THE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN:
AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF LIVES

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Abstract — The idea of development in adulthood, rather than being conceived in terms of either already prescribed ends, as in normative models, or in terms of the absence of ends, as in those models seeking to equate development with history, may be better conceived in terms of the progressive transformation of ends. Along these lines, it is also argued that development may be better conceived within individuals than across them. By focusing on the experiential dynamics of the progressive transformation of ends, and by considering how this process emerges in the lives of different individuals, it may be possible both to discover new forms of development and to determine the means by which their attainment might be facilitated.

INTRODUCTION: DEVELOPMENT AND HISTORY
It can certainly be said that the life course model of human development has breathed new life into the study of adulthood. From the pioneering work of Bayley (1973/1963), Neugarten (1969), Baltes and Schaie (1973), and a host of others, all the way to more recent attempts to rethink this issue (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Kegan, 1982), we have learned to “respect” not only the allegedly formative years, those in which the contours of the self are thought to be progressively articulated and formed, but the entirety of the life course. We have every reason to be thankful for this. Owing to this all-important paradigm shift, should we choose to think of it in these terms, we have expanded our field of vision in such a way as to allow for a picture of the adult years that is more than a mere epiphenomenon of the trials and tribulations of the past.

At the same time, the shift we are speaking of here has brought its share of difficulties as well. On the one hand, while many seem quite willing to grant the idea that the concept of development has its place in the study of childhood and adolescence, usually tying the process of development in some way or other to the maturation of cognitive structure, some (e.g., Shweder, 1982, 1984) have been quite unwilling to take it any farther: the very notion that the movement of life in adulthood can somehow be graded and hierarchized emerges as simply antithetical to everything we know about the multiplicity of ways to live. Moreover, what is even more problematic about extending the concept of development into adulthood, from this point of view, is that all too often this
putatively "natural," "evolutionary" process merely serves as a pretext for advocating—whether wittingly or unwittingly—the values and beliefs we (liberal Western individuals, who care about ourselves and others, hopefully striking a decent balance) cherish. Thus, the concept of development becomes little more than an unreflecting, ethnocentric reification of our own essentially arbitrary hierarchy of values. We can see this in the very fact that as we look at others the world over they often emerge as pitifully stunted in comparison with ourselves. It could even be argued here that by trying to extend the concept of development into adulthood, life course psychologists are consolidating their own and our own identities—which are, perhaps, so fragile and tenuous that we need to go out and do some studies in order to reassure ourselves that our own way of life is a valid one.

Others have argued that the main problem is that, however vigorously we may attempt to extend the principles of development applicable to the earlier segments of the life course to later ones, all too often, they refuse to fit. The more research that gets done the more apparent it becomes that there are so many factors at work, and so much complexity involved, that the sort of epistemic "containment" that is the hallmark of most extant models of development may no longer be possible. In other words, it has become difficult to construct a model of adult development with the ability to encompass adequately as large a portion of the relevant information as those models concerned with the early course of development seem able to do. As both critics and proponents of the life course approach have pointed out, we have perhaps focused too much on identity at the expense of difference, constancy rather than change (Brim & Kagan, 1960). Order rather than chance (Gergen, 1977, 1980).

The critique here is basically an empiricist one. The idea being that extant models of development are just not faithful to adult life. From this point of view, there is the suspicion that the concept of development may be essentially obsolete, particularly for those segments of the life course where regularities are difficult to come by, where the rhyme and reason of true genesis has been superseded by the free verse of history. The problem with this perspective, particularly from the vantage point of those interested in retaining the concept of development in some form, is that everything in the end is equivalent to everything else; there is no higher and lower, no better and worse, no more and less; there is no grid of values and beliefs with which the flux might be ordered. But rather than attesting to and avowing the multiplicity of ways of life—a kind of psychological pluralism, as it were—what this attests to, it might be argued, is the loss of meanings, especially shared meanings, in the modern world. Along these lines, the attempt to replace the concept of development with that of history signals the difficulty of establishing objective values in a world in which the very idea of doing so becomes tantamount to still another form of totalitarian thinking. What the ardent developmentalist might go on to argue, therefore, is that it is precisely the "free verse" types who are the major threat; in abdicating their responsibility to make moral judgments and commitments, they open themselves to the accusation that they themselves are opening the way to a new reign of terror.

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There are, then, two basic camps that have been interested in addressing the issue of adult development: Those who wish to retain the concept of development, usually by extending the principles of child development to the rest of the life course, and those who maintain that this is untenable, for the reasons given above. Now, to the extent that we retain the models of development we currently tend to employ (and most of them are, of course, tied to Piaget, with an occasional sprinkling of Freud), there may well be a good measure of validity to the conclusion that this concept has simply outlived its day. That is to say, if findings about adulthood cannot be assimilated to the models presently being employed, then it seems only logical that we question, indeed radically, whether or not developmental processes really do occur in later life. This is exactly what has happened: We find ourselves asking—as if there were some definite ceiling to these processes—if there even is development after a certain point in the life course, if it continues in some way rather than stopping dead in its tracks (see Riegel, 1973; Woodruff, 1973). This, however, is a very strange question to ask. In fact, it runs counter to just about everything we know about development, which, in a colloquial sense at least, seems to be a rather regularly occurring process for many people, capable of extending itself, in some instances at any rate, until the last few moments before death.

