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CHAPTER

# 12

# Ego Development and Attachment: Converging Platforms for Understanding Close Relationships

Stuart T. Hauser
Emily B. Gerber
Joseph P. Allen
Department of Psychiatry
*Harvard Medical School*
*Judge Baker Children's Center*
*University of Virginia at Charlottesville*

> *Models linking early regulatory experiences, or attachment, and later psychopathology suggest directions for continued investigation. A principal focus of study remains tracing the origins and causes of individual variations within personality functioning. . . . it is important to build on current research—investigating mechanisms that link developmental processes (e.g., cognition and affect) and provide continuity in development—How do affective regulatory styles and representational processes mediate behavior? How do defensive processes develop?*
>
> —Carlson & Sroufe (1995, p. 609)

Concluding their masterful review of attachment theory and developmental psychology, Carlson and Sroufe (1995) highlight key questions about mechanisms linking cognitive and affective processes, and about how we can understand the ways that individual processes (e.g., cognition) can shape behaviors (e.g., peer relationships). Their call for these new integrative research directions in developmental psychopathology converges with: (a) study of close relationships, an emerging domain within social sciences characterized by proliferating contributions from ethology, psychology, and sociology (Bowlby, 1980, 1988, 1989; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Loevinger, 1994; Weiss, 1994); and (b) research focusing on continuity of

attachment across the life span (e.g., Rothbard & Shaver, 1994; Sperling & Berman, 1994).

Curiously, a paradigm given scant attention in otherwise broad reaching reviews of attachment theory is ego development (e.g., Carlson & Sroufe, 1995; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Rothbard & Shaver, 1994). This omission is problematic, in light of several important parallels between attachment theory and ego development. Central in both frameworks are inner representations—constructions, working models, cognitive styles. In addition, the complex interplay between cognitive and affective processes is addressed by studies of ego development and attachment. When we turn to an emergent direction within attachment theory, adult attachment, we find the most specific convergences: coherence of discourse, syntheses of perceptions and cognitions, personal frameworks of meaning (Hauser, 1993).

Most broadly, attachment and ego development research converge with respect to their insistence upon continuously sustaining bidirectional paths between theory construction and empirical assessment; ". . . a well articulated feedback loop between [ego development] theory and data" (Loevinger, 1976, p. 433); "I emphasize that theory and measurement [of attachment] are inextricably linked . . . questions of measurement can in fact have significant theoretical implications" (Bartholemew, 1994, p. 26).

Recognizing these intersections between ego development and attachment, this chapter is in the spirit of more deeply exploring their meaning and implications. Given the range of attachment research (e.g., Carlson & Sroufe, 1994) we deliberately restrict our scope to adult attachment representations, and extend previous work along these lines, based on conceptual (Hauser, 1993; Hauser & Smith, 1991) and empirical (Hauser & Allen, 1991) observations. Through a theoretically guided longitudinal study of adolescents becoming young adults, we have had the unique opportunity to trace ego development antecedents of young adult attachment representations and close relationships. Proceeding from conceptual to empirical analyses, we first review pertinent conceptual domains and then examine results of new analyses from our study, focusing on longitudinal links between adolescent ego development and adult attachment representations.

## EGO DEVELOPMENT

A perspective within psychoanalysis, ego psychology builds on earlier conceptualizations based on hypothesized biological drives. Echoing goals of attachment theory, ego psychology represents an appreciation of biological and psychological views of individuals, together with an



