

Emotion and Conduct in Adolescence

For the

COMMISSION ON SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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STUDY OF ADOLESCENTS

**Emotion and Conduct
in Adolescence**

COMMISSION ON SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Behavior*, by Peter A. Blos

Preface

The Study of Adolescents was set up within the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum of the Progressive Education Association in 1934 and concluded in 1939. Its task has been to gain increased understanding of young people for the purposes of education.

The findings of the Study have been made available to educators through three main channels. First, its work throughout the period of study was integrated with that of the Commission as a whole so that accruing knowledge of educational needs of adolescents could be used in reports of the Commission and of its committees in various curriculum areas.¹ Second, its observations

† The following books have been published by the D. Appleton-Century Company:

Committee on the Function of Art in General Education, *The Visual Arts in General Education* (1940).

Committee on the Function of English in General Education, *Language in General Education* (1939).

Committee on the Function of Mathematics in General Education, *Mathematics in General Education* (1940).

Committee on the Function of Science in General Education, *Science in General Education* (1938).

Lawrence H. Conrad, with the Creative Writing Committee, *Teaching Creative Writing* (1937).

Elbert Lenrow, for the Committee on the Function of English in General Education, *Reader's Guide to Prose Fiction*, An Introductory Essay with Bibliographies of 1500 Novels Selected, Topically Classified, and Annotated for Use in Meeting the Needs of Individuals in General Education (1940).

V. T. Thayer, Caroline B. Zachry, and Ruth Kotinsky, *Reorganizing Secondary Education* (1939).

The following is scheduled for publication by the D. Appleton-Century Company in 1940:

Committee on the Function of the Social Studies in General Education, *The Social Studies in General Education*.

PREFACE

of the nature and needs of the developing individual were discussed, while the Study was in progress, with a large number of teachers and guidance workers, through study conferences and summer workshops held by the Progressive Education Association and its various Commissions, through its own seminars. Finally, its methods, observations, and recommendations have been reported in publications by members of the Study staff.² The present volume is the first book prepared for the Commission that is devoted

² The following books are scheduled for publication in 1940 (all titles are tentative):

Peter Bloss, *The Adolescent Personality: A Study of Individual Growth*.
Elizabeth Hellersberg, *Adolescence: A Period of Transition*.
Wilma Lloyd, *Observation and Objectivity*.

The following articles have been published:

- Wilma Lloyd, "Adolescence—A Quest for Selfhood," *Progressive Education*, Vol. 16, April, 1939, pp. 242-245.
——, "How We Can Understand Our Children," *Childhood Education*, Vol. 15, October, 1938, pp. 53-55.
——, "The Supervisor's Part in the Educative Process," *Educational Method*, Vol. 18, May, 1939, pp. 389-393.
Stanley S. Newman, "Personal Symbolism in Language Patterns," *Psychiatry*, Vol. 2, May, 1939, pp. 177-184.
Benjamin Spock, "The Changing Task of the School Physician," a series of five articles in *Progressive Education*, Vol. 16, December, 1939, through Vol. 17, April, 1940 (reprinted as a pamphlet by the Progressive Education Association).
Caroline B. Zachry, "The Adolescent's Challenge to Education," *Understanding the Child*, Vol. 8, June, 1939, pp. 3-7.
——, "Children and Youth in a Depressed Society," "The Growth Process," and "The Educative Process as Guidance," Chapters V, XII, and XVI of *Democracy and the Curriculum, Third Yearbook* of the John Dewey Society (New York, D. Appleton-Century Co., 1939).
——, "Contributions of Psychoanalysis to the Education of the Adolescent," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. 8, January, 1939, pp. 98-107.
——, "Later Childhood, Some Questions for Research," *Progressive Education*, Vol. 15, November, 1938, pp. 522-528.
——, "The Role of Mental Hygiene in the Arts," in *Art Education Today: An Annual Devoted to the Problems of Art Education* (New York, Teachers College, Columbia University, Fine Arts Staff, 1937), pp. 31-36.
——, "Social Problems Which Youth Must Face," *Progressive Education*, Vol. 14, December, 1937, p. 597.
——, "Some General Characteristics of Adolescence," *Progressive Education*, Vol. 15, December, 1938, pp. 591-597.
——, "Understanding the Child During the Latency Period," *Educational Method*, Vol. 17, January, 1938, pp. 162-165.