The problem of "locating" development in adulthood, therefore, may not lie with the fabric of adulthood itself—its irregularities, its twists and turns, and so forth—but with the models and theories we have brought to the task of understanding this period of the life course. In short, the problem is that we simply do not yet have an adequate way of speaking about developmental processes in adulthood. The result is that all of the aforementioned twists and turns people go through are leveled out onto a plateau of fundamentally directionless change. Generally speaking, this may well be what adulthood is like in our culture: A kind of plateau, an asymptotic leveling of experience. Thus, yet another reason for our difficulty in speaking about development in adulthood may be that our culture somehow prohibits the derivation of data which might attest to it. We as researchers then go on, subsequently, to mirror this prohibition by avowing, "scientifically," the finiteness of a supposedly "natural" process. But in doing so, of course, we run the risk not only of mistaking culture for nature, which is problematic in its own right, but of preventing ourselves from even considering more and less optimal ways of living.

The task with which we will be concerned for much of the remainder of this essay is to devise a way of speaking about development in adulthood. All we will say about this task for the time being is that it must have something to do with splitting the difference, so to speak, between the prevailing conception of development, which continues to seek to establish some sort of hierarchically constructed grid upon which any and all individuals may be placed (some at the bottom, some in the middle, some at the top, etc.), and that point of view which negates the concept of development entirely, in the name of "pure history." More specifically, we are interested in speaking about development not "across" individuals, as is most often done, but "within" them. What this means is that we are interested in speaking about development not in terms of some
discrete end or "telos" to which all life processes must point, but in terms of the continually revised ends that pull us from what we come to realize is an inferior state of being to one that is arguably or demonstrably a better one. Development, then, is irrevocably "differential," in that the superiority of any given end can only be predicated in relation to that end which is being superseded, and irrevocably "narrational," in that the meaning of one's past and present experience becomes reconstructed with every new figuring of what it means to live optimally. Even though there is no discrete end, but only differences, it seems in many cases to be quite enough to keep the process of development moving throughout the course of life.

THE TYRANNY OF MODELS

It must be recognized that even to raise the possibility that there might not be development in adulthood is effectively to acquiesce to models of development predicated in opposition to it. The fact that the Piagetian model of development does not address development in adulthood is not because it has taken some stock of some body of research findings and "decided" that it does not occur, but because the entire schematization is based upon an endpoint located during adolescence; adults are by definition excluded from consideration. When push comes to shove, Piagetians and "neo-Piagetians" may argue that the basic dynamic processes that Piaget addresses (assimilation and accommodation, differentiation and integration, etc.) continue into adulthood (e.g., Furth, 1987), and that it is only "structural" change that ceases. But we are still left with a profound sense of disjunction between what goes on in the earlier years and what goes on in the later. The end result of this perspective is that adults continue, essentially, to be excluded from the very possibility of development by virtue of the fact that a particular conceptual lens, a framework for understanding—derived from progressive changes in cognitive structure in children and adolescents—does not allow for it; adults have ostensibly moved beyond development, living only in its shadows, a region of mere variations on earlier themes.

In relying on these models, which, in their very naturalism and child-centeredness, render the process of development fundamentally finite, we are left not only with an all too conspicuous absence of ways to think about adulthood, but perhaps even more importantly, with a problematically reified public (and often academic) image of what adult life is all about. In "forgetting" that we have been looking at adult experience from a particular point of view, to the exclusion of any one of a number of possible others, we may—again, even if unwittingly—be constituting both the processes and the individuals concerned in such a way as to limit our further understanding. It is in forgetting that models are only models, theories only theories, that we become their captives.

Our conviction is that it is of the utmost necessity that we find a place for the concept of development in the study of adulthood, and that it involves more than taking the existence of development in adulthood as "axiomatic" and then extending an existing model to cover it. Rather, it may call for a new model—indeed an entirely new kind of model. The skeptic may well counter: Why should we attempt to find a place for the concept of development in adulthood if the evidence tells us that it may not be applicable? Why should we "create" a concept if there is no apparent need for one? To these hypothetical questions we can only reply that by opening up the possibility of development in some way, we may conceivably succeed in locating it in places where, previously, we have not even thought to look. In other words, we are suggesting that the evidence for development in adulthood might not be forthcoming because the models currently employed have effectively defined the possibility of development out of existence. With this in mind, our intention is to think the concept anew in such a way that we might not only expand the scope of what might be subsumed under the aegis of development, but in addition, and as a function of this expansion, begin to search for new evidences altogether, evidences that might serve to testify to the ways that experience may be deepened and enlarged, which are in principle limitless.

