviour but which also aim specifically at trying to resolve some of the common adolescent conflicts and issues realistically and suggesting alternative modes of behaviour;

(2) because most television viewing occurs in a home environment, the parents and other family members in that environment can try to select the type of programs that the adolescent watches. If and when traditional or violent themes are encountered in some programs, parents can induce a discussion

with the adolescent by suggesting the appropriate behaviour in that situation. The discussion can include our political, legal and social system, religious and moral issues, etc. Issues like honesty, co-operation, obligation, aggression, etc can be incorporated into the discussion;

(3) the editors of newspapers and magazines can make sure that authentic and authoritative articles which depict the common crises and issues of the adolescents as well as healthy modes of conflict resolution are published. They can have articles written by adolescents or parents of adolescents themselves on their experiences. Newspapers and magazines can bring about more awareness on part of the parents, teachers and other adults who deal with adolescents by publishing researched information and practical suggestions.