THEODORE LIDZ

THE FAMILY: THE DEVELOPMENTAL SETTING

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Studies of personality development and maldevelopment have been seriously impeded by a dearth of understanding of the central role of the family in directing the developmental process. The critical early stages of the life cycle, upon which all later development and the stability of the personality rest, take place in the nidus of the family. The stability and satisfaction of the lives of most adults depend greatly upon their marital and parental transactions within their families of procreation. A very large proportion of the work in any dynamic psychotherapy is concerned with the reevaluation of parental influences and the reorganization of patient's reactions to them, so he can be freed from deleterious internalizations and transferences that interfere with his interpersonal relationships and his own evaluation of himself. The various childhood phases of the life cycle unroll favorably or unfavorably not so much be cause of innate characteristics as because of the manner in which the parental figures and the intrafamilial transactions guide the child through the phase. Attempts to study the young child's development independently of the family setting distort even more than they simplify, for they leave out essential factors of the process.

Importance of the Family

Because the family is ubiquitous it has, like the air that we breathe, been very much taken for granted and many of the vital functions it subserves have been overlooked. Indeed the human being is so constructed that the family is an essential correlate of his biological makeup. It is the basic institution that permits his survival and his development into an integrated person by augmenting his inborn adaptive capacities. Man, after all, is virtually unique among animals in depending upon two endowments: he has both a genetic inheritance and a cultural heritage. His genetic endowment transmits his physical structure and his physiological makeup, which, as in all other animals, permits survival within a relatively narrow range of environmental conditions. Many of his critical adaptive techniques are not inborn; he is born with a unique brain that permits him to acquire language and thereby to acquire from those who raise him the instrumentalities that his society has developed for coping with the environment and for living with one another. This permits him to develop a personality suited to that specific society in which he grows up. The human mechanisms for survival and adaptation are vastly different from those possessed by any other organism, and we can never understand human development and functioning properly unless we take full cognizance of man's dual heritage.

Everywhere the family must meet two requisites: the biological nature

and needs of man, and the requirements of the particular society in which it exists and which it subserves by preparing children to live in it. Thus, wherever families exist they will have certain essential features in common even while handling similar problems in differing ways in accordance with the needs of a specific society. In this chapter, I shall seek to designate the essential functions of the family, particularly for childrearing, and the requisites for carrying them out.

The family is an essential correlate of man's biological endowment, for it is the basic social system that mediates between the child's genetic and cultural endowments, provides for his physical needs while instilling societal techniques, and stands between the individual and society, offering a shelter against the remainder of society. Because the child must remain dependent on others for many years, it is important that he be raised by persons to whom his well-being is as important as their own. His dependency upon them and his prolonged attachment to them provide major motivations and directives for his development. As the family forms the earliest and most pervasive influence that encompasses the still unformed infant and small child, the family's ways are *the* ways of life for the child, the only ones he knows. All subsequent interpersonal experiences are perceived, consciously and unconsciously understood, and reacted to according to patterns laid down within the family. These family patterns and the child's reactions to them become so thoroughly incorporated in the child that they are difficult to

differentiate from genetically determined factors with which they interrelate. This difficulty greatly complicates the study of the child's physical and personality development. Later influences will modify those of the family, but they can never undo nor fully reshape these early core experiences.

The Family's Primary Functions

The family is usually considered essential because of its childrearing functions, but we cannot properly understand either why the family is omnipresent or how it rears children unless we appreciate that it also subserves essential needs of the spouses and of the society. It not only fills a vital societal need by carrying out the basic enculturation of its children, but the family also constitutes the fundamental social unit of virtually every society: it forms a grouping of individuals that the society treats as an entity; it helps stabilize a society by creating a network of kinship systems; it constitutes an economic unit in all societies and a major economic unit in some; and it provides roles, status, motivation, and incentives that affect the relationships between individuals and the society. In addition, the nuclear family completes and stabilizes the lives of the spouses who formed it. These three sets of functions of the family—for the society, for the parents, and for the children—are interrelated, and it is likely that no other institution could simultaneously fill these three functions without radical change in our social structure and probably not without grave consequences. It is even highly probable that these functions essential to human adaptation cannot be met separately at all except under very special circumstances, but must be fused in the family. Nevertheless, these functions can also conflict, and some conflict between them seems virtually inevitable. Fulfilling parental roles obviously often conflicts with a person's functions as a spouse, and society's demands

can obviously conflict with the needs of both the spouses and children, as when the husband is taken from the home into military service.