This project has already begun to be carried out. Labovitz-Vief (1982), for instance, has contended that those very phenomena that are often deemed regressive from a child-centered point of view may perhaps be seen as progressive from another. As intimated above, it is of the utmost importance to recognize that our data themselves will be transformed as a function of the theoretical perspectives within which they are constituted; this is why there is no "progression" or "regression" outside of some theoretical framework that deems it so.

Another demonstration of this point is to be found in Gilligan's In a Different Voice (1982), where she shows that most models of adult development have been constructed from a "male" point of view, largely using male subjects in theory-building studies, and that this bias has resulted in systematic consideration of evidence of women's development as deviant from, and at times less complete than, men's. Her argument that, by considering the evidence without reference to male norms, an entirely different and considerably more positive picture of women's development emerges, may be instructive in dealing with the problem of adult development. By more generally reviewing extant models, in the sense of keeping a vigilant watch over their possible ideological biases, the phenomena observed may permit new conceptions of what development is, where it may be located, and how it might be encouraged.

These writers have indeed taken a number of aspects of Piaget's (and/or Kohlberg's) program significantly further than they have been taken before: this is evident in the very fact that they have taken their researches into the domain of adulthood, relatively uncharted territory for most fellow travelers of this model. Nevertheless, the upshot of this approach is not only that development continues to be couched primarily in cognitive terms, thereby delimiting the scope of the phenomena of interest, but in addition, there remains little in the way of an "inducement" for it to occur. As concerns the first issue, while the focus on cognition, judgment, problem-solving behavior, and so on, is unquestionably important in both earlier and later periods of the life course, it may also be the case that our understanding of these phenomena may be artificially limited by the models presently employed. For instance, it goes without saying...
that moral judgment in adulthood has to do with much more than simply learning how to think about moral issues: it has to do with the values people hold, the emotions they feel, and the various goals they set for themselves in life (see Kohlberg & Robinson, in press, for a discussion of related ideas, as applied to the domain of aesthetic perception and judgment). Indeed, there is a sense in which her recognition of these values, emotions, and goals is precisely what seems to motivate Gilligan to consider dealing with these issues "in a different voice": moral judgment, she indicates, cannot be reduced to a rational calculus in which goods are justly distributed. But rather than rethinking the nature of the entire project, which continues to be based on the will-to-rationality, we might say, her decision is that there is not just one line of development, but two. One of these is a bit more hard-edged than the other, more calculating and abstract, but ultimately both of the developmental lines she sets forth remain couched in the discourse of rationality; it is simply given. The point here is that, in addition to exposing the male bias present in the developmental perspectives advanced by Kohlberg and others, what might also have been exposed is the entire conceptual framework within which the process of development is being understood.

As concerns the second issue, that of indiscipline, while we have been given the tools for identifying particular instances of development in the models we have been addressing, it remains unclear how exactly development may be brought about. In this context too, some of the work has already begun. For instance, Furth (1987), in his recent attempt to unite Piaget and Freud via the process of symbolization, offers a kind of counterbalance to "cold cognition" by incorporating "desire" in the role of motivational fuel: as Piaget himself maintained, organisms think and act in accordance with their most pressing wishes. In the case of children, therefore, who are in the midst of coming to terms with their own libidinal impulses, it becomes easier to understand what it is that might propel them through the process of cognitive development. But it remains to be shown whether this all-important connection between knowledge and desire sufficiently accounts for the movements of development in adulthood. The question of the origins of desire in adulthood remains as well. From the point of view of cognitive developmental psychology, there is still a sense in which development is seen to "happen" to specific individuals or categories of individuals as a function of the levels of cognitive structural organization and complexity that their experiences have "permitted" them to reach. Similarly, those who have not had the same sorts of opportunities will in effect be prevented from moving along with their more fortunate peers. The implication is not that the cognitive-developmental program in its various manifestations is self-consciously elitist, only that in its very logic and normality it is bound to set up firm differentials between various categories of people: there will be those who can develop and those who cannot, even if in principle everyone is on equal footing with regard to its logical possibility.

Now there is no questioning the usefulness of normative models of development such as the ones we have been considering. In supplying a well-demarcated criterion for assessing one's "developmental place" within an overarching, logically constructed scheme, we are provided with a measure of objectivity and precision with which to undergird the selection of truths—and values—to live by. It is through the hierarchization of modes of thought and judgment that we allow ourselves to circumvent the chaos of choice, the wholesale relativity of modes of experience. In the end, this elusive and oftentimes painful search for a rational grid that might somehow bind us together in our humanity is the legacy of Piaget and those who have followed in his wake. But in addition to the suspicion among many that this grid may not be able to do this, we have yet to be provided with a way of speaking about adult development capable of doing justice to the far-reaching and progressive changes that often take place. There is more to adult life than the will-to-rationality, but for the most part, this is how we continue to speak about it.