awareness of social and cultural forces, thereby broadening the scope of psychoanalysis from the study of unconscious processes and psychopathology to the exploration of adaptive processes within a matrix of interpersonal, familial, societal and cultural influences (Hauser & Safyer, 1995). Ego development is a central construct for ego psychology theory (Hartmann, 1939; Loevinger, 1976) and for many practitioners (Hauser & Smith, 1991). Although ego processes and ego development are certainly connected, the nature of their linkages is still not fully clarified (e.g., Haan, 1977; Hauser, 1993; Hauser & Daffner, 1980; Hauser & Safyer, 1995). Two prevailing models of ego development illustrate ego processes–ego development questions (Hauser, 1976). One model is based on multiple ego processes, defining ego development in terms of how these processes unfold, and are used by the individual to manage internal and external conflicts, as well as to develop new competencies. Characterizing the second model, conceptualized by Loevinger, is the special place of one ego process, the *synthetic function*, in defining ego development (Hauser, 1976, 1993; Loevinger, 1976). This model has clear theoretical connections with adult attachment representations, and has been incorporated in numerous relevant empirical investigations (Cohn, 1991; Hauser, 1976, 1993; Loevinger, 1976, 1993a).

Dramatically advancing our understanding of ego development has been the availability of an assessment approach that includes a psychometrically robust sentence completion test (SCT )and theoretically driven scoring system (Loevinger & Wessler, 1970; Loevinger, Wessler & Redmore, 1970). Over the past 20 years, over 280 studies used this approach to study ego development from psychological and sociocultural perspectives (Cohn, 1991; Hauser, 1976, 1993; Loevinger, 1976, 1979a). Embedded in much of this research is close attention to intersections between an individual's level of ego development and other aspects of his or her psychological functioning—inner representations, empathy, emotional security, impulsiveness, psychological-mindedness, openness to experience (Hauser, 1976, 1993).

Loevinger's model of ego development assumes each person has a customary orientation to the self and to the world and that there is a continuum (ego development) along which these frames of reference can be arrayed. "In general, development is marked by a more differentiated perception of one's self, of the social world, and the relations of one's feelings and thoughts and feelings to others" (Candee, 1974, p. 621). From this perspective, the ego is conceived of as a relatively stable structure, maintaining its coherence by initially screening out information that would disrupt its homeostasis. Yet, this definition does not postulate that the developing individual is completely shielded from disequilibrium.

Qualitative changes occur, usually gradually, in developing children *and* adults as they encounger experiences with their current frameworks of meaning. Such inconsistencies may trigger periods of disequilibrium, and in favorable circumstances may lead to shifts to higher ego development levels (Loevinger, 1976; Loevinger et al., 1970).

Stages of ego development vary along several dimensions—impulse control, conscious concerns, interpersonal and cognitive style (Loevinger, 1976; Loevinger et al., 1970). Individuals at the earliest (preconformist) stages are impulsive and fearful, favoring stereotypes and dependent or exploitative interpersonal styles. Their most prominent conscious concerns are immediate gratification and avoidance of punishment (Loevinger, 1976). At the conformist stages, an individual's conscious concerns shift to social acceptance and approval. Inner states are verbally expressed for the most part as clichés, stereotypes, and generalizations. Nonetheless, there is a gradual increase in self-awareness and an appreciation of the multiple possibilities and outcomes expected from a given situation or experience.

As individuals reach the most advanced (postconformist) stages, their self awareness and capacity for introspection are most noteworthy. Social norms are no longer seen as immutable; they are followed because they are understood as just, not because their violation leads to punishment and disapproval. Interpersonal relationships are guided by principles of mutuality and empathy, alongside a growing appreciation of interest in individual differences. In most groups, it is more unusual to find individuals functioning in ways reflecting these more advanced stages, which usually emerge during late adolescence and adulthood. Moving beyond specific stages, most germane to our interest in ego development and adult attachment representations are those components of ego development contributing to how an individual integrates outer and inner experiences with perceptions of interpersonal relationships.