The Purposes of Marriage

In order properly to grasp the nature of the family setting, it seems essential to examine briefly why people marry and form new families. Such considerations have particular pertinence at the present juncture in history when the value of the family is being challenged as part of the broader questioning of existing institutions and mores. Although people marry for many reasons—love, passion, security, status, to escape from the parental home, to have children, to legitimize a child—marriage is a basic institution in virtually all societies primarily because of man's biological makeup and the manner in which he is brought up to reach maturity.

In growing up in a family, a person forms an essential bond to those who raise him, and he assimilates and internalizes their ways and their attributes. However, an individual cannot achieve completion as an adult within his family of origin. Minimally some degree of frustration must occur because he cannot become a parent with the prerogatives of parenthood and because sexual gratification cannot be united with his affectional relationships. Within his natal family, however, he has enjoyed the security of being a member of a mutually protective unit in which his welfare, at least theoretically, has been of paramount importance to his parents. When he leaves his family of origin, his emotional attachments to it remain unresolved, and he has strong conscious and unconscious motivations to bring closure to

these emotional imbalances that move him toward a new union with a person who seems to fill the image of the desired complementary figure sufficiently to be transformed into it. He hopes through marriage to regain the security afforded by a union in which his well-being and needs are again of paramount importance to another—and in marriage the spouses' well-being and security are intimately if not irrevocably interconnected.

The division of the human species into two sexes has created another major impetus for marriage. Men and women are drawn together not only by sexual impulses but also because the two sexes complement one another in many different ways. Males and females are subjected to gender-linked role training from earliest childhood, which gives them differing skills and ways of relating to people and regarding the world even if such differences are instigated by anatomical, genetic, and hormonal factors. Speaking broadly, neither a man nor a woman can be complete alone. The two sexes are raised to divide the tasks of living and to complement and complete one another as well as to find common purposes sexually and in raising children.

In a marriage the husband and wife can assume very differing types of role relationships and find very diverse ways of achieving reciprocity with one another provided they are satisfactory to both, or simply more satisfactory than separating. The variant ways in which marital couples live together are countless. However, when the birth of a child turns a marriage

into a nuclear family, the spouses' ways of relating to one another must not only shift to make room for the children, but limits are also set upon how they can relate to one another if they are also to provide a proper developmental setting for their children.

The Family as a Small Group

Even though a marriage relationship is a very complicated matter, it can be studied and understood in terms of a dyadic interaction, including the influence of other persons and other situations upon the two marital partners. A family, in contrast, cannot be grasped simply in interactional terms, for it forms a true small group with a unity of its own. The family has the characteristics of all true small groups, of which it is the epitome: the action of any member affects all; unless members find reciprocally interrelating roles, conflict or the repression of one or more members follows; to function properly the group requires unity of objectives and leadership toward these objectives; the maintenance of group morale requires each member to give some precedence to the needs of the group over his own desires; it has a tendency to divide up into dyads that exclude others from significant relationships and transactions. These and still other characteristics of small groups are heightened in the family because of the intense and prolonged interdependency of its members, which requires the family, in particular, to have structure, clarity of roles, and leadership to promote the essential unity and to minimize divisive tendencies. The family, moreover, is a very special type of group with characteristics that are determined both by the biological differences of its members and also by the very special purposes it serves. A designation of these characteristics can lead to an appreciation of why the structure of the nuclear family must meet

certain requirements.

Generational Differences

The nuclear family is composed of persons of two generations, and the members of each have different needs, prerogatives, obligations, and functions in the family. The parents who have grown up in two different families seek to merge themselves and their backgrounds into a new unit that satisfies the sexual and emotional needs of both and helps bring completion to their personalities in a relationship that seeks to be permanent for them. The new relationship requires the intrapsychic reorganization of each spouse to take cognizance of an alter ego. Wishes and desires of a spouse that can be set aside must be differentiated from needs that cannot be neglected. Although individuals, as parents they function as a coalition, dividing the tasks of living and childrearing. They are properly dependent on one another, but parents cannot be dependent on immature children without distorting the children's development. They provide nurturance and give of themselves so that the children can develop, serving as guides, educators, and models for their offspring even when they are unaware of it. As objects of identification and as basic love objects for their children, how the parents behave and how they interrelate with one another, and not simply what they do to and for their child, are of utmost importance to the child's personality development.

