



Personality Development in Adolescence

A cross national and life span perspective

Edited by Eva Skoe and
Anna von der Lippe

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Personality Development in Adolescence

Challenge and conflict are an integral part of adolescent life here in the West. This intriguing book looks at adolescence from a cross-cultural perspective, including research presented here for the first time, from Canada, the United States, Norway and Japan.

The roles of morality, family contexts, social change, and gender are considered in adolescent personality development by contributors well known in their respective fields. In three parts, *Personality Development in Adolescence* begins with a look at related studies of adolescent development of individuation, ego, identity and moral orientation related to family context in several countries, with a focus on family communication and adolescent personality. *Personality Development in Adolescence* examines development in differing cultural contexts and concludes with an exploration of life span issues of moral development, separation-individuation, and psychosocial issues, focusing on Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*.

This book will be of central importance to developmental and clinical psychologists, sociologists and criminologists, and valuable to social workers, teachers, nurses and all those working with young people.

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*For my parents Evelyn Vera and Jens Aage Dybwad
Aspaas (ES)*

*For my grandchildren Martine, Mathias, Julie and
Kai (AL)*

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Preface

This book contains primarily papers presented at the seminar held at the inauguration of the doctoral program in psychology in May 1994, at the University of Tromsø, which is the youngest university in Norway and the northernmost university in the world (if one discounts the university branch on Svalbard at 88 degrees north). In fact, the University of Tromsø is situated on a coastal island in the North Sea, north of the Arctic Circle. The Gulf Stream makes this polar part of the world habitable. This is the land of extremes—from midnight sun in the summer to darkness in the winter. The Psychology Department was established in 1989 to meet demands for psychological services in northern Norway. The first group of psychologists all graduated successfully in 1995.

In this unique setting, the seminar provided a special opportunity for national and international scholars to meet and to discuss with post-graduate students and with each other various theories, research, and thoughts about personality development in adolescence and across the life span. It has been noted that “developmentalists often are not interested in the outcome of a developmental process in adulthood...or additional development past adolescence (or sometimes even past infancy)” (Eisenberg, 1995, p. vii). This is clearly not the case with the contributors in this volume; all have worked extensively with developmental issues in adolescence and beyond.

We arranged this seminar because we believe adolescence to be an important phase with regard to personality development. Adolescence was long an underresearched area, seen to be unstable and little related to the periods before and after (Block, 1971). The last 20 years have, however, seen a blossoming of research and the starting of scientific journals. The way adolescence is negotiated between the young and his or her environment has become to be viewed as far reaching in its later consequences. Adolescence also has its sensitivities, not least for girls, who suffer set-backs which need to be understood. In Norway,

adolescence has received some research attention by criminologists and sociologists, but considerably less by psychologists. In 1990 a cross-disciplinary research program was started to stimulate research. Central to this program was a longitudinal nationwide project with 12,000 youth, which is now nearing completion. Two of the contributors to this volume are active in this program. Its initiation stimulated the choice of personality development in adolescence as topic for the seminar. An additional reason was the hope to put together the proceedings in a volume by inviting internationally renowned researchers in the field to the conference and later asking them to contribute to the book, both for their excellence, but also to add a cross-cultural perspective. An offshoot of this effort was that one of these contributors (Jane Kroger) is now professor at the University of Tromsø.

Generally, this book is cross-cultural in nature. The chapters discuss research conducted with many different cultural groups: for example, Canadian, American, Japanese, Chinese and European. Although most of the writers are to some degree psychodynamically inclined, all agree that context effects, such as culture, family, peers, and the social as well as physical environment, are important for explaining and understanding personality development. We also all seemed to agree that we would like to meet again at such a seminar. Perhaps because we were a relatively small group (about 20 people), the atmosphere throughout the three days the seminar lasted was especially warm and conducive to genuine discussion and sharing of ideas as well as feelings and experiences. Another reason for the good atmosphere may be that we Norwegians appreciated and valued the presence of the three distinguished international speakers, Harold Grotevant, Jane Kroger, and James Marcia, all who had traveled very long distances to be with us.

In the chapters ahead, contributors address various issues and topics examined in a variety of nationalities, which we hope that both students and professionals will find useful for gaining greater insights into the complex processes of personality formation. The first three chapters consider primarily influences of the family context on identity, ego development, and moral orientation, stressing the interactional aspects of the parent-child relationship. In their extensive and informative chapter "Individuality and connectedness in adolescent development: review and prospects for research on identity, relationships, and context" (Chapter 1), Harold D.Grotevant and Catherine R.Cooper argue that central to all human relationships is the transactive interplay of the two dimensions of individuality and connectedness; such transactions influence both individual and relational development. Their developmental model assumes that security in the parent-adolescent

relationship will be predictive of the adolescent's ability to explore his or her sense of identity and the future. Also, in their view, historical, cultural, and economical contexts have significant bearing on the nature of family processes and the development of identity. In this chapter the key approaches used and the findings from a study of 121 two-parent families with adolescents are described. Studies with several different cultural groups, such as Mexican, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Japanese and European, are also discussed. Grotevant and Cooper highlight methodological and conceptual advances and close with a description of new directions their work will be taking.

The importance of the parent-child relationship is further assessed by Anna L.von der Lippe ([Chapter 2](#): "Are conflict and challenge sources of personality development? Ego development and family communication"), von der Lippe discusses the "optimal growth" hypothesis, that environmental challenge and conflict are potential contributors to personality development when they take place in a benign atmosphere. She reviews the research evidence and presents Norwegian data on family conflict resolution and ego development in late adolescent girls.