## EGO DEVELOPMENT AND ITS NEIGHBORING DISCIPLINES: FOUR THEMES

A major benefit of the accumulating predictive validity studies is our greater awareness of neighboring theoretical perspectives (e.g., Blasi, 1993; Costa & McCrae, 1993; Hauser, 1993; Loevinger, 1976, 1979b, 1983; McCrae & Costa, 1983; Selman, 1993; Thorne, 1993; Vaillant & McCullough, 1987). This chapter's explorations of ego development and attachment representations clearly extends these outreach efforts. In a festschrift dedicated to Henry Murray (Zucker, Aronoff, & Rabin, 1984), Loevinger (1984) argued that ego development can most appropriately be viewed as a form of "self-



theory," referring to "... a kind of filter, template, or frame of reference for one's perceptions and conceptions of the interpersonal world" (p.49). This template is not simply a static theoretical entity:

> I am convinced that the self, ego, I, or me is in some real sense, not created by our definition. My purpose is to comprehend the way the person navigates through life, not to create artificially demarcated entities [self, ego, I, me]. . . . What I have called ego development is, I believe, the closest we can come at present to tracing the developmental sequences of the self, or major aspects of it. (p. 50)

In other words, assessing ego development is a way of tapping this template, discovering the "filter" through which the child, adolescent, or adult is experiencing his or her interpersonal world. We know that individuals vary greatly with respect to the framework of meaning that they impose upon their experience (Hauser, 1976). Broad outlines of such variation are apparent in our descriptions of the ego development stages. To be sure, Loevinger is investigating individuals' constructions, their meaning-making. Yet pressing questions arise: What is being constructed? What is the developmental nature of these constructions? What are the relations of the constructions to other representations, such as those so relevant to adult attachment?

Perceptions and conceptions of the interpersonal world are among the most striking aspects of ego development. But more is included in this model. Cognitive style, cognitive complexity, impulse control, and conscious preoccupations are repeatedly cited as components of ego development (Hauser, 1976, 1993; Loevinger, 1976, 1984; Loevinger & Wessler, 1970). These components are not merely discrete properties; they are dynamically interconnected along a continuum of increasing self-integration, differentiation, and complexity of thought.

In addition, there are at least four specific motifs embedded within the ego development perspective (Hauser, 1993): (a) psychological-mindedness, (b) integration and coherence of perceptions and cognitions, (c) agency, active mastery; and (d) interpersonal relationships. These motifs are strongly implied as one reads up the sequence of advancing levels of development. The four themes suggest connections between ego development and adult attachment representations.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL-MINDEDNESS

Included among "conscious concerns" in Loevinger's model of ego development, this multifaceted strength encompasses several aspects of

awareness: recognition that one's internal states are separate from those of others; self-reflection; knowledge that inner feelings and standards can stand apart, and yet are not totally isolated from those of others; and awareness of the psychological impact of one's actions, emotional expressions, and verbal expressions on another person (e.g., Loewald, 1980; Vaillant & McCullough, 1987). This monitoring of self and others is comparable to *metacognition*, discussed by Main and Hesse (1990) with respect to adult attachment representations.

## INTEGRATION AND COHERENCE OF PERCEPTIONS AND COGNITIONS

One cannot synthesize inner representations through bypassing complexity, by reducing diverse ideas and perspectives to one overriding scaffolding (e.g., psychological or sociological), or truncating ideas and perceptions so that they artificially fit together. Rather, the experience of coherence comes about through recognizing, constructing, a network of connections of thoughts and perceptions relevant to the topic at hand. For example, the coherent completion to a given sentence stem on the SCT may be highly relevant to the sentence stem and it may reflect the individual's integrated perceptions and thoughts related to an issue touched on by the stem.