Children, in contrast to parents, receive their primary training in group living and in socialization within the family and are properly dependent upon their parents for many years, forming intense bonds to them while developing through assimilation from the parents and the introjection of their characteristics. Yet the children must so learn to live within the family that they can eventually emerge from it into the broader society, or at least be capable of starting families of their own as members of the parental generation.

Gender Differences

The nuclear family is also composed of persons of two genders with complementary functions and role allocations as well as anatomical differences. The primary female role derives from woman's biological makeup and is related to the nurturing of children and the maintenance of the home needed for that purpose, which has led women to have a particular interest in interpersonal relationships and the emotional harmony of family members—an expressive-affectional role. The male role, also originally related to physique, traditionally is concerned with the support and protection of the family and with establishing its position within the larger society—an instrumental-adaptive role.

Intrafamiliar Bonds

The family relationships are held firm by erotic and affectional bonds. As the marriage is expected to be permanent, the parents are not only permitted but expected to have sexual relationships. Conversely all direct sexual relationships within the family are prohibited to the children; and even the erogenous gratification from parental figures that properly accompanies nurturant care must be progressively frustrated lest the bonds to the family become too firm and prevent the child's investments of interests, energy, and affection beyond the family. The de-erotization of the child's relationships to other family members is a primary task of the family.

The Family as a Shelter

The family forms a physical and emotional shelter for its members within the larger society. However, the family must reflect and transmit the society's techniques of adaptation to its children including the culture's systems of meanings and logic, its ethos and ethics, to assure that the children will be able to function when they emerge from the family into the broader society.

These characteristics of the nuclear family, and corollaries derived from them, set requisites for the parents and for their marital relationship if the family they form is to provide a suitable setting for the harmonious development of their offspring and for directing their development into

reasonably integrated adults.

The Parental Requisites

In considering the family's essential functions in regard to the development of its children, it is of critical importance to recognize that the child does not grow up to attain a mature, workable personality simply through the nurturance of inborn directives and potentialities;

he does not simply develop into an integrated and adaptable person unless fixations occur because of some innate tendency, some emotional trauma, or some flaw in maternal nurturance during the early years of his development. The child requires positive direction and guidance in a suitable interpersonal environment and social system. The positive molding forces have largely been overlooked because they have been built into the institutions and customs of all workable societies and particularly into the family, which has everywhere knowingly or unknowingly carried out the task of shaping the child's development. The family fosters and organizes the child's development by carrying out a number of interrelated functions, which I shall consider under the headings of *nurture, structure,* and *enculture.* We must examine the nature of these essential functions to understand human personality development and its aberrations properly.

Nurture

The parental nurturant function must meet the child's needs and

supplement his immature capacities in a different manner at each phase of his development. This is the one function of the family that has been specifically recognized by most developmental theories. As it has been the focus of intensive study, it does not require elaboration here. It concerns the nature of the nurturance provided from the total care given to the newborn to how the parents foster adolescent movement toward independence from them. It involves filling not only the child's physical needs but also his emotional needs for security, consistency, and affection; and it includes furnishing opportunities for the child to utilize new capacities as they unfold. Proper nurturance requires the parents to have the capacities, knowledge, and empathy to alter their ways of relating to the child in accord with his changing needs. The capacity to nurture or to be maternal is not an entity. Some mothers can nurture a child properly so long as he is almost completely dependent but become apprehensive and have difficulty as soon as he becomes a toddler and cannot be fully guarded from the dangers in his surroundings; some have difficulties in permitting the child to form the erotized libidinal bonds essential for the proper development of the preoedipal child, whereas others have difficulty in frustrating the child's erotized attachment during the oedipal phase. However, unstable parents and grossly incompatible parents are often disturbing influences throughout all of the child's developmental years, and such panphasic influences are often more significant in establishing personality traits or disturbances in children