PREFACE

wholly to the observations of the Study and the only one that attempts to discuss these in the full scope of their implications for secondary education.

The Chairman organized the Study in the light of experience in secondary education, in teacher training, and in guidance.³ The Study staff included educators, psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychiatric social workers. The Editor was engaged for collaboration in the preparation of the present volume.

Adolescents were observed in manifold relationships in several public and private high schools and colleges and in some out-of-school situations. The various techniques of observation that were employed in these centers yielded insights into the educational needs of students both more comprehensive and more intimate than accrue in the usual faculty-student relationship. Yet the fact that these processes of observation were smoothly integrated in the work of the coöperating schools suggests that none was beyond the potential scope of an educational institution as such. The necessarily close relationship between the Study and the educators in service made possible gains, on the part of the workers of the Study, in understanding of the requirements of practical educational situations, and, on the part of the faculties, in appreciation of the demands of adolescent development upon secondary education.

From this close observation of developing boys and girls emerged the recognition on the part of the Study staff that the process of growth from childhood to adulthood in contemporary American culture groups requires of young persons certain major adjustments in emotion and conduct which are basic to later, adult adaptations. These tasks confront adolescents generally, although no two individuals experience them in quite the same way. It was held to be a chief function of the school to help adolescents in these basic adjustments in order that in adulthood they might function in personally satisfying and socially constructive

³ The Chairman came to the Study from service as Director of the Mental Hygiene Institute and Head of the Department of Psychology, New Jersey State Teachers College, Montclair. For a number of years she was engaged in teacher training at Teachers College, Columbia University.

PREFACE

ways; it was felt that secondary education had not taken these developmental processes sufficiently into account.

This concept of the needs of adolescents in present-day America and of the function of the school in relation to them determined the manner in which observations regarding adolescent development are formulated in ensuing pages. Basic life-adjustment tasks in general more keenly experienced in the early, middle, and later years of adolescence are discussed in the three parts of this book in the light of interacting personal and cultural demands both in the previous developmental experience of the individual and in that of the present.

In all of the illustrative life histories, excerpts, episodes, and quotations appearing in this book, data which might have tended to identify individuals have been omitted or altered. All names have been changed.

This volume is addressed to high-school and college teachers and to guidance workers and other specialists concerned with secondary education in hope that two purposes may be served. From the analysis of life-adjustment tasks confronting adolescents and the discussion of their attempts to work these out, the reader may gain in understanding of his students. And since throughout these pages the potential significance for education of relationships between adolescent and adult is manifest, the reader may gain added insights into his individual professional function in fostering the social development of boys and girls.

That this book is based on materials of the Study of Adolescents has already been noted. While staff members contributed both directly and indirectly toward the preparation of this report, the Chairman assumes full responsibility for the interpretations presented therein. Staff members who assisted in the selection and preparation of illustrative material from the Study are Regina C. Weiss, Evelyn Necarsulmer, and Claire Selltiz. Ann B. Armstrong worked as editorial assistant throughout the preparation of the manuscript. Without the assistance of Ethel T. Haugen as secretary, the Chairman could not have carried out her responsibility in relation to this volume.

Important suggestions toward the organization of data for pres-

viii

PREFACE

entation in book form were given by Lawrence K. Frank, and Erik Homburger Erikson contributed valuable insights to interpretation of the material. Frank Fremont-Smith, Wilma Lloyd, Stanley Newman, and Benjamin Spock gave assistance at various points in the preparation of the volume. The following gave generously of their time and thought in reading portions of the manuscript and offering constructive criticism and suggestion: Robert J. Havighurst, William H. Kilpatrick, Ruth Kotinsky, Margaret Mead, W. Carson Ryan, and V. T. Thayer.

The Chairman takes pleasure particularly in acknowledging a long-standing debt to Dr. Kilpatrick who, through his understanding of the interrelationship between mental hygiene and education, first stimulated and facilitated her study of this relationship.