To become conscious of experience as repetitive of one's past is to assume an active role. In doing so, one lifts the experience to a new plane and puts it within the scope of the ego as an integrating agent. In active repetition, the old is mastered, not eliminated or abolished but dissolved and reconstructed (Loevinger, 1976). Coherence is a salient dimension in the study of adult attachment representations; and is one of the major criteria used for assessing and classifying adult attachment representations (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

## AGENCY, ACTIVE MASTERY

This theme could be included under the rubric of psychological-mindedness. Yet its distinctiveness merits separate discussion. The basic idea is that a person thinks he or she can influence their surroundings—immediate environment and even larger institutional contexts. For instance, one may believe: that he or she is able, within limits, to shape ongoing relationships; has affected previous ones; and will meaningfully influence future relationships. These beliefs contrast starkly with perceiving oneself to be a victim, at the mercy of the environment. Active or passive orientation to the world is reflected in each of the ego development stages



and in how individuals complete specific sentence stems. Activity and passivity are also important considerations in distinguishing among attachment representations.

## INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Earlier reviews of ego development studies covered many investigations of social functioning (Hauser, 1976; Loevinger, 1979a). Since then, a series of papers amplified support of the view that there are theoretically meaningful connections between ego development and aspects of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Browning, 1986, 1987; Hauser, 1978, 1993; Helson & Wink, 1987; McCrae & Costa, 1980; Rosznafsky, 1981; Vaillant & McCullough, 1987; White, 1985). The most persuasive data supporting this claim are based on actual behavioral ratings or naturalistic data, thereby circumventing the bias inherent in data drawn from multiple self reports. Several studies used this important design (Frank & Quinlan, 1976; Hauser, 1978; Helson & Wink, 1987; Rosznafsky, 1981; Vaillant & McCullough, 1987). The thrust of the findings is that higher levels of ego development are associated with increased nurturance, trust, interpersonal sensitivity, valuing of individuality, psychological mindedness, responsibility, and inner control. These studies lead us, in turn, to the personal relationship field, where attachment theory has been an influential new paradigm (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Rothbard & Shaver, 1994).

## ADULT ATTACHMENT REPRESENTATIONS

Attachment theory was conceptualized by John Bowlby (e.g., 1973, 1980, 1988) " . . . to explain the nature of a child's ties to his or her parent in terms of its biological function and to account for the disturbing behavioral responses observed in infants subjected to prolonged separations from significant attachment figures" (Van IJzendoorn, 1995a, p. 387). Over a decade ago, Mary Main and her colleagues (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) offered a new hypothesis signaling a move from the level of behaviors (of infants and children) to mental representations (of parents). In brief, they argued that "an adult's evaluation of childhood experiences and their influence on current functioning becomes organized into a relatively stable 'state of mind' with respect to attachment" (Main et al., 1985, p. 68; Van IJzendoorn, 1995, p. 387). Referred to as a *mental representation*, this state of mind is then defined as a system of rules "for the organization of information relevant to attachment and for obtaining or limiting access to that information" (Main et al., 1985, p. 67).

This shift to mental representations stimulated several lines of research focusing on predicting infant–parent attachment relationships, parents' responsiveness to infant attachment signals, and adult close relationships (e.g., Bartholemew, 1994; Crowell & Waters, 1994; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). In his comprehensive meta-analysis of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), a major approach for assessing adult attachment, Van IJzendoorn (1995a) considered the reliability and validity of this interview assessment, concluding that "... the AAI shows the predicted associations with infant attachment and parental responsiveness, and its predictive validity is also supported in clinical studies" (p. 400). Another direction in adult attachment research addresses individual differences in adult attachment representations, raising important questions about developmental, cognitive, and affective determinants of variations among individuals (Bartholemew, 1994; Belsky & Cassidy, 1994). For example, do adults holding insecure attachment representations function at earlier stages of ego development? Are specific components of ego development systematically related to aspects of adult attachment representations? Such questions about individual variation organize our new explorations of links between ego development and adult attachment.[1]

## ASSESSING ADULT ATTACHMENT REPRESENTATIONS AND ADULT ATTACHMENT STATUS

Van IJzendoorn (1995a), concurring with many other observers, considered "The Introduction of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George, Kaplan & Main, 1985) ... [to reflect] a simple but revolutionary shift in attention from the objective description of childhood experiences to the current mental representation of these experiences and from the contents of autobiographical memories to the form in which the autobiography is presented" (p. 388). Originally developed with parents of young children, the AAI is a semistructured interview probing the degree to which adults can access, and openly reflect on, their relationships with early significant caregivers, tapping several dimensions—coherence, metacognition (reflecting on one's mental processes), derogation of attachments—that are key features of attachment representations. The interview consists of