It is that some wish to abandon the concept of development and the project of constructing models to account for it altogether. Not only in psychology, but in philosophy, literary criticism, historiography, and a wealth of other intellectual pursuits, there has gathered the conviction—exciting for some, tragic for others, ambivalent for most—that attempts to fashion grids of sorts we have been discussing are ultimately doomed to fail; they are the last, weak gasps of a cultural tradition that, in one way or other, has sought to close off the multiplicity of modes of knowing and modes of being in order to further its own narcissistic fantasy that there is a code to life that and, if we try hard enough, we can crack it. But if we are to follow the directives of such prominent thinkers as Derrida (1976, 1978), Lyotard (1979), Rorty (1979), and countless others, this "logocentric" project, as Derrida has dubbed it, has been misconceived. It has given us a history of epistemological and ontological security, to be sure, but at the cost of our own more authentic construal of the world as a realm not of sameness, but of difference.

It is with these ideas in mind that the concept of development, which, as customarily formulated, is about as logocentric as concepts get, may be deemed obsolete. All we can speak of, all we should speak of (there do remain certain moral imperatives here) is history. As we do this, the argument might continue, we have to be aware that history and science are not nearly so apart as we might suppose (Spence, 1982; Schafer, 1983; White, 1978). At an extreme, therefore, fiction, and the associated language of creativity, the imagination, the "construction of reality," and so on, become the inverted image of the misconceived project of the will-to-rationality.

The question we wish to return to now is whether we might be able to think about the concept of development outside of the sort of hierarchical, normatively based framework considered above while preserving the idea that it is more than history. Of course it may be argued that the concept of development is always essentially hierarchical and normative in that there is always an implicit valuation of change over stasis, growth over stagnation, and so forth. It may further be argued, plausibly, that the concept is Western, through and through, and that there are cultures for whom it would be unthinkable: development presupposes something akin to forward movement, and if the
predominant way of thinking about the world is cyclical, say, then this notion of forward movement will not make any sense at all. The same sorts of criticisms hold true for concepts such as “self,” “other,” “world,” and nearly everything else besides. So, in short, if the bottom line is that we are still doing Western psychology, this is something we will just have to live with.

But it may still be possible to speak about development, whatever its rootedness in our own worldview, without resorting to the specific kind of normativity intrinsic to the approaches discussed thus far. From the opposite point of view, it may be argued that our attempt to preserve the concept of development is just another nostalgic wish to ward off the burden of choice that accrues from the realization that our lives possess no intrinsic order other than the one we create. This too is plausible and, at some future point in time, we may come to more fully recognize the futility of this project. For now, however, and for reasons enumerated earlier in this essay, it still seems worthwhile. The search for “better” and “worse” may be construed as a denial of difference, but in the context of people’s actual life experience, which is (arguably and demonstrably) often less than what it might be, this alleged denial may nonetheless yield some positive consequences.

Our aim, again, is to speak about development within individuals, that is, in speculative terms, rather than in terms of the implicit or explicit comparisons between individuals that is part and parcel of normative models. That this will entail a relativization of the concept of development is undeniable: We will no longer be operating in the context of an ordered hierarchy within which placement is made. But as we hope to show, this is neither to leave ourselves strictly devoid of ways of determining if and when development has occurred nor to forestall the possibility of developmental investigation. This is because even though there may not be an ideal end to which any and all life experiences point, there may be an ideal process which characterizes the movement of development itself. Let us then describe what this process might look like.

RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

In addressing the problem of what is to be considered “ideal,” at the level of process, it immediately becomes clear that we cannot completely sidestep the problem of ends: a developmental process, by definition, implies movement toward some future end (Kaplan, in press). However, this end need not be construed as a fixed objective, in the way that either formal operations or post-conventional morality are, but may instead be a quality of experience that can be agreed upon as desirable or valuable. What might this quality of experience be? There is a sense in which we have already begun to provide answers to this question. Our arguments so far suggest two aspects that might characterize optimal experience.

First, optimal experience has something to do precisely with the refusal to order one’s life according to a discrete end or telos. This is to say that the conception of an end ought not to precede the execution of experience. This is because if it does, it will inevitably result in a static conception of what development is, namely, the process by which progress is made toward an already established objective, from which one must never swerve. In other words, in such a case, someone would be constructing an individual version of the cognitive-developmental grid we have already sought to cast into question. Experience thus conceived would always hover in the middle of a preconceived project, with the result that one’s receptivity to other projects, other modes of experience, would become constricted (Robinson, 1988a). With the emulation of this sort of developmental model, there may well be a measure of security gained, but perhaps not quite enough to offset the loss of possible experience.

Second, optimal experience has something to do with the refusal to deny that there are better and worse ways of living one’s life, that is, the refusal to acknowledge the importance of the concept of development. For the fact of the matter is that there can be no development without ends of some sort, without some sense, however rudimentary, of the difference between what is and what could be (Freeman, in press): life would be reduced to pure history or pure fiction, with the end result that there would be little reason to go on except to experience the various equivalent changes that lie in the future. Without some sense of what one might be moving toward or capable of, any new fictions one might create for oneself would only be alternative versions of one’s life; they could never be better or worse, more or less truthful. The point is that development is best seen as taking place in the space between “goals” or absolute developmental endpoints, on the one hand, and the complete absence of ends, on the other; it is a “personal project” (see Robinson, 1988b), being formed even in the midst of its very revision.

