

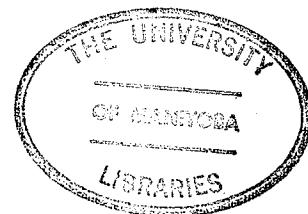
PERCEIVED PARENT BEHAVIOR, LOCUS OF CONTROL BELIEFS,
AND ACHIEVEMENT BEHAVIOR IN ADOLESCENTS

A dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
David Stephen Abrahamson

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ABSTRACT

As a consequence of earlier research into the correlates of parent attitudes and behavior, two problems were identified which occupied the studies presented herein. The first concerned the predictive validity of Schaefer's Children's Reports of Parent Behavior Inventory. The second involved the development of an alternative measure of locus of control beliefs, which would more adequately assess the unidimensional versus multidimensional issue.

The new multicontent locus of control measure was constructed and assessed in a test-retest study, in which item and subscale reliabilities together with social desirability involvement and the measure's factor analytic structure were first evaluated. Administered to over 800 University of Manitoba introductory psychology students, roughly equated for sex, the original measure and its revision demonstrated a single factor structure which accounted for 25% to 45% of the total scale variance.

In a second study, Schaefer's perceived parent behavior measure, the new locus of control measure and two social desirability scales were administered to approximately 600 Grade 7 to Grade 12 students in three Winnipeg school divisions. Information on student academic performance and father's employment were also obtained.

Factor analyses of the new locus of control measure replicated the findings in the college population with respect to the variance accounted for by the scale and with respect to its single factor structure.

Hypotheses regarding the relations between CRPBI factor scores and the new measure of locus of control were tested and results indicated that adolescents' beliefs in their own or an individual's ability to control the environment (more generally labelled a belief in internality) are related to perceptions of parental acceptance, firm control and psychological autonomy. An hypothesis predicting a greater relationship between adolescent internality and parental acceptance for younger adolescents was tested with equivocal results (although the direction of prediction is maintained in the data). The prediction that parental acceptance is related curvilinearly to adolescent academic achievement behavior, in that moderate rather than high or low acceptance is tied to achievement, was contradicted by evidence which suggested that high as opposed to moderate maternal acceptance was tied to higher adolescent academic achievement. Perceptions of both mothers' and fathers' firm control and psychological autonomy were shown to be linearly related to adolescent achievement, while only maternal acceptance showed this relationship to achievement. The highest relationship obtained between the major variables of the study was that between adolescents' locus of control beliefs and their academic achievement.

Recommendations for future research based on issues derived from this work encompassed the following topics: research tactics in elaborating our understanding of the dimensionality issue; the measurement of social desirability; and the elaboration of assessments in perceived parent measures.

Lastly, theoretical consequences in the research are considered.

The relationship between the results and a general model specifying ties between parent behaviors and adolescent behaviors and attitudes are discussed. The application of several theoretical perspectives, including that of social learning theory, to the conceptualization of parent behavior are evaluated and the pragmatic implications of this research are suggested.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to Baldwin (1960) one of the major stages in the growth of child development was the appearance somewhere between 1935 and 1945 of an interest in the effects of childhood experience upon adult personality. During this period child developmentalists turned to studies of the effects of weaning, toilet training, birth injuries, broken homes, institutionalization, maternal absence, and maternal rejection upon the psychological development of the child. In opposition to the prevalence of growth studies before this period, this stage appears to have marked a new appreciation of the environment's input into the development of the child. Although this period, as a consequence, more closely approximated the environmentalist bias of the main stream of psychological research, its onset appears to have been due to a different theoretical position. Baldwin (1960) ties the genesis of this stage to the influence of Freud.

The early research of this period attempted to test specific Freudian hypotheses. Unfortunately the hypotheses were often so simplified no Freudian considered them legitimate representatives of the theory, especially when the studies appeared to controvert an asserted Freudian hypothesis. Gradually this interest was replaced by attention to more general characteristics of the childhood experience. In addition, research progressed away from the testing of any specific theoretical hypothesis and became a more general study of the influence of childhood experience upon personality and its growth. As Baldwin

(1960) noted, these latter developments accompanied the addition of further theoretical alternatives to the inquiry into childhood experience and its consequences for personality development. Specifically they marked the convergence of learning theory and research in child development by way of the translation of Freudian concepts into the terminology of general behavior theory. The work of Dollard and Miller (1950), Whiting and Child (1953), and Mowrer (1950) exemplifies this early effort. Parsons and Bales (1955) in their sociological analysis of child development in terms of role changes and their focus on the dynamics of family interaction leading to the socialization of the child via changes akin to those in psychotherapy would also seem to fit, albeit somewhat loosely, into this group.