[1]To be sure, many other issues could also be taken up: To what extent are attachment representations consciously held? How general or specific are these representations? (Bartholemew, 1994). Under what conditions are these representations likely to be activated and influence close relationships? Does their influence, for instance, vary with the dynamics and phase of the relationship—courtship, early marriage, termination? These related questions, for now, reach beyond the scope of this chapter—which addresses the possible interface between ego development and adult attachment representations.



15 questions asked in a set order, with standardized probes. Questions inquire about specific descriptions of attachment figures, supportive or contradicting memories, and current relationships with attachment figures. Other questions ask the participant to recall memories and descriptions of events from early childhood in which the subject was upset, physically hurt, ill, felt rejected, threatened, and/or experienced loss (i.e., events that would typically activate his or her attachment system). Of much importance is the fact that the interview includes probes designed to evoke memories exemplifying words the individual has used to describe experiences with attachment figures (for instance, subjects choose five words they believe characterize their early relationship with their mother, and are then asked to provide associated memories). Subjects are also asked about alternative attachment figures, and to reflect on how childhood experiences and parental behaviors affected the course of their development. A significant portion of the AAI addresses abuse experiences and loss of key figures through death, as a child and as an adult. Hence, with minimal involvement on the part of the interviewer, the AAI is designed to elicit a subject's *representations* of significant attachment figures and attachment experiences.

Coding of the AAI transcripts is based on the ways in which these experiences and their attributed effects on current functioning are reflected on and evaluated (Van IJzendoorn, 1995a). Although several dimensions are assessed (e.g., derogation of attachment, idealization, passivity of thought) one aspect of attachment representations, *coherence*, is central: "The nature of an adult's attachment representation is considered to become manifest in the coherence of his or her discourse during the AAI" (van IJzendoorn, 1995a, p. 388). Drawing from Grice (1975), the AAI coding manual presents several scoring systems to assess subjects' coherence in their use of language (Main & Goldwyn, 1994).

Three major *adult attachment classifications* can be derived from application of the Main and Goldwyn (1994) coding system to AAI transcripts. A subject is classified as *secure* or autonomous when his or her descriptions of attachment-related experiences are coherent and consistent; "their responses are clear, relevant, and reasonably succinct" (Van IJzendoorn, 1995a, p. 388). In contrast, subjects are classified as *dismissing* when they present attachment figures in a very positive way, using terms that are contradicted or unsupported elsewhere in the interview. The dismissing subject appears to be unaware of inconsistencies and contradictions. In addition, these subjects frequently insist that they are unable to remember childhood attachment experiences. Recent studies note that they do not lack memory for other childhood events (Bakermans-Kranenburg & Van IJzendoorn, 1993; Sagi et al., 1994). These observations

are consistent with the view that dismissing subjects minimize their attention to attachment-related experiences (Main, 1990).

*Preoccupied* subjects describe a confused, angry, or passive involvement with attachment figures, using jargon and long entangled sentences. Intense emotional memories are apparent, together with few indications that the speaker has integrated these strongly expressed, often lucid, constructions with one another or with descriptions of the present. In these subjects, ". . . the interview questions seem to stimulate excessive attention to attachment-related memories at the cost of loss of focus on the discourse context (i.e., once started on a given [attachment-related] topic the participant becomes lost or confused or cannot stop talking; Main, 1990)" (Van IJzendoorn, 1995a, p. 388). Dismissing and preoccupied subjects are classified as insecure (Main & Goldwyn, in press).