Bringing these ideas together, an ideal developmental process must be based on those forms of experience that at once avow the fundamental multiplicity of ways that one can and should move toward better ways of living while recognizing that these better ways can never be the last word. Furthermore, we can also say that development is self-perpetuating, that it beguts itself, by being predicated neither upon preconceived ends nor the absence of ends, but upon the revision of ends, it is a process that sows the seeds of its own perpetuation. Therefore, the characteristics of optimal experience of which we have been speaking, far from being arbitrary, are intimately related to the process of development itself. This is what makes the process of development “differential,” as we put it earlier: there are no final ends, only differences, but what is important is that this condition of difference somehow makes a difference in the experiential world of the individual.

Alongside the revision of ends, it follows that development entails a process of reconstructing one’s past and the self in which it has culminated. This is simply because for every new end that is figured in the course of one’s life, old ends are superseded, which in a more general sense can be taken to mean that the "text" of one’s life, one’s narrative, is being rewritten. What deserves emphasis here is that the process of development is an interpretive process; it always requires the reflective mediation of the experiential individual, who is engaged in the task of
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transformation through praxis, through their capacity to adopt modes of experience and action more fully in line with their particular ends. Just as an
aside, it is clear that the ends individuals formulate may well run counter to our
own, perhaps even being considered by some to be immoral or unethical. But
strictly speaking, the problem here is not a problem about development; it is a
problem about ethics, about what forms of life are “intrinsically” superior to
others. This is certainly a question developmental psychologists may be
interested in, but it is not one that they can answer unless they adopt the role of
philosopher. The second point is that we, as researchers, will be relying not on
words alone, nor on the “observation” of development, but on the interpretation
of its exteriorization, its signs. This is to say that it is only through some way of
assessing the degree of congruence between word and deed, between stated ends
and the processes leading to them, that we will be able to speak about whether or
not there has been development. We will return to this point in the final section
of this essay.

Let us now turn to the question of what this ideal process we have been
referring to might entail. Perhaps the best way to begin is by employing a
distinction that has been offered by several interpretation theorists (e.g., Palmer,
1969; Ricoeur, 1974), between the processes of *explication* and *demystification*. For
our purposes, we mean by “explication” the progressive realization or recog-
nition of aspects of experience that have been lived through, but not accorded the
amount or quality of conscious attention necessary to fully appreciate their
worth. An example might be an individual who after much thought of remembering here,
in the sense of “returning” to former experiences and reconstructing their
meanings in such a way as to transform them, giving them a different role in the
narrative of one’s life (Cohler, 1979; 1981; Freeman, 1984, 1985a, 1985b). In
this context, development is again predicated upon the supersession of old
meanings and the creation of new ones that are deemed superior on account of
either their truthfulness or their functionality for present experience.

By “demystification,” we mean the progressive realization or recognition of
the virtual opaqueness, the impenetrability, of experience. Demystification is
the process whereby one comes to see that consciousness or experience or action has
been blocked, prevented from being manifested or realized as fully and as
transparently as it could be. It is in this context that we might think of both
Marxian theory and psychoanalysis, in that they both (in quite different ways)
attempt to serve as vehicles for facilitating processes of coming-to-consciousness
by demonstrating the means by which such processes have been masked or
concealed. These theories have to do with more than just bringing lived
experience to light; they are interested, instead, in showing how individuals have
been kept in darkness, whether through the workings of psyche, society, or both.
In any event, in the process of demystification, as in the process of explication,
the key idea is that there is being posed, by the individual, a significant
difference between former meanings and present ones, and that this difference
is arguably or demonstrably a positive one, one which allows rather than inhibits
the movement of development itself.

In addition to explication and demystification, it is also necessary to consider

taking a portion of the self as other and simultaneously identifying both its
limitations and its possibilities.

Needless to say, the task is not an easy one, and it may often give rise to
faulty—and even downright false—interpretations. Fallacious senses of what
one’s limitations and possibilities are. If one proceeds with his or her life armed
with these faulty interpretations—a process that is customarily thought of as self-
deception, which happens quite often actually—we will thereafter be witnessing
not development, but pseudo-development or “mock” development. Sometimes
people lead their entire lives in this fashion. But other times, and this is
important for our purposes, the contradiction between one’s interpretations and
one’s actual life—however ambiguous and/or multifaceted it may be—becomes
palpable enough that a more adequate revisioning of ends can ensue. What this
means is that the inducement for development often derives from the
contradictions one experiences between interpretation and reality, and we need
not be “correspondence” theorists, positivists, or naive realists to see that this is
so. This is not the only form of contradiction serving as an inducement for
development, of course, just a very prominent one. Other forms will be
enumerated as we proceed.

