

Social and Personality Development



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Infancy through Adolescence

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Preface

FOR several years, I have taught social and personality development to both undergraduate and graduate students. In presenting to students the research and literature in this area, I have found it necessary to integrate readings in ways not available in current textbooks. This is because the few existing textbooks on social and personality development are organized into chapters that cover topics like attachment or aggression. But the child is not divided, like topical chapters, into distinct processes of attachment or aggression. In the child, such processes always operate and change in *relation* to one another and not in isolation. Understanding social and personality development means understanding how such processes influence one another, and how they arise from and contribute to the child's entire developmental history. For this reason, I have organized this book around two principles. The first principle is a descriptive one: I have chosen to follow the development of the child chronologically, from infancy through adolescence. The second principle is more theoretical and based on the notion that social and personality development fulfills two complementary life functions, socialization and individuation. Accordingly, the book begins with the newborn and follows the child's socialization and individuation through the first two decades of life. Topics that usually stand as chapter headings for textbooks in this area are related to one another within this chronological framework.

Goals and Implications of a Chronological Account

By now, we know that there are developmental relations that can be traced from the earliest signs of infant sociability through the child's later, more intricate interactions with intimate friends and society-at-large. I have organized this book chronologically in order to demonstrate how the social skills and achievements of the mature individual have their roots in early childhood and infant social interactions. The book begins with as positive as possible a picture of infant sociability and infant individuality. This provides us with a foundation for seeing how childhood and adolescent social development build upon processes that are very much present (though in primitive form) when the baby is first born.

The chronological approach, therefore, is more than an attempt merely to describe various aspects of children's social behavior. It is an attempt to explicate the developmental relations between social behavior at different periods in life. This is why this book does not have individual chapters on "moral development," "attachment," or "parental styles of child rearing," even though all of these topics are discussed at length within this book. Rather than being discussed within themselves, these topics are presented in the context of the social relations and interactions that characterize a particular age period. For example, the attachment between an infant and his or her caregiver is presented as one critical mode of social interaction and communication. It is explained as one manifestation of the infant's sociability, and it is analyzed according to its contribution to the infant's potential for further social relationships. This presentation enables us to see how infant attachment paves the way for parental and peer relations in childhood, for adolescent intimacy and autonomy, and for many other subsequent social-developmental achievements. If we were to consider attachment as a self-contained "research topic" to be segregated within its own chapter, we would likely neglect the relation between attachment and the rest of the infant's rich social life, as well as between attachment and the social relations that children establish later in development.

As we identify the developmental relations between early social interaction and later developmental achievements, we will be led as a consequence to go beyond mere descriptive accounts of children's social behavior. Our awareness of developmental relations will force us to consider the future significance of social interactions at any time of life. This means that children's social behavior will become interesting to us for more than one reason. First, of course, we are interested in characterizing the nature of social behavior at different periods in development, as are all traditional accounts of social development. This is an interest in the social interactions occurring during infancy, childhood, and adolescence, in themselves, for the purpose of charting the general course of social development through the first twenty years. But since we are also interested in the future significance of the social interactions that we are characterizing, we will adopt an additional perspective on children's social interactions. We must look at social interactions as an integral

part of the growth process and examine how they function in contributing to this process. In doing so, we will not only describe how children interact with their social world at different ages, but we will also show how these very interactions play a role in the developmental changes that lead to new forms of social interactions at later ages.

For example, we are certainly interested in attachment between an infant and his caregiver as a profoundly important phenomenon in its own right. But beyond describing attachment and its place in the infant-caregiver relation, we should also set ourselves another task. We should discover how the caregiver-child interactions that constitute the attachment relation prepare the child for further, and different, types of social interactions with a variety of others later in life. In order to do so, we must analyze attachment interactions in terms of their developmental effects on the infant. That is, we must examine the ways in which engaging in close, emotional interactions with a caregiver enables an infant to extend his or her social life into new and more challenging areas. We will show how the attachment experience prepares the infant for taking new risks, acquiring new social competence, and establishing new social relations. In short, we will consider attachment not only as a phenomenon that is central to an infant's social life, but also as a process that contributes to development of the infant's social abilities and social experience.

Infancy through Adolescence as a Time Frame for This Book

It is not difficult to explain why this account of social development begins with infancy. First, there is ever-increasing evidence that the infant is a highly social creature, even at birth. Second, the infant's remarkable sociability no doubt is linked to his or her potential for social and personal growth later in life. Third, social interactions at early ages influence social-personality achievements at later ages. For these reasons, we begin this account in the infant years.