A final category is *unresolved–disorganized* with respect to likely traumatic experiences involving loss or abuse. Indices of this classification, assessed through the AAI, include momentary lapses in the monitoring of discourse (e.g., confusions of time and subject) during or immediately following discussion of such experiences. Subjects classified as unresolved–disorganized are always given a second major category assignment (preoccupied, dismissing, secure) (Main & Hesse, 1990).

## ADULT ATTACHMENT REPRESENTATIONS AND EGO DEVELOPMENT: EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Theoretical analyses of ego development and adult attachment representations, then, highlight meaningful connections between these frameworks. Until now, other than occasional suggestions of possible links (e.g. Carlson & Sroufe, 1995; Hauser & Smith, 1991; Van IJzendoorn, 1995b)—and preliminary findings pointing to expected links (Hauser & Allen, 1991)—empirical studies of associations between Main's personality–interpersonal framework (Kobak, 1994) and Loevinger's personality–developmental perspective have not been reported. Through new analyses, drawn from our longitudinal research, we are now in an excellent position to consider one highly relevant question: Does adolescent ego development predict young adult attachment representations?

In the most recent phase of our program (Hauser et al., 1984; Hauser, 1993; Hauser & Allen, 1991), we follow a sample of 143 middle adolescents who were former psychiatric patients and a demographically comparable group of nonpatients into their young adulthood. Guiding these studies are explorations of how adolescent socioemotional development and family experience may shape attachment, close relationships, and other



aspects of adaptation in adult years. Consistent with theoretical expectations, we find that adolescents with higher ego development levels are classified as expressing secure attachment status in young adulthood, in contrast to significantly lower adolescent ego development levels for unresolved, preoccupied, and dismissive young adults. In addition, adolescent ego development predicts young adult attachment coherence ($r = .41; p < .0001$). Moreover, arrested paths of adolescent ego development (Hauser, 1993) are associated with dismissing and preoccupied attachment in young adult years (Hauser & Allen, 1991). Finally, even after adolescent psychopathology is accounted for (through multiple regression analyses), adolescent ego development continues to be a significant predictor of coherence of young adult attachment representations.

One way to understand these findings is through recognizing the key role—for ego development and attachment—of processes leading to coherence or synthesis of representations and constructions. Moreover, there are likely other psychological processes shaping both ego development stages and adult attachment status, including the capacity to tolerate and reconcile inner conflicts, balanced needs for autonomy and relatedness, ability to reflect on internal and external events (psychological mindedness), and curiosity. These dimensions, discussed as embedded within the ego development framework, are also conjectured to be closely associated with the ability to construct coherent, cohesive, and plausible internal representations of attachment (Main, 1990). Also of interest are questions about causal direction. On the one hand, early attachment experiences can facilitate or obstruct advances in ego development, as they influence the emergence of key ego strengths like self-reflection, delay of gratification, tolerance of ambiguity, and intense affect. Alternatively, early and emergent ego processes of self reflection, affect tolerance, and synthetic abilities may provide the requisite conditions for constructing those coherent attachment representations classified as secure. Because attachment representations were not assessed in adolescence, we cannot firmly argue for one or the other of these alternative directions of influence. Nor can we discover whether both attachment and ego development assessments are ultimately indexing a third underlying dimension, yet unmeasured. About one matter we can be sure. Attachment and ego development are not simply different names for the same phenomena (a problem of discriminant validity). Our findings indicate that, at most, 16% of the variance in adult attachment coherence is explained by adolescent ego development. Observing a significant but modest relationship between ego development and attachment suggests the hypothesis that ego development is likely a necessary but not sufficient condition for security of attachment in young adulthood.

