

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Social and Emotional Development across the Life Span

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There are numerous handbooks on various aspects of psychology, covering topics as diverse as emotion, motivation, or social psychology. Handbooks of psychology typically include a volume on development, and there also exist two age-defined handbooks about development, the *Handbook of Child Psychology*, the sixth edition of which was edited by William Damon and Richard M. Lerner (2006), and the *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, the third edition of which was edited by Richard M. Lerner and Laurence Steinberg (2009). Although some of the finest chapters on life-span development were published in these handbooks, there was no high-level reference work reviewing theory and data about all aspects of psychology across the entire life span until the publication of the present *Handbook*. Our efforts to commission and edit the current volume were predicated on the assumption that a complete and satisfying understanding of any area of functioning requires adoption of a life-span perspective.

Most research and theory in developmental psychology is still clearly concerned with specific phases of the life span. This specialization by researchers has a pragmatic rationale; to work across the full age spectrum would require so much technical and methodological expertise and an understanding of so many different, topic-specific paradigms that one laboratory would not be capable of

mastering them all. In addition, the training we provide students of developmental science militates against the acquisition and development of such integrative, life-span knowledge even today. Lecture classes or seminars typically deal with one phase of development, such as “emotional development in childhood” or “self and identity in adolescence.” This focus implies that separate age phases constitute meaningful units for studying development. Moreover, most students (especially at the postgraduate level) are likely to study either child development or adult development and aging, giving them expertise regarding one phase of development but not of the entire life span. With this *Handbook of Life-Span Development*, we hope to begin breaking that pattern by commissioning thorough overviews of development in various functional domains across the entire life span.

When conceptualizing this *Handbook*, we first took seriously the idea that development is a lifelong phenomenon. To the extent permitted by the knowledge base within each substantive area of focus included in this volume, the contributors have documented how the processes of development—despite qualitative or quantitative discontinuities (as well, of course, as continuities in these dimensions)—begin in utero and extend across the entire ontogenetic span, ending only with death. Unfortunately, however, variations in the extent to

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which this orientation to life-span developmental processes has come to characterize the study of different aspects of social and emotional development ensure that there are differences in the degree to which the areas of research reviewed in this volume have been studied across the life span.

As one might expect in a field that tends to describe and study development in such discrete age-graded phases as infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, or old age, our requests of the contributors were daunting and demanding. Most had expertise regarding one or two phases, rather than the entire life span. Although readers will be impressed by how well the contributors have mastered the tasks assigned to them, they will also notice a tendency for many chapters to include more detailed analyses of some phases of life than others. To the extent that these differences in amount of detail reflect differences in the amount of research that has been conducted, we hope that the evident gaps will prompt students and scholars of development to embrace perspectives that encompass the entire life span in their future research and conceptualization.

Second, we have tried in this volume to cover all the diverse topics that comprise the field of social and emotional development. Of course, domains of development can be partitioned in many ways. In the end, the choices we made were largely dictated by the extent to which different topics had been conceptualized and studied, and the chapters included in the volume include different levels of analysis, ranging from the molecular focus on peptides, genes, hormones, and the neurological bases of development, to the macro-level analysis of such constructs as the development of self-efficacy and developmental psychopathology.

Third, when charting the terrain of emotional and social development across the life span, we also sought to cover different experiential or functional aspects of development, including emotions, motivation, and temperament, as well as social and intimate relationships. We do not want to imply that these functional domains are separate; they are not. Humans experience emotions in social contexts, and these experiences are influenced by their motivations as well as their temperaments, for example. However, the focus on different functional domains makes a project like this *Handbook* feasible, while helping to create a holistic understanding of development.

AN OVERVIEW OF THIS VOLUME

Our vision for this volume is instantiated in the chapters that it comprises. The chapters are organized into several areas of scholarship pertinent to social and emotional development.

Emotional Regulation across the Life Span

In the second and third chapters in this volume, Porges and Carter (Chapter 2) and Lewis, Todd, and Xu (Chapter 3) place considerable emphasis on the neurobiological factors that influence or control individual behavior across the life span.

Porges and Carter focus on the neurobiological factors that make social bonding and social interaction possible across the life span. The phylogenetic perspective they introduce draws extensively on research conducted using social animals, including voles, as well as research on individuals whose intrinsic characteristics make it easier to understand the underlying processes, either because they are especially young and immature or because they have conditions such as autistic spectrum disorders that compromise their capacities. Porges and Carter proceed to document the role of neuropeptides in promoting the development of social relationships, in part by inhibiting tendencies to reject or aggress against strangers (including offspring) and also explain how and why the brain, using the vagus nerve, modulates psychological reactions to different social stimulus. Interestingly, as they show, the same basic processes mediate interactions between individuals and their environments, especially but not exclusively their social environments, across the life span. Evidence regarding the ability of this model to explain key aspects of social behavior in childhood should, these authors hope, prompt more extensive research on the interface between neurobiological processes and social behavior at other stages of the life span.