But social development is a lifelong process, or at least we hope it is. Most of us expect to continue developing socially right up through old age. We might concede that our physical powers diminish after adolescence. We might even grant an eventual decline in our intellectual acuity. But we would hope that our social understanding, our ability to relate to others, and our sense of self change in a positive way all through life. This is because we generally believe that the social experiences of adulthood impart a wisdom and a competence unavailable to the adolescent. Why, then, end a book on social development with adolescence?

One reason is that, in the period from infancy through adolescence, there are many age-related patterns of growth that apply quite generally across individuals. This is less true during the adult years. As Paul Baltes, Hayne Reese, and Lewis Lipsett have written, "interindividual variability apparently increases with increasing age, particularly in adulthood and aging. Conse-

quently, the organizational power of chronological age per se decreases as life-span development unfolds.”¹ Since this book will examine normal developmental trends in socialization and individuation, the best period to examine is that between infancy and the end of adolescence.

Another reason for framing this account from infancy through adolescence has to do with the course of social and personality development between these two age periods. In adolescence, many of the strands and themes of social development born in the infant years are woven together for the first time into an integrated system. There is even a new integration of social development’s two complementary functions, socialization and the construction of personal identity. This integration takes place as one’s social relations and moral character interpenetrate with one’s sense of self in a number of profound ways never before possible. In providing a chronicle of this process, this book does in fact tell a story that has a beginning and an end. Its end does not coincide with the final chapter of human life, or even of human social development. But it is an end that has a certain logic and a certain sense of closure. In short, the saga of social development from infancy to adolescence makes a good story, and this book was written for the purpose of telling it.

Plan of the Book

This book provides a chronological account of social and personality development during infancy, childhood, and adolescence. There are sections on each of these three main life phases. Each section is organized according to the complementary functions of social development—the socializing function and the individuating function. That is, within each section, there is a chapter on the development of social relations and a chapter on the development of self-identity (except that, for the childhood section, there are two chapters covering social relations during this age period, because of the extensive literature that is available on this topic). In this manner, the book traces the individual’s integration into and differentiation from the social network through approximately the first two decades of life.

The social-relational chapters of this book (Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 7) focus on the individual’s manner of connecting with others throughout the course of development. The main issues considered in these chapters are (1) the types of interactions and relationships the individual establishes with others at different ages, and (2) how these interactions and relationships become transformed through psychological changes within the individual and social changes in the individual’s environment. In the context of these social-relational issues, we take up the following specific topics: attachment, peer relations, parental child-rearing practices, moral development, social cognition, children’s play, sociocultural influences, friendship patterns in childhood and adolescence, the

¹ Baltes, Reese, & Lipsett, 1980, p. 74.

school, other socializing institutions, and teen-age sexuality. The literature that we review for the purpose of discussing these social-relational topics is rich with empirical studies of infants, children, and adolescents in their home, play, and school environments.

The individuation chapters of this book (Chapters 3, 6, and 8) focus on the psychological separation of the individual from others in the social world. The main issues here are (1) the manner in which the individual establishes a sense of self at different ages, and (2) how this sense of self eventually forms the basis of the individual's unique personal identity. The following topics are discussed in the context of these individuation issues: self-knowledge at different age periods, individual differences in temperament, gender differences, personality differences, psychosocial development, the identity crisis, and the process of identity consolidation. For the purpose of examining these topics, we rely on case studies and individual life histories. In each of the individuation chapters in this book, the processes of self-identity formation are illustrated by an in-depth analysis of at least one such individual life.

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In writing this book, my intellectual debts are scattered throughout the pages of the text, and they are too many to acknowledge here. But a number of persons have directly contributed valuable advice and support to my writing efforts. John Broughton of Columbia University and James Youniss of Catholic University and Boys Town Center for the Study of Youth Development saw parts of the manuscript at an early phase and offered me insightful and formative guidance. John Masters of Vanderbilt University, Carolyn Shantz of Wayne State University, and Alan Sroufe of the University of Minnesota provided extensive feedback on a later version, and their comments led to important improvements. My colleague at Clark University, Roger Bibace, also generously gave me his astute critique of large sections of the book.