Ego development refers to syntheses, complexity of thought, self-reflection. Yet it does not cover all aspects of emotion regulation, interpersonal distance, intimacy, trust, and commitment in close relationships. Such dimensions are within the domain of attachment theory, particularly that newest branch focusing on adult attachment representations. Carlson and Sroufe (1995) expressed a similar point of view:

> Attachment . . . organization regulates the processing of emotional information and provides direction in interpersonal relationships. Developing cognitive and linguistic capabilities increase the complexity of processing of emotional information and the meaning assigned to experience. More complex representations and beliefs concerning relationships with caregivers, the self, and the world develop. (p. 598)

Through these excellent measures and a relevant database we can now investigate—in some detail—the interplay between ego development and attachment in childhood years, and from these years into different phases of adulthood. As we follow our subjects from young adulthood to parenthood, we can identify ways parental differences in ego development and attachment representations may shape parental behaviors and cognitions about parenting. Major new questions can be explored empirically: For instance, do advances in ego development lead to overarching transformations in attachment representations or in specific dimensions of these representations? Or do dramatic changes in attachment status (e.g., changing from securely attached to dismissive) become reflected in unexpected ego development regressions? By engaging adult attachment and ego development theory in conceptual and empirical dialogue, we begin to cover broader theoretical terrain, probing new frontiers about psychosocial development.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Loevinger's notion of the ego as a self's "guiding fiction," adapted from Adler (Loevinger, 1976, p. 9), resonates with adult attachment representations conceived of as memories of childhood experiences of their relationship with primary caregivers. Both attachment theory and ego development rely on the accumulation of past layers of emotional, interpersonal and cognitive experiences. For ego development, Loevinger (1976) argued that this amounts to taking an active role in perceiving "conscious experience as repetitive of one's past . . . in doing so, one lifts the experience to a new plane and puts it within the scope of the ego as an integrating agent. . . ." (p. 334). In a similar way, Bowlby (1989) conceived



of working attachment models as the key to how adults organize their orientation to the world, involving expectations of self and other relationships to partners, children and parents, based on current perceptions of their previous child–parent attachment relationships. These representations represent "principal features of the world about the person, about him and himself as an agent in it. Such working models determine his expectations and forecasts, and provide him with tools for constructing plans of action" (p. 117).

Although there is evidence for some stability of attachment classifications (Van IJzendoorn, 1995a) and ego development stages (Hauser, 1993) over time, both attachment and ego development perspectives share an optimism about human potential for change and flexible adaption in the face of normative stressors, like the transition to parenthood or traumatic events, like the sudden loss of a child or spouse. As a response to environmental changes, revised attachment representations may become more coherent, and transitions from lower to higher stages of ego development may occur, revealing varied developmental paths that may be traced over time (Hauser, 1993).

Despite their shared optimism about human potential for growth, both the ego development and attachment perspectives identify childhood as a particularly important phase of development when children are more vulnerable than adolescents and adults to stressors ranging from marital discord to abuse. As a consequence of early serious psychosocial stressors, young adults may become arrested at earlier stages of ego development and construct insecure representations. When an adult has endured such adverse conditions, the significance of his or her arrested ego development or insecure attachment patterns is not always readily apparent. Are these levels and patterns necessarily indicative of significant psychopathology? Or can one understand these patterns and levels as indexing special forms of adaptation to a particular set of life events, a repertoire of responses enabling the child and then adult to creatively cope with severe adversity?

We have argued that higher levels of ego development are likely a necessary, but not sufficient condition to sustain secure attachment representations. However, although we can specify processes contributing to coherence of attachment representations and to higher levels of ego development, we have not yet precisely conceptualized how these constructs differ. The ability to restructure and flexibly adapt in domains outside the interpersonal, for example, can indicate higher levels of ego development. But such abilities, alone, do not lead to a secure attachment.

We may find connections between attachment representations and ego development in terms of information processing constructs, relevant to the central motifs of coherence, psychological-mindedness and agency.