Lewis, Todd, and Xu's approach to emotional regulation, as presented in Chapter 3, also focuses on fundamental processes, including those that determine both the extent and nature of emotional arousal. Lewis and colleagues make clear that the underlying neural mechanisms tend to be quite immature at birth. Furthermore, although developmental change is rapid in the early years, changes continue to take place more or less across the life span, with mature or optimal function emerging only in early adulthood and with neurological changes underlying declines in behavioral function in later adulthood and old age. Thus, the capacity to regulate emotions, especially in response to challenges posed by intrinsic (e.g., pain, illness) and extrinsic (e.g., fear-provoking stimuli or separation from a source of comfort) factors, develops gradually, with significant individual differences attributable to variation in the behavior of others (especially parents and care providers) during the phase

of life when regulatory capacity and control shift from extrinsic to intrinsic control.

As with Lewis and his colleague's examination of emotional regulation, Labouvie-Vief, Grünh, and Studer's analysis of the dynamic integration of emotion and cognition (Chapter 4) adopts a dynamic systems approach to the understanding of emotional development. Labouvie-Vief and colleagues present a model of emotional development inspired by Piaget's seminal work on child development in two ways: by acknowledging the importance of striving for equilibrium in developing systems and by taking seriously the intricate interplay and connectedness of emotion and cognition. Their model seeks to explain how people develop by navigating between the needs for safety and well-being on one hand and the need for increased mastery and control on the other. According to their model, the opposing needs create a tension between resting in an equilibrium state and venturing into disequilibrium to develop more complex integrations of emotion and cognition. This model is a true life-span model of emotional development because it describes and explains how the contextual and cultural demands as well as biological changes across the life span interact in shaping the codevelopment of emotion and cognition. In this way, Chapters 3 (Lewis and colleagues) and 4 (Labouvie-Vief and colleagues) nicely complement each other.

Turning to self-regulation, Geldhof, Little, and Colombo (Chapter 5) present an organizing heuristic for the structures and elements of self-regulation that serves as a theoretical model for understanding the development of self-regulation. This heuristic integrates elements from various models developed in the rich literature on self-regulation and thereby helps structure a broad and somewhat confusing field that has produced not only many theoretical accounts of self-regulation but also a variety of rather disconnected empirical findings. Moreover, like both Lewis and colleagues and Labouvie-Vief and colleagues, Geldhof, Little, and Colombo invoke a multilevel approach to self-regulation that encompasses biological and neurocognitive as well as social-psychological and motivational constructs, in the process highlighting the importance of attention, cognitive schemas, expectancies, and immediate and future gains for self-regulation. Taking a developmental perspective highlights the extent to which the elements of self-regulation and their interaction change over time. Moreover, Geldhof and colleagues also review the outcomes of self-regulation, adopting the action-theoretical notion that individuals are not just the products but also the producers of development (Lerner &

Busch-Rossnagel, 1981). Self-regulation is one of the hot topics in current psychological research because it is related to performance in many areas of functioning, including emotion, motivation, and cognition, and there is little doubt that the heuristic presented in Chapter 5 will help scholars and researchers gain a better understanding of self-regulation and its development across the life span.

Self, Identity, and Personality across the Life Span

Describing and structuring the development of self and identity across the life span, McAdams and Cox, the authors of Chapter 6, take us on a voyage through historical time and ontogenetic development, clearly demonstrating that any static analysis of self and identity obscures essential elements of these constructs because self and identity are both inherently subject to change as well as being agents of change and development. In their wide-ranging analysis, McAdams and Cox highlight the extent to which the concepts of self and identity are culturally embedded and have self-related and social functions that vary depending on whether the selves are actors, agents, or authors. From the perspective of the self as an author, for instance, telling people who you are communicates what others can expect from you in future interactions, thereby making social relationships more predictable and allowing people to shape their social relationships effectively. Telling their life stories, however, also helps individuals to make meaning of different, perhaps even separate events by drawing them together into a coherent narrative. Moreover, as research on generativity and redemptive life stories has shown, the way people tell their life stories predicts actual behavior, nicely illustrating how different levels of analysis complement one another: Cultural themes such as redemption that shape our sense of self and identity then find expression in life stories that reflect and reconstruct biographical life events and themes, which, in turn, are translated into actions that affect society (such as generative behavior) and foster experiences that transform our sense of self.