My reviews of the self-concept literature were originally done in collaboration with Daniel Hart of Clark University, as part of my own research on self-understanding in childhood and adolescence. Dan's thoughtful efforts are reflected throughout my own summaries and interpretations of this literature. I am also grateful to Karen Pakula of Clark University for her contributions to the self-development analyses, and to Wendy Praisner for her dedicated secretarial work. I especially wish to thank Bobbi Karman for her exceptionally intelligent work on every phase of this manuscript, as well as for her good-natured patience and sympathetic support. I have also been fortunate to have at Norton a wise editor, Don Fusting, and a talented copy editor, Sandy Lifland.

Although my own research is not a prominent part of this book as a whole, it has helped me formulate my approach to the field of social and personality development, as well as to gain some special understanding of certain social-developmental processes. I am grateful to the funding agencies that have made

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Worcester, Mass.

W.D.

Contents

	Preface	xi
1	Introduction	1
	The Two Functions of Social Development	2
	Relations between Socialization and Individuation	3
	Socialization and the Active Child	6
	Biology, Culture, and Interaction	7
	Social Relations as Context for Children's Behavior	9
	The Self and Self-Knowledge	10
	The Self-as-Known: The <i>Me</i>	11
	The Self-as-Knower: The <i>I</i>	12
	Age-related Changes in Social Development	13
2	Infant Social Relations	17
	The Sociability of the Newborn	17

	Conceptual Revolution: Infant as Active Partner	18	•	Technology and the Study of the Infant	19	•	Contribution of Infant	21	•	The Infant's Openness to Social Influence	26
	Attachment to the Caregiver	27									
	Bonding and Attachment	28	•	The Infant's Means of Contacting the Caregiver	29	•	Attachment and Infant's Emotions	32	•	Developmental Phases of Attachment	33
	Separation Protest, Wariness of Strangers, and the Strange Situation	35	•	Assessing Attachment: The Strange Situation	37	•	Long-Term Developmental Consequences of Attachment	41	•	The Role of the Father	48
	Beyond Attachment: The Development of Communication between Infant and Adult	50									
	Peer Relations in Infancy	52									
	Developmental Studies of Infant-Infant Interaction	54	•	The Quality of Infant-Infant Interaction	57	•	Facilitating Peer Interactions among Infants	61			
	Summary	63									
3	Infant Individuality and the Origins of Self	69									
	Infant Individual Differences and Their Social Consequences	71									
	Responsiveness to Social Interaction	71	•	Temperament	72	•	Individual Differences in Specific Social Behaviors	78	•	The Effect of an Individual's Physical Endowment	79
	Sex Differences	80									
	Developmental Research on Infant Self-Knowledge	83									
	Contemporary Psychoanalytic Theories	84	•	Experimental Studies of Self-Knowledge	90						
	Summary	97									
4	Peer Relations and the Development of Prosocial Behavior	101									
	Social Play between Children	102									
	Defining Play	103	•	Functions of Social Play	106	•	Developmental Phases of Children's Play	109			
	Symbolism and Interpersonal Communication	116									
	Mead's Significant Symbols and Role Taking	116	•	Role Taking and Developmental Theory	117	•	Egocentrism and Role Taking	119			
	Prosocial Behavior	128									
	Empathy	129	•	Social-Contextual Influences on Children's Prosocial Behavior	131	•	Fair Exchange and the Child's Sense of Justice	133			
	Friendship and the Development of Stable Relations between Peers	137									
	Development of the Understanding of Friendship	139									
	Summary	142									

5	Adult-Child Relations and the Transmission of Culture	147
	The Two Social Worlds of the Child	147
	Child Rearing	151
	Permissive versus Restrictive Child Rearing	152 • Child's Own Disposition and Child Rearing 154 • Democracy and Control in Child Rearing 156 • Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive, and Harmonious Child Rearing 160 • The Child's Viewpoint on Parental Authority and Control 165
	Mechanisms of Adult-Child Influence	168
	Observation and Imitation	168 • Identification 172 • Attitude Change 179 • Conceptual Growth and the Child's Acquisition of Values 184
	The Social and Cultural Context of Adult-Child Relations	188
	Cross-Cultural Variations	189 • Subcultural Research 191 • The Influence of Societal Institutions in Contemporary Western Culture 196
	Summary	199
6	Individuality and Self-Development during Childhood	205
	Individual Personality Differences between Children	206
	Ego-Control and Ego-Resiliency	207 • Cognitive Style and Children's Social Interactions 210 • Gender and Sex Roles 214 • Children's Understanding of Their Gender and Sex Roles 218
	Personal Identity Formation in Childhood	220
	Erikson's Stages of Childhood Identity	220 • Self-Esteem and Personal Control 225
	The Development of Children's Self-Understanding	231
	Self-Understanding Distinguished from Self-Esteem	231 • Understanding Self in Comparison and Contrast with Understanding Others 233 • Developmental Progression of Self-Knowledge during Childhood 235
	A Case Study in Childhood Self-Development: The Autobiography of Jean-Paul Sartre	241
	Summary	246
7	Adolescent Social Relations	251
	Adolescent Peer Relations	252
	Friendship	252 • The Peer Social Life of the Adolescent 256 • Sexual Relations 259
	Family Relations during Adolescence	264
	The Parental Role	265 • Developmental Changes in Parent-Child Relations during Adolescence 268 • Life-Course Studies of the Adolescent's Family Life 270