As Ausubel (1957) has recognized, the progression to Freudian theory was not an immediate or total admission of the environment's prepotence over the development of the child. Instead Freudian theory maintained a preformationist attitude in its hypothesizing of libidinal drives that prevailed in any environment. The theory was at best predeterminedist in proposing stages of development which were not so much passed through via a process of qualitative differentiation based partly on environmental influence as they were seen as inevitably appearing as a consequence of inherent biological processes. The environment was seen as mediating the expression of these drives. It was not viewed as a determinant in defining the essential qualities of these drives. The step toward a convergence of learning theory with Freudian concepts, in this light, can be seen as an increasing predilection for environmentalistic theory in the study of personality

development. Subsequent to the early efforts at rapprochement with the reigning theory of personality development, general behavior theory found sufficient strength to offer itself as a theoretical alternative independent of the encumbrances of psychoanalytic phraseology. This is not to say, however, that such phraseology was entirely omitted in the more recent theorizing. Instead there seemed to be a progressive enhancement of the mechanism offered by learning theory over the explanations of processes offered by Freudian theory. Under the label of social learning theory a number of independent formulations relevant to aspects of personality development were offered. All of these formulations share a common foundation: The environment is prepotent in determining development. Rotter (1954), Sears (Maier, 1969), Lundin (1961), and Bandura and Walters (1963) provide examples of such an application of learning principles to the study of human development.

THEORETICAL OPTIONS

Theoretically, then, what is available to the researcher interested in the myriad issues contained under the label of parent-child interactions? One may choose from a number of psychoanalytic (including here neopsychoanalytic) perspectives or from a number of viewpoints largely classifiable under the social learning theory label. Adequate summaries of Freudian theory on child development are available in a number of sources (e.g., Baldwin, 1967; Langer, 1969), therefore this classical theory will be only briefly summarized.

Freudian Theory

In Freudian theory the child is born with an id structure that is motivated by pleasure-seeking and aggressive instincts. Out of the increasingly demanding interchange with his environment the child develops a secondary structure meant to aid him in this interchange. His ego differentiates or matures out of the initial motivational structure. As a consequence the child becomes increasingly able to appreciate the limitations of reality and increasingly effective in serving his needs within that reality. Concurrent with this maturation of cognitive function, the child goes through stages of psychosexual development in which there is a progressive shifting of primary libidinal gratification to various organ systems. This shifting of pleasure centers from mouth to anus to genitals reflects a shifting of instinctual aims. The result of this change is that the emotional impact of socializing events in childhood vary according to these shifts. Thus the behavior of the child's caretaker and the circumstances at the time of these shifts are assumed to play strong roles in the personality development of the child. Each stage confronts the child with new needs and therefore new problems. The nature of the solution of the problems of each stage determine the residue of fears, fantasies, defenses and expectations left at each stage. For example, excessive nurturance or sufficient denial of libidinal needs at the oral stage leads to a fixation of functions characteristic of this stage. Apparently depending on the substage in which the inappropriate handling of the infant occurs, the child later will manifest behavior characterizable as oral dependent or oral aggressive. Similarly at the

anal stage, inappropriate handling of the infant's instinctual needs in the context of his socialization can lead to an excessive fixation of libidinal drive on such generalizable functions as neatness, order or punctiliousness. The growing capacity of the child to autonomously serve some of his own needs is importantly involved in the activities of this stage. Severe socialization practices could lead to an overly inhibited child, while compulsive autonomy (negativism) would be attributed to inadequate socialization. Shyness and shame are expected to be learned at this stage as a consequence of socialization practices. At the phallic or genital stage the appearance of a basic conflict, the Oedipus complex, is seen by Freud as setting the motivational foundation for the young boy's development of masculine interests and values. Solution of the conflict is hypothesized as occurring through identification of the male child with his father. This identification, for Freud, involved the development of the desire to be like the father who controls both punishments and desired objects. For girls, Freud proposed an analogous although more complex process for the ultimate development of feminine interests and values. A further consequence of the resolution of the Oedipus complex is the development of the super-ego or conscience. For Freud the formation of this structure was importantly related to the trauma generated by the Oedipal conflict.

These are the general hypotheses of Freudian theory most immediately relevant to caretaker influence on personality development. What would appear to be the assets and liabilities of this approach to the experiential sources of development? One is immediately struck by the richness of detail and empirical intuition of the theory. The