Finally, it must also be emphasized that although the inducement for
development often derives from the various contradictions one comes to
recognize as a function of one’s life experience, it may sometimes be necessary
for inducement to derive from external sources as well. Since people are often
unaware of the contradictions that characterize their lives, it may sometimes be
necessary to consider ways in which they may in fact be made aware, and thereby
consider alternative ways of living that had previously been unseen or unknown.

Now there is no mention here of specific contents of development, that is, we
are not trying to tie the concept of development to specific domains, such as
cognitive, social, or moral. Rather, we are interested in formulating the
conditions of development that cut across the specific domains they apply to in
any and every instance. Our interest is in the determining level or stage of
development within some specific domain. This approach will apply to specific
domains solely as a function of their experiential relevance to the individual
or individuals in question. The question now be-
comes: How are we to determine if and when development is occurring? The
answer is that our ability to assess development will be tied to both the manner in
which individuals explain and justify their alleged subjective changes as well as
the way in which these changes are incorporated into the lived texture of their
experience. As we will argue later on, the final “moment” of development is
praxis, meaningful action taken in the world. The problem is that it is not
enough for people simply to say they have developed, and then go on to explain
why they believe this to be so, for again, there always exists the possibility of self-
deception; hence the need for development to be demonstrated in some fashion
as well.

There are two points to be emphasized in conjunction with this problem of
evidence. The first, as noted earlier, is that, for experiencing individuals,
development will be seen primarily as a function of their own subjective

those forms of development that, for whatever reason, are attempts to rework one's own vision of what optimal experience is all about. In encountering some other mode of life, for instance, the sheer juxtaposition of the other's experience with one's own may jar an individual into the realization or recognition that one's own experience is not what it could be, that the various rules by which one has been living are not the only ones, and so on—in short, that there may be a better way. As one further aside, it is important to emphasize that “better” is not necessarily to be equated with contentment or pleasure, for pleasure may be exactly the problem—one for which a healthy dose of pain may be the solution. As one might argue, better to begin to lead a miserable but real life than the content but illusory or superficial life that has been led so far. Again, development may even be tied to the capacity to engage in what would consensually be regarded as immoral or unethical action, and we, as researchers, may abhor the new ends others fashion for themselves. Furthermore, it is perfectly plausible to assume that what would consensually be regarded as regression from a cognitive-development point of view (even though it is not supposed to happen) might be deemed thoroughly progressive from the standpoint of particular individuals and their ends. We can even hope that they eventually come to see the various errors of their ways. But this doesn't make their own process any less developmental, only less ethical.

THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT

It is time now to treat in more explicit detail the process of development, which we will attempt to do by delineating a number of conditions that may be said to characterize it. We can best express these conditions by laying out four specific “moments” of development. We use the term moment not to refer to an instant of realization or a flash of insight, nor as a stage per se, but to identify the sub-processes that are the constitutive parts of the diachronic process of development considered as a whole. At the most schematic level of speaking about this process, it is clear that the first moment of development must involve the recognition that there is some semblance of a disjunction or contradiction between what exists and what is posited as representing a more ideal state of knowing or being, even if it is the case that this ideal state is not yet fully known. As previously indicated, this state might be self-induced, other-induced, or whatever; what is most central is that some “tensive” aspect be present, some realization that one is “at odds” with oneself, that one has stopped short of experiencing as optimally as one might. The relevant conditions may be anything from falling short of one's goals all the way to the lack of meaningful, caring interaction with one's surrounding world, while the tension itself may be embodied in anything from a vaguely felt sense of unease to a profound and thoroughgoing sense of otherness and alienation. The main thing is that there exist some sort of experienced rift that constitutes a provocation to restore, to move beyond. Without recognition, there can be no development.

But this provocation is only the very beginning of the requisite conditions, necessary but not sufficient for development to occur. What needs to happen next is that there be some movement toward “removal” from one's current existential situation, a process which might be referred to as distanciation (Ricoeur, 1981). We can think of this simply in terms of the necessity of dis-vesting oneself (of course never completely) of existing modes of experiencing; in order to pave the way for newer ones. Stated another way, for every instance of self-gain, there must necessarily be an instance of self-loss; it is only through the giving up of that which has been recognized as the source of the experiential rift that there can ensue the kind of receptivity that is integral to enhancing self-understanding. We can see this process at work in certain forms of psychotherapy, where immature defenses, despite being the source of great problems, are often deeply held and require considerable effort in order to be broken down. But what is clear is that these defenses need to be broken down, and identifying or “naming” them in some way is essential before further progress can be made. It is along these lines that development must be seen not merely as the addition of the new, but again, the supersession and displacement of the old.