than are fixations at a specific developmental phase. While the mother is usually the primary nurturant figure to the child, particularly when the child is small, and though she is usually the family expert in childrearing and child care, her relationship with the child does not transpire in isolation but is influenced by the total family setting. The mother's capacity to care for her child properly is influenced greatly by her marital interaction with her husband, by the demands of other children, and by the relationships between her children as well as by her husband's relationship with each child. The quality and nature of the nurture that a child receives profoundly influences his emotional development. It affects his capacities to differentiate from the mother and the emotional context of his relationships to others; it affects his vulnerability to frustration and the anger, aggressiveness, anxiety, hopelessness, and helplessness he experiences under various conditions. As Erikson has emphasized, it influences the quality of the basic trust a child develops—the trust he has in others, in himself, and in the world in which he lives. It contributes to the child's self-esteem as a member of the male or female sex. It lays the foundations for trust in the reliability of collaboration with others and in the utility of communicating verbally as a means of solving problems. A person's physiological functioning can be and perhaps always is permanently influenced by the way in which the parental nurturing figures respond to his physiological needs.

From these brief comments it is apparent why so much attention has

properly been paid to the parental nurturant activities and how profoundly they influence the development of a person; but they are but one aspect of what a child requires from his parents and his family.

Structure

Let us now turn to consider the relationship between the dynamic organization of the family and the personality integration of its offspring. Although the family organization differs from one society to another and with social class and ethnic group within a society, it seems likely that the family everywhere follows certain organizational principles both because of its biological makeup and because of the specific functions it subserves. As noted above, the family members must find reciprocally interrelating roles or distortions in the personalities of one or more members will occur. The division of a family into two generations and two sexes lessens role conflicts and tends to provide an area free from conflict into which the immature child can develop, and directs him or her to grow into the proper gender identity, which forms the cornerstone of a stable ego identity. While all groups require unity of leadership, the family contains two leaders—the father and the mother—with different but interrelated functions that permit them to form the required coalition that permits unity of leadership. We may hazard that in order for the family to develop a structure that can properly direct the integration of its offspring, *the spouses must form a coalition as parents,*

maintain the boundaries between the generations, and adhere to their respective gender-linked roles. These requirements may sound rather simple until we explore their ramifications.

The Parental Coalition

As has been noted, all small groups require unity of leadership, but the family has a dual leadership. The mother, no matter how subjugated, is the expressive-affectional leader; the out his or her cardinal functions. The mother, father, the instrumental leader. A coalition between these leaders is necessary not only to provide unity of direction but also to afford each parent the support essential for carrying for example, can better delimit her erotic investment in the small child to maternal feelings when her sexual needs are being satisfied by her husband. The family is less likely to break up into dyads that create rivalries and jealousies if the parents form a unity in relating to their children; and, particularly, a child's tendency to possess one or the other parent for himself alone—the essence of the oedipal situation—is more readily overcome if the parental coalition is firm and the child's egocentric fantasies are frustrated and redirected to the reality that requires repression of such wishes. If the parents form a coalition both as parents and as a married couple, then the child, who is provided with adult models that treat one another as alter egos, each striving for the partner's satisfaction as well as for his own, is very likely to grow up valuing marriage as an institution that

provides emotional satisfaction and security, thus gaining a long-range goal.

The child properly requires two parents: a parent of the same sex, with whom he can identify and who forms an object of identification to follow into adulthood, and a parent of the opposite sex, who serves as a basic love object and whose love and approval is sought by identifying with the parent of the same sex. However, a parent fills neither role effectively for a child if denigrated, despised, or treated as a nonentity, or even as an enemy, by the spouse. Parents who are irreconcilable in reality are likely to become irreconcilable introjects in the child, causing confused and contradictory internal directives. It is possible for parents to form a reasonable coalition for their children despite marital discord and to some extent even despite separation; they can agree about how children should be raised and support their spouses to the children as worthwhile persons and as good parents even if their ways and ideas differ.

A variety of difficulties can follow upon failures of the parental coalition. The growing child may invest his energy and attention in supporting one or the other parent or in seeking to bridge the gap between them, rather than utilizing his energies for his own development. Sometimes the child becomes a scapegoat with his problems magnified into the major source of dissent between the parents, and he comes to feel responsible for their difficulties. A child may willingly oblige and assume the role of villain in order to mask the

parental discord, thereby retaining the two parents he needs. The child may also be caught in an impossible situation in which any attempt to please one parent elicits rebuff or rejection from the other. When the parents fail to achieve a coalition, there are many ways in which the child becomes subject to conflicting motivations, directives, and standards that interfere with the development of a well-integrated personality.