	The Adolescent and Society: Moral and Political Development	271
	Moral Development	272 • Social-Conventional Development
	Political Socialization	285 • 292
	Strategic Social Interactions and Their Role in Adolescent Development	299
	Summary	301
8	Adolescent Identity and the Consolidation of Self	307
	The Need for Autonomy and Individuation in Adolescence	308
	The Process of Individuation	310
	Adolescent Self-Understanding	312
	Developmental Levels	313 • A Developmental Model of Adolescent Self-Understanding
	Establishing Personal Identity	320
	The Identity Crisis in Adolescence	325 • Identity Confusion during Adolescence
	Empirical Research on Identity Formation	328 • 331
	Developmental Relations between Identity and Intimacy	334
	Case Studies of Identity Formation	336
	Summary	344
	References	347
	Acknowledgments	374
	Name Index	377
	Subject Index	383

Chapter 1

Introduction

SOCIAL development is a life process built upon a paradox. The paradox is that at the same time we are *both* social and individual beings, connected with others in a multitude of ways, as well as ultimately alone in the world. This dual condition of connectedness and separateness begins at the moment of birth and remains with us all through life. The phrase *social and personality development* describes a two-fronted life movement within this paradoxical state of affairs. In the course of development, we become better able both to establish connections with others and to realize our own distinctness from others. In short, we become more social while at the same time becoming more individual and unique.

Paradoxes, of course, are only seeming contradictions, not real ones. The strange mix of sociability and individuality that develops in the course of human life can be seen as two complementary developmental functions, rather than as contradictory life directions. These are, respectively, the *social* and the *personality* functions of social development. Although these two functions seem to pull us in opposite ways, in actuality the two functions go hand in hand, each contributing to growth and to the individual's successful social adaptation.

The Two Functions of Social Development

The first of social development's complementary functions usually is called *socialization*. The socialization function includes all of one's tendencies to establish and maintain relations with others, to become an accepted member of society-at-large, to regulate one's behavior according to society's codes and standards, and generally to get along well with other people. We may consider this to be the *integrating* function of social development, since it ensures the integration of the individual into society as a respected participant.

As a child grows, she experiences many different kinds of incentives toward socialization and integration into society. The baby needs close physical and emotional contact with her mother, and must respond actively in ways that encourage such contact. The toddler is subject to direct disapproval until she becomes toilet trained. By middle childhood, children must learn to act cooperatively and fairly if they are to enjoy the companionship of friends. By the time of adolescence, the standards of society-at-large must be understood and respected. If an adolescent does not obey the law, there will be legal repercussions; if the adolescent does not do well in school or at work, her future career prospects may suffer. In these and many other ways, children experience the multiple needs and demands of socialization throughout their development.

The second function of social development is the formation of the individual's personal identity. This function, often called *individuation*, includes the development of one's sense of self and the forging of a special place for oneself within the social order. It entails understanding one's idiosyncratic personal characteristics and reconciling these characteristics with the requirements of interpersonal relations, as well as of occupational, sex, and family roles. We may consider this to be the *differentiating* function of social development. The formation of a personal identity requires distinguishing oneself from others, determining one's own unique direction in life, and finding within the social network a position uniquely tailored to one's own particular nature, needs, and aspirations.

As with socialization, the demands of individuation and differentiation begin early and continue throughout life. Babies struggle to recognize themselves as separate persons, distinct from their caregivers. Toddlers learn to say "no" as an assertion of their autonomy (such assertions are so common that during this period, children are considered to be in "the terrible twos"). By middle childhood, children in school and at play are busy discovering the particular talents and interests that may set them apart from their peers. The young adolescent's need to establish independence from home and family is well known. Moreover, late adolescence is a primary proving ground for one's personal sense of identity. One's personal identity, once constructed, is continually evaluated and reassessed throughout development.