Once again, however, it is evident that one may well undertake this movement toward distanciation without following through on the path toward development; one may become suspended, as it were, in this condition of self-distance, without ever effecting any resolution. Thus a writer, a poet for instance, might realize, after a period of work that is experienced as unsatisfying, that the style in which he or she has been working for years is no longer capable of expressing what is desired, but may still not know how to proceed. Thus, we might expect “fixation” during this particular phase of experience to be rather uncomfortable and unsettling. After distanciation, this separation of self from self, there needs to be a further moment of definition or articulation, a moment wherein the aforementioned tension is given some measure of form. As Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) have stated in their work on creativity, before a problem is able to be solved, it must be found. Returning to the poet, he or she may have to go through a period where further articulation of both the problems with the old style and what it is that he or she wishes to accomplish is needed before he or she can begin to work toward establishing a new—and better—voice. This is why we customarily think of creativity as more than the provision of solutions to already existing problems; it is a primary task in and of itself to come to realize just what the problem is with which one is concerned. It is at this point in the process of development, therefore, that one comes to identify the difference between the new and the old. One's narrative and, by extension, one's self is being reconstructed here. From a poet who has been immersed in a particular way of thinking about and experiencing the world arises a poet who is able to conceive of a better way.

None of what has been said is meant to imply that the determination of the problem with which one is concerned can be exhaustive or that it can be made into a wholly self-enclosed object, only that the problem must be constituted as such, identified and given form, before it can be used as a vehicle for further development. Sometimes people seem to want to "leap over" this phase of the developmental process, seeking resolutions to problems or contradictions that have yet to be as fully articulated as they need to be. It may even work quite well in certain instances, but as a general rule praxis without articulation culminates
in experiential dead-ends, a kind of “symptom substitution,” perhaps. It follows
that behavioral change alone, even though it might be highly functional
experimentally, is not the same as development; what is needed, in addition, is a
rational for why the change has taken place.

Ideally, the process of articulation will lead to the next and final moment of
development: the difference between the old and the new, after having been
identified and articulated, must be “made one’s own” by being integrated into a
superior vision. Referring once more to Ricoeur (1981), we might call this final
moment appropriate to there being a process of “taking in” newly constructed ends by
incorporating them into the fabric of subjectivity.

It might be mentioned that, although we have been speaking about the
supersession of the old by the new, the degree to which this happens will always
be contingent upon both the nature of the phenomena being dealt with and the
nature of the self who is doing the dealing. In some cases of development, say in
the context of a “midlife crisis,” the old may be left behind virtually completely;
we might caution that one’s conviction in this can often be illusionary—since the
past, if it has any depth at all, cannot be left behind terribly easily—but for
argument’s sake we can assume that this sort of thing occasionally gets done. In
most other cases, however, say in the case of the poet moving on to a new style of
writing, the tension between the old and the new—between tradition and
innovation, we might say—continues to be maintained in some way; the new
continues to draw its life blood, at least in part, from the old. From this point of
view, development, whether in individuals, cultures, or what have you, remains
tied to the process of confronting the past and the tradition that it represents
rather than denying or abolishing it. Without this maintenance of tension, of
difference, modes of experience that may have thought to have been wholly
superseded may surface again in a “return of the repressed.” This may in turn
serve as another useful reminder that the process of development is always more
than a freely created project in which new, ever more novel forms of experience
are sought; we can not, in a radically new things every day of our lives and remain
essentially the same. Development is not instead a process of transformation, where
new ends, through their meaningful difference from old ones, have a defensible
rationale for being.

It must be emphasized that this final moment of appropriation is made
possible only after each of the previous conditions has been met; there is no
short cut. In this respect, our own formulation remains hierarchical, but in a
quite different way than it is usually conceived. What must also be emphasized is
that this final moment of development, far from being an end in itself, sealed off
from the future, from the continued revisioning of ends, is instead best seen as a
new beginning. No problem area can ever be totally reconciled with the fabric of
the self; there will always be residues, vestiges that remain to be dealt with. In
addition to the difference between the old and the new, therefore, there ideally
arises a further tension: between the new, already in the process of being
relegated to the old, and those future ends, however ill-defined, that will
eventually serve to pull us into yet another cycle of development.

Nevertheless, the completion of the process discussed above is in itself
development: the working through of the four moments necessarily eventuates
in what we have argued might be considered an ideal mode of experiencing.
The results of this process are actions—whether in the forms of ideas or
behaviors—that function, even if temporarily, to “relieve” the tense conditions
giving rise to the process in the first place. These actions are more than just the
individual’s demonstration that development has occurred, however; they are a
fundamental part of the process itself. Yet there still remains the problem of
determining in some way whether these actions are to be judged as truly
developmental. In other words, it is conceivable that although an individual may
work through all of these moments successfully, he or she may still act in ways
that are manifestly problematic given what is known about the process he or she
goes through.