In [Chapter 3](#) ("A narrative approach to the study of moral orientation in the family: tales of kindness and care") Michael W.Pratt, Mary Louise Arnold, and Susan M.Hilbers discuss Carol Gilligan's concept of the care voice and the role the family may play in its socialization, in particular highlighting recent narrative approaches to moral development. A longitudinal family study is then described which focuses on parents' stories about family socialization, and explores gender differences in these family narratives. The care voice of mothers appears closely linked to adolescents' own moral self-concepts. Pratt, Arnold, and Hilbers then provide some suggestions for future research, focusing on the complexity of usage of various moral voices within the family and across different contexts.

The next three chapters focus mainly on empirical data and on the influence of culture and social change. Torild Hammer ([Chapter 4](#): "Social parameters in adolescent development: challenges to psychological research") argues that in psychological research on adolescence it is important to consider how a changing society affects the social conditions and opportunities for development during the adolescent years. Hammer describes and analyzes some important aspects of social change in the adolescent situation and living conditions during the last decade in Norway. An especially noteworthy change was increased differentiation in female career choice.

Lars Wichstrøm (Chapter 5: “Self-concept development during adolescence: do American truths hold for Norwegians?”) considers the issue of self-perception and presents a study which surveyed a nationwide sample of more than 10,000 Norwegian adolescents (aged 13–19 years) using Susan Harter’s Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents. Five topics related to self-concept development in adolescence were addressed: gender differences, age trends, differentiation of the self-concept during adolescence, the relative importance of self-concept domains for overall self-esteem, and finally, the effect of pubertal development. The results revealed gender differences in self-concept according to prevailing sex-role stereotypes. The gender difference in perceived physical appearance was particularly strong, with boys scoring much higher than girls. No gender differences were observed with respect to the impact of pubertal development. Adolescents who were particularly late in their pubertal development scored lower on all self-concept domains as compared to those who were on time or early. Wichstrøm notes that several of the findings are in conflict with results obtained in the USA and discusses the role of culture and context.

Within the area of developmental psychology, there is increasing interest in ethnic issues. In Chapter 6 (“Language and ethnic identity in indigenous adolescents”), Siv Kvernmo points out that language is salient to several aspects of ethnic group membership and ethnic identity. For indigenous people like the Sami, the contact with majority groups has been dominated by assimilation, a process which often leads to language shift and language death. Kvernmo presents a study examining the relationship between language and ethnic identity, a topic crucial to all aboriginal groups across the world. A significant relationship between ethnic identity (self-defined and ascribed) and mother tongue among Sami and Norwegian monolinguals and bilinguals was found. The results showed, however, that ethnic identity in these three linguistic groups of Sami adolescents is clearly associated with contexts which linguistically and culturally transfer and support Sami values, both at the family and community level. Another main finding indicated that language contexts which are supportive of Sami culture can provide ethnic identity to Sami adolescents without Sami language competence. Further investigations are needed to explore ethnic factors other than language and context which may provide a strong sense of ethnic group membership to aboriginal adolescents.

The final three chapters include life span perspectives with different, but closely related topics as main themes. Eva E. Aspaas Skoe (Chapter 7: “The ethic of care: issues in moral development”) reviews Carol Gilligan’s theory of the care ethic and recent research aimed at

elucidating one of the most heated debates in psychology: gender differences in moral development. This chapter describes Skoe's increasingly used moral reasoning measure, the Ethic of Care Interview (ECI), which is based on Gilligan's (1982) theory, and provides an overview of studies with the ECI across the life span. The findings point to the importance of care-based morality for general human development, especially personality development. Skoe concludes that several variables, such as generational differences, cultural and family background, historical context, and stage or period in life, must be considered in addition to gender in understanding differences in moral development. Directions for future research are also outlined.

Jane Kroger ([Chapter 8](#), "Adolescence as a second separation-individuation process: critical review of an object relations approach") provides a review and appraisal of contemporary theoretical and empirical efforts to elucidate intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions of the adolescent separation-individuation process initially described by Blos (1967). Kroger also provides suggestions for conceptual refinements in theory and future research directions.

The last chapter is a most unique and creative piece of work by James E. Marcia ([Chapter 9](#): "Peer Gynt's life cycle"). Using the literary figure of Peer Gynt (Henrik Ibsen's stage play), Erik Erikson's psychosocial stage theory of personality, and the research which has issued from it, are applied to analyze the life cycle. A special focus is on identity formation and part identities as they interweave with earlier and later developmental stages. Marcia introduces the verb "adolescing" to allow for continued identity reformulation throughout development. Peer is seen as a man who is ill-prepared by all earlier psychosocial stage resolutions to meet the next, except that he has achieved the first stage of basic trust, which gives him energy and charm. Ibsen has shown relentlessly in his play how each chance of redemption at significant turning points of development is wasted, leaving a person with only roles and appearances, with self absorption and despair. Yet, the play, and Marcia's chapter, end with a faint glimmer of hope.

The unifying theme in this book is that all of the chapters deal in various ways with the self-other relationship. Also, a common thread is the importance of examining the relevance of various contextual factors. Personality development involves a "sequential process that follows certain emotional, cognitive, social, and contextual changes, phases, and stages over time" (L'Abate, 1994, p. 55). The challenges to researchers in personality development include providing a more precise and differentiated specification of this sequential process and the factors that influence it across a variety of cultures, not least to identify factors that

have transcultural significance. This book presents empirical data from several different nations, and comparisons made among countries show that it is vital to consider the wider context of culture. Only by pursuing such work will we come to understand the role of culture in personality formation.

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Part I

Family context