Despite a long tradition, research on temperament and personality across the life span typically places considerably less influence on the importance of social context and construction than is done by McAdams and Cox and is substantially less precise about neurobiological mechanisms than either Porges and Carter or Lewis et al.'s chapters; this area of research is eloquently summarized by Bates, Schermerhorn, and Goodnight in Chapter 7. Much of the relevant research is predicated on assumptions (and

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evidence) that fundamental individual differences in temperament and personality are inherited. Furthermore, there is an increasing body of evidence linking specific aspects of temperament to regulatory processes such as those that control attention (e.g., persistence and distractibility). Recent progress in this respect, as Bates and his colleagues' document, is attributable in large part to consensus regarding at least some of the principal dimensions of temperament and personality. On the other hand, there continues to be a distinction between the major dimensions of temperament studied in infancy and early childhood, as opposed to the dimensions of temperament studied in adulthood, a divergence that has impeded life-span research. In addition, there has been relatively little research on the development of personality and temperament in later life.

Further building on the themes of personality development as well as the concepts of redemption and resilience discussed in the two preceding chapters, Staudinger and Bowen (Chapter 8) examine positive development from a life-span perspective (albeit with a focus on the age phases of adulthood and aging), emphasizing the processes of growth (i.e., improving levels of performance) and adjustment (i.e., maintaining levels of performance). According to Staudinger and Bowen, personality exerts an "executive function," orchestrating the development of other psychological systems (such as cognition or emotion) by allocating resources in response to and in anticipation of a changing balance of gains and losses across the life span. In their view, the self manages and constrains developmental changes, while changing through interaction with the environment. As a result, although personality at the level of traits often appears to involve fixed dispositions that change slightly, if at all, after young adulthood (see Chapter 7), it reacts to and shapes developmental changes that help manage resources and adjustment. In this way, personality processes have fundamental implications for adjustment and growth throughout adulthood and into old age.

Complementing the earlier chapters on positive personality development, self-regulation, and emotion regulation, Aldwin, Yancura, and Boeninger describe the development of coping across the life span in Chapter 9. As their first sentence states and their chapter compellingly shows, "coping and development are inextricably intertwined," with coping both dependent on resources and helping in the maintenance and creation of well-being (see also Staudinger and Bowen, Chapter 8). Echoing Geldhof and colleagues' multilevel approach, Aldwin and her colleagues' analysis of coping and its development

across the life span draws on evidence regarding neurocognitive, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Not content to simply list and describe different coping styles and their relative prominence at different points across the life span, Aldwin and colleagues propose that coping should be viewed as self-regulation and problem solving in stressful contexts, with individual capacities developing in response to the interaction among these three factors over time. Because it includes proactive and anticipatory cognitions, coping becomes a process that does not merely involve reactions to stress but also helps individuals to create environments and to influence the world to suit their needs. Like the authors of the preceding chapters, therefore, Aldwin and her colleagues provide an interactive perspective on development, viewing coping as the product of development as well as one of the processes driving development. They illustrate this by reference to the resilience–vulnerability trajectory, describing upward and downward spirals of coping with losses. Their analysis thus raises issues discussed in several other chapters, including Dante Cicchetti's account of developmental psychopathology (Chapter 14), in which resilience is a central concept.

Gender, Friendship, and Intimate Relations across the Life Span

In Chapter 10, Hines discusses the development of gendered behavior across the life span. Echoing Chapters 2 and 3, Hines makes extended references to prenatal biological development, noting that exposure to and uptake of specific compounds at critical biological stages have enduring influences on both anatomy and behavior. It is important to note, however, that these prenatal biological processes are not the sole factors affecting gendered behavior and, at least in some cases, appear to affect members of one gender more than the other. Indeed, as Hines explains, the behavioral dispositions influenced by prenatal hormones are typically reinforced by individual experiences after birth, notably the efforts initiated by parents and reinforced by many others (including peers and teachers) to bring their children's behavior in line with socially prescribed norms. As Hines points out, behavioral differences between males and females are actually much less pronounced than most people think and they are quite varied across cultures and historical eras. Unfortunately, the research literature has focused fairly narrowly on the beginning of the life span, with precious little attention paid to adulthood and old age. As in other cases when the literature is so uneven, we hope

that this volume may prompt further research on the “forgotten” phases of the life span.