Crittenden (1992) observed that children achieve secure attachment via the coherent processing of information by procedural, semantic, and episodic memory systems. This tripartite information-processing system is linked with cognitive development: procedural memory involves encoding of sensory stimuli and behavioral responses; semantic memory allows the child to create verbal representations of their experience; and episodic memory involves episodes of specific, sequential narrative experiences that may be recollected like a story accompanied by the sounds, smells, and feelings associated with the event. Synthesis is achieved when children develop coherent integrations of their representations of external events, their own behaviors and inner experiences (feelings and beliefs). In other words, securely attached children are able to retrieve and coherently interpret their various stored memories of events. Attachment figures who selectively attend to their infant's signals facilitate an attachment relationship in which the infant learns that he or she cannot reliably depend on consistent strategies to obtain care when aroused. Attachment figures' inconsistent or dismissive responses provide discordant or negative feedback about the self in relation to the environment; in turn, these infants become anxiously attached children employing strategies like distortion, defensiveness, and repression to manage discrepancies between their internal states and environmental responses.

Can the differing strategies employed by children with insecure and secure attachments be viewed as an attempt to master a known environment? At a distance, these strategies could be considered adaptive or maladaptive. But within the context of their lives, children's engagement in certain behaviors might be an attempt at immediate mastery, regardless of subsequent outcome. For example, a child classified as dismissing might engage in disruptive behaviors to attract the attention of a neglectful parent. However, when this strategy is generalized to other settings, like school, it becomes maladaptive. And consider a child with a secure attachment classification. At home, this child experiences caring, sensitive and supportive responses. How might this child handle conflict with the "class bully"? Would this encounter prove more difficult for the secure child to master than the dismissing child? Would the dismissing child be more adept at countering unprovoked aggression from a peer? These questions illustrate how both attachment representations and ego development conceptualize the convergence of outer realities with inner experiences. A child's mastery of the home environment may or may not generalize easily to other environments. This lack of success is usually interpreted as maladaptive. How a child (and adult) approaches challenging experiences likely depends on context, ego development, and attachment representations.



Whether classified as secure or insecure, adolescents with higher ego development levels share an ability to master their environment; strategies employed in early attachment relationships become generalizable to other environments and feedback received from the environment continues to be positive, leaving the adolescent psychologically intact or providing room for psychological growth. This behavior may appear to be maladaptive. For example, consider an adolescent who sells drugs to establish financial independence from a controlling or neglectful parent. Appearing dysfunctional from an external perspective, within the framework of the adolescent's plan to achieve greater fiscal autonomy, his or her actions may be adaptive. Higher levels of ego development cannot be equated with mental health. Rather, levels of ego development and attachment representations combine to determine psychological response to the environment. In other psychiatric samples, Noam (1993) found that higher levels of ego development are related to internalizing disorders, whereas lower ego levels are related to externalizing disorders.

These final comments, stimulated by the interplay between two historically different perspectives, raise many intriguing questions. With the exception of recent contributions by Kobak, Allen, and Hauser (1993) and Hauser and colleagues (Hauser & Safyer, 1995; Hauser & Smith, 1991), there are no focused discussions about the surface and deep paths between what now appear to be obvious theoretical 'neighbors.' New work reexamining emotion processes and development (e.g., Campos, Campos, & Barrett, 1989; Hauser & Huffman, 1994; Hauser & Safyer, 1994, 1995) should enhance our understanding of the intersection of ego development, internal representations, and interpersonal relationships, thereby deepening our knowledge of the evolution of developmental pathways through adolescent and adult years. At the most practical level, such advances in our knowledge promise to yield new insights about why some individuals, seemingly at great risk for later psychopathology, lead optimal lives, whereas others show surprising signs of disorder following low-risk, "normal" childhood and adolescent years.

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# PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

## Theoretical, Empirical, and Clinical Investigations of Loevinger's Conception of Ego Development

Edited by

**P. Michiel Westenberg**
*Leiden University—The Netherlands*

**Augusto Blasi**
*University of Massachusetts—Boston*

**Lawrence D. Cohn**
*The University of Texas at El Paso*

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