CAROLINE B. ZACHRY, *Chairman of the
Study of Adolescents*

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416

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Contents

	PAGE
PREFACE	V
CHAPTER	
1. EDUCATION AND THE ADOLESCENT'S TASKS OF LIFE ADJUSTMENT	I
The School's Responsibility	2
The Student and His World	2
Emotion and Conduct in Social Development	3
The Process of Growing Up	7
Growth toward Adolescence	8
Adjustments in Adolescence	11
The School's Resources for Understanding Needs of Students in Social Development	14
Staff Interpretations	15
Use of Records	20
The Educator's Role	24

PART I

CHANGING ATTITUDES TO THE SELF

2. CHANGING BODY AND CHANGING SELF	31
The Body and the Concept of the Self	32
Changes in Growth	35
Maturation of the Organism a Process of Metamorphosis	35
The Task of Adjustment to Body Change in Adolescence	44
Social-Emotional Problems Related to Organic Growth	47
The Growth Process in Itself	47
Change in Size and Strength	49
Sexual Maturation	52
Asymmetry an Aspect of Most Emotional Problems in Organic Growth	55
Adaptations to Organic Growth	58
Physical Bearing and Activity	58
Appearance	62
	xi

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Health	66
Other Areas of Conduct	73
3. DIFFERING INFLUENCES UPON BOY AND GIRL	78
The Importance of Sex Differentiation	78
Cultural Influences in Sex Differentiation	81
Social Conditions and Popular Concepts	83
Family Relationships	93
4. DEVELOPMENT IN SEX DIFFERENTIATION	103
The Boy's Adaptations	104
Before Puberty	104
Early Adolescence	105
The Girl's Adaptations	111
Before Puberty	111
Early Adolescence	112
Beginnings of Heterosexual Adjustment	116
Response to Group Expectations	116
Sex Differences in Social Maturity	125
Misgivings, Cross Purposes, and Attractions	127
5. INFLUENCES UPON DEVELOPMENT OF ETHICAL STANDARDS	143
The Task of Adaptation to a Worthy Way of Life	143
Cultural Influences upon Standards of Value	145
Precepts and Popular Concepts	146
Family Relationships	152
Changing Sources of Standards	162
Questions of Personal Worth	166
6. ADAPTATION TO STANDARDS OF CONDUCT	173
Changing Attitudes to Achievement	174
Assurance through Competence	175
Overwork and Perfectionism	178
Whistling in the Dark	184
Flight from Challenge	186
Self-Depreciation	191
Changing Attitudes to Right and Wrong	200
Aggressive Energies	201
Sustained Resentments	207
Self-Blame	212
Orientation amid Standards	216
7. EDUCATION AND CHANGING ATTITUDES TO THE SELF	219
The School and the Student's Adjustment to Organic Growth	219

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Curriculum and Attitudes to Body Change	220
Curriculum and Attitudes to Health	223
The Staff and the Troubled Student	224
Sex Education	228
The Extent of the School's Responsibility	229
Boy and Girl Relationships	231
Teaching	233
Individual Guidance	241
School and Community	243
Character Education	243
The School's Objectives	243
School Procedures and the Sense of Worth	245
School Procedures and the Adolescent's Conscience	252
Curriculum and Character Education	255
Conclusion	259

PART II

CHANGING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

8. INFLUENCES UPON DEVELOPMENT IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	263
The Adolescent's Task of Adjustment in Personal Relationships	263
Social Trends Influencing Development in Attitudes to Others	267
The Child's Developing Attitudes to Protection and Authority	271
Relationships with Parents	271
Relationships with Other Adults	275
Relationships with Peers	278
The Desire for Emancipation	281
9. CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS	285
Attitudes of Adults in the Adolescent's Striving for Independence	285
Parents in Their Changing Rôle	285
The Rôle of Other Adults	295
The Adolescent's Changing Attitudes to Parental Authority and Protection	301
Evasion of Parental Solicitude	302
Efforts to Justify Feelings of Revolt	303
Fluctuating Feelings about the Parents' Way of Life	306
Rationalization of Rebellious Feelings	310

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Beginnings of a New Companionship	312
The Troubled Adolescent in Changing Relationships with	
Parents	313
Response to Divided Authority	313
Fearing to Rebel	314
Extremes in Rebellion	323
Relationships with Other Adults	324
The Search for a Lesser Support	324
Defiance of Adults outside the Family	327
Gaining Perspective in Attitudes to Adults	328
The Troubled Adolescent in Relation to Other Adults	334
Confusion about Authority and Protection at School	334
Growth through Relationships with Adults outside the	
Family	336
Conclusion	344
10. CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS	346
Changing Attitudes to Similarities	348
Comradeships with Peers of the Same Sex	349
Difficulties in Forming Comradeships	356
Changing Attitudes to Differences	360
Differences among Contemporaries of the Same Sex	362
Relationships with Those Who Are Less Strong	371
Changing Heterosexual Relationships	384
Development in Reciprocity	394
11. EDUCATION AND CHANGING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	400
School Relationships	402
Participation in Control	403
Teaching	407
Individual Relationships with Students	411
School and Home	414
Home and School Relationships	414
The Rôle of the School in Parent Education	418