The need to belong has long been recognized as one of the most central human needs (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and thus a fundamental component of life-span developmental science is an understanding of how people form relationships and how both the relationships and the processes develop and change across the life span. Echoing some themes raised by Porges and Carter (Chapter 2), the authors of the next two chapters both address relationship formation. Whereas Diamond, Fagundes, and Butterworth focus on intimate relations (Chapter 11), Antonucci, Fiori, Birditt, and Jackey (Chapter 12) turn to social convoys across the life span.

The first social relationships to develop are, of course, the relationships that infants form with their parents, but the bulk of Diamond and her colleagues’ chapter is concerned with what might be called romantic relationships, most of which include sexual intimacy as a key arena for interaction. Diamond and her colleagues show how the characteristics of the first such relationships in adolescence differ with respect to both some defining features as well as their temporal perspective from those established in emerging and later adulthood, when commitment becomes more central. Diamond et al. discuss a growing body of research on the factors associated with both longevity and satisfaction, noting that these appear quite similar across much of the life span as well as in different types of intimate relationships. Unfortunately, there has been much less research on intimate relationships in later as opposed to earlier phases of life, so this remains a fertile area for future research, especially in light of demographic trends that now allow most adults to enter (and terminate) intimate relationships long after the age of reproduction or paid employment.

Clearly, intimate relations are essential for subjective as well as objective indicators of well-being. However, people do not live and develop in close relationships only but typically have networks of family, friends, and acquaintances that constitute important developmental contexts and are, at the same time, subject to development as well. Antonucci, Fiori, Birditt, and Jackey (Chapter 12) review and integrate the literature on the life-span development of social networks or convoys, noting that the structure, function, and quality of these networks all develop over time and vary depending on the larger social and cultural context. The convoy model helps describe as well as explain patterns of change in these social networks, accounting for both stability and change in network compositions and processes.

Highlighting the importance of a life-span developmental approach, Antonucci and her colleagues argue that location in the life span crucially affects social relationships (e.g., being the child of one’s parents at 3 years of age is very different from being the child at 30 or 60 years of age). Similarly, friendships of 3 years’ duration have different qualities and functions than friendships that have lasted 30 years. Only when considering such developmental aspects of social relations can a coherent understanding of social interactions and their functions emerge. The pattern of social relations, as Antonucci et al. further note, not only affects emotional and subjective well-being but also influences physical health and longevity. Thus, a social convoy that moves with people throughout their lives shapes individual development, is shaped by the individual, and can promote—or hinder—individual resilience and growth. Interestingly, as we have already observed, this focus on positive developmental processes reappears in many of the other chapters, representing something of a recurrent theme.

Specific Topics of Life-Span Development: Achievement Motivation, Psychopathology, Civic Engagement, and Religious and Spiritual Development

The focus then shifts in Chapter 13 to motivation, specifically achievement motivation, which is widely seen as an important predictor of the tasks that people select, of the tasks on which they persist, and of how well they perform. The motivational literature has tended not to take a life-span perspective, especially when achievement is concerned, instead focusing on childhood and adolescence. It is not surprising, therefore, that the chapter by Elliot, Conroy, Barron, and Murayama pays considerably more attention to earlier phases of the life span than to adulthood and aging. There is simply not a lot of literature—either theoretical or empirical—on the development of achievement motivation throughout adulthood, pointing to a gap in our knowledge that should be addressed in the future because, as Elliot and colleagues show, achievement motivation plays a crucial role in the development of competence. In their review, Elliot and his colleagues focus on two central constructs. First, approach and avoidance motives (i.e., the need for achievement and the fear of failure) are believed to develop very early in life, even before the acquisition of language, rendering them resistant to change because they are not represented verbally. Second, by contrast, goals develop in childhood when cognitive development is advanced enough that individuals can represent future desired (to be approached) or dreaded

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(to be avoided) states. Goals change across the life span not only with respect to content but also with respect to such dimensions as time perspective. Elliot and his colleagues present a hierarchical model of achievement motivation that encompasses the dimensions of competence (whether people want to master tasks or perform well) on one hand and valence (approach and avoidance) on the other. Using this well-researched model, Elliot and colleagues show that achievement goals are dynamic and that life-span features of such factors as the time scales relevant to goals need to be considered more fully in future research.