The Generation Boundaries

The division of the nuclear family into two generations lessens the danger of role conflict and furnishes space free from competition with a parent into which the child can develop. The generational division is a major factor in providing structure to the family. The parents are the nurturing and educating generation and provide adult models and objects of identification for the child to emulate and internalize. The child requires the security of dependency to be able to utilize his energies in his own development, and his personality becomes stunted if he must emotionally support the parents he needs for security. A different type of affectional relationship exists between parents than between parent and child. However, the situation is complicated because of the intense relationship heightened by erogenous feelings that properly exists between the mother and each preoedipal child and by the slow differentiation of the child from his original symbiotic union with his mother. The generational division aids both mother and child to overcome

the bond, as is essential to enable the child to find a proper place as a boy or girl member of the family and then to invest his energies in peer groups and schooling, as well as in gaining his own identity. The generation boundaries can be breached by the parents in various ways, such as by the mother failing to establish boundaries between herself and a son; by the parent using a child to fill needs unsatisfied by a spouse; by the parent acting as a rival to a child; by the father seeking to be more of a child than a spouse. Incestuous and near incestuous relationships in which a parent overtly or covertly gains erotic gratification from a child form the most obvious disruptions of generation lines. When the child is used by one parent to fill needs unsatisfied by the other, the child can seek to widen the gap between his parents and insert himself into it; and by finding an essential place in completing a parent's life he need not—and perhaps cannot—turn to the extrafamilial world for self-completion. The resolution of the oedipal situation thus depends for its proper completion upon having a family in which the parents are primarily reliant upon one another or at least upon other adults. Further, if a parent feels excluded by a child, the child's fears of retribution and retaliation may not be simply projections of his own wishes to be rid of a parent, but may derive from the reality of having a jealous and hostile parent.

Confusions of the generation boundaries within the nuclear family together with the ensuing role conflicts can distort the child's development in a variety of ways, some of which have already been indicated. The child's

proper place within the family is invaded; rivalry with parents absorbs energies and fosters internalized conflicts; a parent's dependency upon a child occupies and preoccupies a child prematurely with problems of completing the life of another rather than with his own development. Aggressive and libidinal impulses directed toward the parents become heightened, rather than undergoing repression and gradual resolution, and are controlled only through strongly invested defensive mechanisms.

The Sex-Linked Roles

Security of gender identity is a cardinal factor in the achievement of a stable ego identity; and of all factors entering into the formation of personality characteristics, the child's sex is probably the most decisive. Confusions concerning sexual identity and dissatisfactions with one's sex can contribute to the etiology of many neuroses and character disorders as well as to perversions; and probably all schizophrenic patients are seriously confused concerning their sexual identity. A child does not attain proper sex-linked attributes simply by being born a boy or girl, but through gender role allocation that starts at birth and then develops through role assumptions and identifications as he grows older. The maintenance of appropriate gender-linked roles by the parents is one of the most significant factors in guiding the child's proper development as a boy or girl. Clear-cut reversals in the parents' sex-linked roles obviously distort the child's development, either

when they are in the sexual sphere, as when a parent is overtly homosexual, or when they concern the divisions of tasks in maintaining the family. While it is clear that a child whose father performs the mothering functions, both tangibly and emotionally, while the mother supports the family will usually gain a distorted image of masculinity and femininity, the common problem is usually more subtle: the inability of the mother to fill an expressive-affectional role or of the father to provide instrumental leadership for the family. As Parsons and Bales have pointed out, a cold and unyielding mother is more deleterious than a cold and unyielding father, whereas a weak and ineffectual father is more damaging than a weak and ineffectual mother." Still more explicitly, a cold and aloof mother may be more detrimental to a daughter who requires experience in childhood with a nurturant mother in order to attain feminine and maternal characteristics, whereas an ineffectual father may be more deleterious to a son who must overcome his initial identification with his mother, as well as his early dependency upon her, to gain security in his ability to provide for a wife and family. Although the sharing of role tasks has become a necessity in most contemporary families, which leads to some blurring of the parental roles, there is still a need for the parents to maintain their primary gender-linked roles and to support one another in them.