PART III

CHANGING ATTITUDES TO BASIC SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

12. APPROACHING A VOCATION	425
The Task of Adaptation to a Vocation	425
Development toward Vocational Choice	429

CONTENTS

• CHAPTER		PAGE
	Factors in the Selection of an Occupation	429
	Early Preferences	432
	Floundering in Later Adolescence	435
	Perplexities of the Gifted	438
	Deeper Difficulties	440
	Emerging Preferences in Relation to Developmental Ex- perience	442
	Interest in Children	443
	Interest in Helping Others	446
	Sex Rôle and Vocational Preference	449
	Other Interests Expressed in Vocational Preferences	452
	The Time for Choosing	458
	Adjustments to People on the Job	460
	Conclusion	465
13.	APPROACHING CITIZENSHIP AND MARRIAGE	466
	Social-emotional Factors in the Approach to Citizenship and Marriage	466
	The Task of Adaptation toward Citizenship	466
	The Task of Adaptation toward Marriage	472
	Adaptation toward Citizenship	476
	Individualistic Tendencies	477
	Revolt and Dependence in Widening Relationships	480
	Development through Constructive Participation in Wider Relationships	489
	Adaptation toward Marriage	494
	Conflicting Values in Adaptation toward Family Life	496
	Development toward Psycho-sexual Maturity	506
	Conclusion	514
14.	EDUCATION AND THE APPROACH TO ADULTHOOD	515
	Fostering Adaptation toward Basic Social Institutions	516
	Education for Vocational Choice and Adjustment	516
	Education for Citizenship	521
	Education for Family Life	527
	Education through Relationships	533
	Basic Processes	534
	Social Maturity—A Goal Redefined	541
	SELECTED READINGS	545
	INDEX	549

I

Education and the Adolescent's Tasks of Life Adjustment

To grow up to be a fit and happy member of contemporary society is not a simple process. This development is not only complex; with all its satisfactions, it is often difficult as well. The chief duty of the school is to give the help young people need in order to make socially constructive adjustments in the course of their growth—that is, the school is mainly concerned with their social development. Organized society expects it thus to continue, supplement, and, when necessary, even offset the influence of the home and other agencies in the public interest.

In a comparatively spontaneous and complex society such as that of present-day America, community needs are correspondingly diverse, fluctuating, and obscure. But even here and now, in any given community in the United States today, basic values can be singled out that are essential to the public interest. These are fundamental in determining what course education in America must take if it is to foster social development. They derive from the democratic organization of the community.

A democratic society holds the individual in respect. It affords substantial opportunity for personal differences in intellectual and emotional self-realization. At the same time, it

EMOTION AND CONDUCT IN ADOLESCENCE

imposes upon the individual a high degree of responsibility for adapting himself to the needs of others in his conduct. For the purposes of education it is significant that in such a culture the claims of the individual and of society can be compatible.

THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITY

The Student and His World

Thus social development for America not only refers to group mores as such but also represents a personally satisfying fulfilment of individual potentialities. Or, to put it the other way around, this democratic society cannot be well served by deprivation of the individuals who make it up but only by a continuing reciprocity between individual and group whereby basic needs of both are satisfied. In this frame of reference, social development refers as much to the individual as to the society in which he lives, and in fostering it the school is concerned with both.

The term *social development* is derived from physical growth, to which this broader process is partially analogous. Yet even in physical growth, standards differ from person to person; one man at five-feet-eight inches is no less grown up than another at six-feet-two. Much more, social growth, which concerns the whole personality in its physical, intellectual, and emotional functioning, refers to standards that in sum are indigenous to each individual. The child's personality develops through interaction with his surroundings, physical and social. And most children growing up in present-day America have in common some basic experiences, to which they tend to respond in ways broadly similar. But no home environment is exactly the same for every child in the family, since from his infancy onward other members respond in somewhat different