Attention then turns to the development of psychopathology. In his chapter, Cicchetti (Chapter 14) focuses not on the age-graded stages at which specific syndromes or psychological dysfunctions either first emerge or are most likely to impede effective behavior and functioning, but on providing a framework within which the development of both effective and pathological behavior can best be understood. Cicchetti introduces and explains an organizational perspective on development, in terms of which positive early experiences channel development along positive lines of development, whereas adverse experiences (such as maltreatment) set in motion developmental processes that make maladaptive, pathological behavior more likely, both in the present and in the future. Echoing themes mentioned earlier in the book, Cicchetti emphasizes that intrinsic differences among individuals are also important, making some individuals more vulnerable and others more resilient in the face of adverse experiences. Here we thus see an important interaction between inherent differences and the effect of experiences. Indeed, the organizational perspective adopted by Cicchetti proposes that most forms of psychopathology are the result of such interactions between predisposition and life experiences, thereby providing a life-span framework for understanding developmental psychopathology, even though the focus in his chapter is on childhood.

In Chapter 15, Zaff, Hart, Flanagan, Youniss, and Levine discuss a topic of considerable interest to applied social scientists today: the development of civic engagement. Despite its importance, the research on this topic is less extensive than one might assume, with both the life-span approach and research on adulthood conspicuously lacking. Taking a developmental systems framework, however, Zaff and colleagues examine the ways that adolescents develop social responsibility and engagement, illustrating the development of civic engagement by focusing on a group of individuals who are particularly unlikely to engagement in civic activities—namely, adolescents who do not attend college. Civic engagement is a complex and multifaceted

phenomenon that requires the integration of cognitive processes, emotion regulation and responsiveness, and actions as well as social relations, structure, and context. Zaff and colleagues carefully explain how these aspects interact in their effect on the development of civic engagement. They argue that civic engagement is not only an outcome but also an influence on development, at least in adolescence. We join them in calling for rigorous research on this important topic and hope that their review of the literature will inspire life-span researchers to study civic engagement at phases of life after adolescence.

Finally, Scarlett and Warren (Chapter 16) address a topic that has received little attention from life-span developmentalists—namely, religious and spiritual development. In a chapter that carefully articulates the conceptual and definitional issues that will have to be addressed by researchers and theorists in the future, Scarlett and Warren make clear how research in this area needs to develop if it is to clarify the important conceptual issues that have often been ignored. As they show, definitions (including the operational definitions of spirituality, religiosity, religious observance, and faith) have especially serious implications for the framing of empirical research questions in this domain; the failure to grapple with these issues has helped impede progress in this area to date. In particular, divergent conceptions of development—notably, the difference between functional and structural models of development—affect such fundamental issues as assumptions regarding the directionality of development and the notion that development necessarily implies growth. Some theories of religious and spiritual development take the view that development occurs in stages and that these stages lead inexorably to “higher” levels of spirituality, thereby adopting views at odds with some of the basic tenets of life span developmental psychology (e.g., Baltes, 1989, 1997)—that development is multidirectional, involving gains and losses, as well as contextual, resulting in heterogeneity rather than universal transitions from one stage to the next. Perhaps an extended dialogue between those studying different aspects of life-span development will help to resolve these issues, promoting a richer understanding of religious and spiritual development in the process.

CONCLUSIONS

To what extent does the *Handbook* include life-span sensitive analyses of all important aspects of social, emotional, and personality development? In truth, we can claim only

partial success. The excellent chapters indeed provide deep insights into social and emotional development, but most also reveal incomplete understanding of development as a lifelong process. Our disappointment about this state of affairs is modulated by the hope that awareness of these gaps in the current literature will inspire research to bridge them. In that sense, the thoughtful reviews included in the *Handbook* serve not only to demarcate what we already know but also to direct the future efforts of interested scholars.

There are other sources of disappointment as well. For example, the increased awareness on the part of social scientists that individual differences are the product of interactions between biogenetic factors and experiences is unevenly represented in the volume, with “biological” factors almost entirely unmentioned in some chapters. In addition, some aspects of development, particularly the development of close, nonromantic relationships (such as those within the family) or the development of moral values and attitudes, are not addressed by contributors to this *Handbook*, and their exclusion is disappointing. It is us, the editors, who are to blame for this omission.

On balance, however, we believe that the *Handbook* represents an important step forward. It brings together vast bodies of research that have never been examined so closely, either within individual chapters or within the same volume. We have no doubt that this will have an important impact on developmental science in the next decades, and we are grateful to have been a part of that process.

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willing and able to produce these chapters under adverse circumstances. In this regard, we would like to pay special tribute and thanks to Gisela Labouvie-Vief and her colleagues, as well as Jon Zaff and his colleagues.

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