The child's identification with the parent of the same sex is likely to be seriously impeded when this parent is unacceptable to the other whose love

the child seeks, a difficulty that can be heightened by the homosexual tendencies of a parent. The mother may be basically unacceptable to a father with homosexual proclivities simply because she is a woman; and the daughter may respond by seeking to be boyish, by gaining the father's affection by being intellectual, or through some other means that do not threaten him by feminine appeal. If a mother, on the other hand, is consciously or unconsciously rivalrous with all men, her son may readily learn that masculinity will evoke rebuff from her, and fears of engulfment or castration by the mother become more realistic sources of anxiety than fears of retaliatory rejection or castration by the father.

Of course, other problems can create difficulties for a child in gaining a secure gender identity, such as when parents convey the wish that the boy had been born a girl or vice versa, or the need to avoid incestuous involvements; still, when parents adequately fill their own gender-linked roles and accept and support the spouse in his or her role, a general assurance of a proper outcome is provided.

The relationship between the family structure and the integration of the offspring's ego development is a topic that is only beginning to be studied. Still, a little consideration leads us to realize that the provision of proper models for identification, motivation toward the proper identification, security of sexual identity, the transition through the oedipal phase, the

repression of incestuous tendencies before adolescence, and many other such matters are profoundly affected by the family's organization. Unless the parents can form an adequate coalition, maintain proper boundaries between the generations, and provide appropriate gender role models by their behavior, conflicts and role distortions will interfere with the proper channeling of the child's drives, energies, and role learning.

The Family and Enculturation

The proper enculturation of the child within the family may be more properly divided into the process of socialization and the process of enculturation. Under socialization we may somewhat arbitrarily subsume how the child learns basic roles and institutions through interactions between family members; and enculturation concerns that which is transmitted symbolically from generation to generation rather than through societal transactions. However, there is considerable overlap, and the two functions cannot always be clearly distinguished.

The form and function of the family evolves with the culture and subserves the needs of the society of which it is a subsystem. The family is the first social system that the child knows, and simply by living in it he properly gains familiarity with the basic roles as they are carried out in the society in which he happens to live: the roles of parents and child, of boy and girl, of

man and woman, of husband and wife. He also learns how these roles of the family members interact with the broader society. Whereas roles are properly considered units of the social system rather than of the personality, they also are important in personality development through directing behavior to fit into roles and by giving cohesion to the personality functioning. Individuals generally do not learn patterns of living entirely on their own, but in many situations learn roles and then modify them to their specific individual needs.

The child also learns from his intrafamilial experiences about a variety of basic institutions and their values, such as the institutions of family, marriage, economic exchange, and so forth; and societal values are inculcated by identification with parents, superego formation, teaching, example, and interaction. The wish to participate in or avoid participating in an institution —such as marriage—can be a major motivating force in personality development. It is the function of the family to transmit to the offspring the prescribed, permitted, and proscribed values of the society and the acceptable and unacceptable means of achieving such goals. Within the family the child is involved in a multiplicity of social phenomena that permanently influence his development, such as the value of belonging to a mutually protective unit; the rewards of renouncing one's own wishes for the welfare of a collectivity; the acceptance of hierarchies of authority and the relationship between authority and responsibility. The family value systems,

role definitions, and patterns of interrelationship enter into the child through the family behavior far more than through what he is taught or even what the parents consciously appreciate.

The process of enculturation concerns the acquisition of the major techniques of adaptation that are not inherited genetically but that are assimilated as part of the cultural heritage that is a filtrate of the collective experiences of man's forebears. In a complex industrial and scientific society such as ours, the family obviously can transmit only the basic adaptive techniques to its offspring and must rely upon schools and other specialized institutions to teach many of the other instrumentalities of the culture.

The cultural heritage includes such tangible matters as agricultural techniques and food preferences, modes of housing and transportation, arts and games, as well as many less tangible matters such as status hierarchies, religious beliefs, ethical values and behavior that are accepted as divine commands or axiomatically as the only proper way of doing things and are defended by various taboos. The transmission of language is a primary factor in the inculcation of both techniques and values because the totality of the enculturation process depends so greatly upon it. After the first year of life the acquisition of almost all other instrumental techniques depends to a greater or lesser extent upon language; and the collaborative interaction with others, which is so critical to human adaptation, depends upon the use of a

shared system of meanings. Indeed, the capacity to direct the self, to have any ego functioning at all, depends upon having verbal symbols with which one constructs and internalizes a symbolic version of the world that one can manipulate in imaginative trial and error before committing oneself to irrevocable action. As virtually all intact children learn to speak, we are apt to overlook the complexities of the process of learning language as well as its central importance to ego functioning. It required the linguistic anthropological studies of Sapir and Whorf to illuminate how profoundly the specific language that a person utilizes influences how he perceives, thinks, and experiences. The studies of schizophrenic patients and their parents illustrated how greatly faulty and distorted language usage can affect personality development and functioning. The inculcation of a solid foundation in the language of the culture is among the most crucial tasks carried out by the family.