Both functions of social development are absolutely essential for a person's adaptation to life. Through the integrating function, a person maintains satisfying and productive relations with others and with society-at-large. Con-

tinued failures here can lead to interpersonal conflicts, social isolation, or even to social deviance and delinquency. In addition, poor social relations during development can leave a person impoverished in cognitive skills and emotional responsiveness. Through the differentiating function, a person acquires a coherent identity and a feeling of control over her own destiny. Failure here can lead to a sense of confusion, paralysis, and despair.

Further, these two essential functions are deeply interconnected in the course of a person's development, often relying upon each other's achievements. Thousands of years ago, Aristotle wrote, "All friendly feelings towards others come from the friendly feelings that a person has for himself." Conversely, a shaky sense of self can impair one's social interactions, and a maladaptive history of social relations can bear unfortunate consequences for one's personal identity.

Together, these two functions penetrate into every area of life. Intellectual activity, for example, is frequently affected by one's social and personal adaptation. Both social and personal chaos can easily disrupt one's intellectual processes, just as confused thinking can disturb one's efforts to make sense out of problematic social and personal issues. There are, of course, unusual cases in which intellectual and social competence seem to become divorced from one another. One such example is the stereotype of the brilliant scholar who has great insights but who cannot manage the simplest of personal affairs. But for most individuals, their social and personality growth is closely reflected in their intellectual achievements.

Although social and personality development penetrates into every sphere of human life, including the intellectual, the scientific study of social and personality development is not a field without boundaries. Cognitive and perceptual processes, with the exception of those directly bearing upon the apprehension of persons, are generally excluded. So are nondeveloping aspects of social and personal behavior. The domain of social and personality development as a field of inquiry, and as the province of this book, centers on developmental changes in (1) an individual's social behavior, including the individual's interpersonal relations and the individual's capacity for social interaction and relationship, and (2) an individual's personal identity. The former pertains to the socializing function of social and personality development, the latter to the individuating function.

Relations between Socialization and Individuation

In some ways, socialization and individuation are quite distinct processes, even at times operating in opposition to one another. Establishing one's individuality very often requires a different sort of activity than that required for "socialized" behavior in the traditional use of the term. Defining one's distinctness from others and staking out one's unique social position sometimes place one in an antagonistic relation to others. Conversely, being "socially accept-

able” sometimes means forgoing personal wishes and habits in deference to the expectations of others.

Psychoanalytic writing has always emphasized this distinction between the individual and society. This was the subject of Sigmund Freud’s treatise, *Civilization and Its Discontents*.¹ Freud argued that to become civilized (his word for socialized) means renouncing some of one’s most basic drives, in particular those of sex and aggression. But these drives do not simply go away once they are renounced: they remain as a source of conflict and discontent for the individual who has accommodated to civilized life. It is as if, in a far less extreme way, we are all seething Mr. Hydes contained within mild-mannered Dr. Jekylls, always in danger of bursting through our civilized veneers. Normally this universal conflict can be contained and even productively channeled without too great a toll on the individual’s happiness. In less fortunate cases, it may lead to psychopathology or social deviance. But in all cases, according to classic Freudian analyses, it typifies the universal and constant tension between a person’s individualistic and social needs. Freud may or may not be correct in his belief that “antisocial” drives like aggression are an intrinsic part of human nature. But the dichotomy that he described between individual and social tendencies, along with the conflict that the dichotomy sometimes produces, cannot be denied.

Yet there is a sense in which there are profound connections between socialization and individuation. Developmentally, the two often go hand in hand for important psychological reasons: as one learns more about others, one learns more about the self, and vice versa. This is because interactions between self and others simultaneously provide one with feedback about both the nature of the other and about the nature of the self. Such feedback includes information about relations with other people, about other people’s view of the self, and about characteristics of persons that are shared by both self and other. In the course of conducting social relations with others, one learns simultaneously about how to get along with others, about what others are like, and about what the self is like. In this sense, socialization and individuation are really opposite sides of the same coin: they are the yin and yang of social development.

At the turn of the century, James Mark Baldwin introduced this two-directional notion of social development to the field of psychology.² Baldwin wrote that children come to know themselves only as a consequence of social interactions with many others:

The growing child is able to think of self in varying terms as varying social situations impress themselves upon him. . . . The development of the child’s personality could not go on at all without the constant modification of his sense of himself by suggestions from others. So he himself, at every stage, is really in part someone else, even in his own thought of himself.³

¹ Freud, 1930.

³ Ibid., p. 23.

² Baldwin, 1902.