Speaking very broadly, the child learns language through attempting to solve problems. Meanings are established rapidly or slowly, with clarity or vagueness, in accord with how effectively and consistently the proper usage of words gains objectives for the child. The process depends upon reciprocal interaction between the child and his tutors, the consistency among his teachers, the cues they provide, the words to which they respond or remain oblivious, the meanings that they reward consistently or sporadically, or that they indicate are useless, ineffectual, undesirable, repugnant, or punishable.

Many other factors are also involved in the child's attainment of language, but it is clear that the family plays a very important part in the process. The categorizing of experiences through the abstraction of common attributes, the labeling of categories by words, and the sharpening of the meaning of words by grasping the critical attributes designated by the word are essential for both ego development and proper ego functioning.

In contrast to the commonly accepted dictum expressed by Hartmann, the infant is not born adapted to survive in an average, expectable environment. The range of environments in which he is physiologically capable of surviving are relatively limited, but every viable society develops a set of instrumental techniques and institutions that take the infant's essential needs into account and modify the environment to the child's capacities. Then, very largely through the use of language, the child learns the culture's techniques of adaptation more or less adequately, and gains an ability to delay the gratification of basic drives, to internalize parental attributes, directives, and teachings, and to be motivated by future security as well as by drive impulses. Further, the world in which he lives, the behavior of others, and his own needs gain some degree of order and predictability through the categories provided by the language.

Upon consideration it seems apparent that the parental styles of behaving, thinking, and communicating, as well as their specific patterns of

defenses, are critical factors in the development of various personality traits in their children, both through direct example and the internalization of such traits by the children as well as through the reactions that such styles produce in the child. When Bateson and Jackson formulated their double-bind hypothesis of schizophrenia; when Lidz, Fleck, et al. noted how schizophrenic patients had been taught to misperceive, to deny the obvious, to be suspicious of outsiders; and when Wynne and Singer documented that virtually all schizophrenic patients have parents who have either amorphous or fragmented styles of communicating, a new dimension was added to the study of personality development as well as to the study of psychopathology. In the study of the obsessional character, for example, instead of focusing primarily upon what occurred in the patient's "anal" phase of development, we begin to note that the parents of such persons are usually obsessional themselves, unable to tolerate direct expressions of hostility in themselves or in their children. They are very likely to teach the use of isolation, undoing, and reaction formation as a defense against the expression of hostility both through their own example and through what they approve and disapprove in their children.

Such obsessional parents are likely to use rigid bowel training and to limit the young child's autonomy and thus foster ambivalence, stubbornness, shame, and undoing defenses in many ways other than simply through the way they direct the child's bowel training.

Conclusions

Personality development cannot be properly studied or understood abstracted from the family matrix in which it takes place. The major foci of attention—the childrearing techniques and the emotional quality of the nurturant care provided the child—while clearly very important do not encompass the topic. The child's development into an integrated individual is guided by the dynamic organization of his family, which channels his drives and directs him into proper gender and generation roles. The child must grow into and internalize the institutions and roles of the society as well as identify with persons who themselves have assimilated the culture. The child acquires characteristics through identification but also by reactions to parental figures and through finding reciprocal roles with them. His appreciation of the worth and meaning of both social roles and institutions is markedly affected by the manner in which his parents fill their roles, relate to one another, and behave in other contexts. The perceived reliability of the verbal tools that are necessary for collaboration with others and for thinking and self-direction depend greatly upon the tutelage within the family and on the parents' styles of communicating. In the study of personality development and in our search for proper guidelines to help provide stable emotional development, the emphasis upon what parents should or should not do to the child, for the child, and with the child in each phase of his development has often led to neglect of other more significant familial influences. Who the parents are;

how they behave and communicate; how they relate to one another as well as to the child; and what sort of family they create including that intangible factor, the atmosphere of the home, are of paramount importance. Numerous sources of deviant personality development open before us when we consider the implications of the approach to personality development presented in this chapter.

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