How are we to judge what is problematic? Recalling our argument that
development is best seen as self-perpetuating, we can make this judgment simply
by the effect actions or modes of experience have on the individual’s capacity for
future development. More generally, we can say that any actions that impede
progression through the four moments of development or prevent the
possibility of future cycles of development are not truly developmental, while
those actions that facilitate development are. It is here that we are required to
interpret the congruence of word and deed, and this can only be done by
considering where an individual has come from, experientially, and what the
current form of his or her “project” is. Just as the fundamental openness of the
process we have been describing leaves behind vestigial problems to be dealt
with, so too do the actions taken on the basis of this process create new tensions
and new problems, even as they resolve old ones. It is these vestiges that will be
constitutive of further cycles of development, serving as the provocation for its
perpetuation.

INDUCING DEVELOPMENT

Unlike most other developmental psychologies, the examination of the
processes we are proposing cannot occur in a developmental psychology for
total, all places, all contexts. Nor does it aspire to. In being founded upon the
multiplicity of ways in which development might be manifested, the present
developmental psychology will not make generic claims concerning what
adolescence or aging are like, nor what they ought to be like, in terms of specific
stages or behaviors. It will not attempt either to ascertain whether or when
development ceases. What it will provide is a flexible framework for the
recognition and understanding of development in all its variety. Moreover, in
providing a framework for detecting when development has been blocked, this
psychology will be able to suggest ways in which the developmental process
might be “restared,” set in motion.

This is where things become most difficult. For despite the fact that the
inducement for development often derives from experience itself, via the
identification of its contradictions, it is also clear that people can live through
contradictions without being at all cognizant of them; they may be unaware that
there exist modes of experience that they themselves would regard as more ideal—
if they only knew about them or thought them to be possible. So the problem remains: How can the process of development be set in motion? We would argue that there are two distinct, yet not unrelated, ways of addressing this issue. The first makes use of the four moments we have outlined as a framework for the empirical study of individuals' experience and its relationship to development. The second might use the findings generated by empirical studies to underscore and examine critically the relationship between individual and society.

In a most basic sense, cutting across all four moments of development, research might involve seeking out evidences of development in various arenas of experience: emotional, intellectual, interpersonal, vocational, cultural, and so on. It might attempt to ascertain how, within these domains, individuals manage to continue to deepen and enlarge their experience as well as to surmount potential obstacles to development. In relation to emotional development, for instance, we might try to understand how people give from what is vaguely or confusedly felt, say in the face of illness or the imminence of death; intellectually, how new pursuits are brought to the forefront of attention; interpersonally, how more archaic or repetitive modes of experience are transcended; vocationally, how it may be possible to move after years of stagnation and discontent; culturally, how self-understanding may accrue through the encounter with works of art and the like. Briefly stated, one task of this developmental psychology will be to lay out the countless domains in which development is possible and to articulate the means by which this possibility may be realized.

But again, this is only part of the answer. Seeking evidences of development may surely be of consequence in its own right, in that these evidences will serve to test the openness of the process; they may serve as exemplars to that who may have desired to move ahead in some way, but thought it unwise or impossible. Such individuals may come to see not only that development is possible, but how it is; they may borrow the means by which others have negotiated changes in their lives toward the end of changing their own. What is perhaps even more important than this exemplifying dimension of the research undertaking, however, is the attempt to seek evidences of lack of development: stagnation, immobility, whatever we wish to call it. We need to know what prevents individuals from developing, what causes them to ward off the possibility of their own expansion in the face of opportunities that are in principle, if not always in practice, limitless. Let us be more clear about this. We are neither advocating a blind utopianism nor denying the inevitability of intrapsychic and social constraints; some of these constraints are simply integral facets of life. But others are not.

Problems encountered in conjunction with each of the four moments point in the direction of how these sorts of issues might be addressed. For example, in reflecting upon the notion of the experienced rift presented earlier, it would seem that another task of the proposed developmental psychology would be to determine the conditions under which these rifts emerge. Acknowledging that some will likely be largely idiosyncratic, our assumption here is that many more will not. In support of this assumption, we could illustrate regularities such as progressions through discrete "domains" of knowledge (e.g., mathematics, music, engineering), through the series of socially constructed roles and statuses (e.g., student, intern, professor) or "fields" that parallel these domains (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986), life course changes, as well as experiences of either an historical or cohort-specific nature. Each of these progressions inevitably results in a number of critical change points—we might think of geological faults as an analogy—that are likely sources of experiential rifts or disjunctures of one form or another. As with the geological fault line, the rupture might never occur, but these points are much more likely to result in difficulty than are most others, and thus bear careful observation.

It is also likely that these will give rise in many individuals to similar perceptions of an inability to avoid or modify such difficulties. Because of their regularity, commonality, or expectability, such points may be seen as somehow prefigured into their life scripts, the necessary concomitants of certain developmental "stages" or life transitions. For instance, job dissatisfaction may become an expectable facet of what it means to have done the same thing for 30 or 40 years. Disappointment may become an expectable facet of what it means to retire from this same job, even while recognizing how dissatisfying it has been. "Of course there will be disappointment after retirement," one might say; all those years of "productivity" have come to an abrupt halt; all of a sudden there is so little to do.

As expectable, even as seemingly inevitable, these rifts may be seen as experiences to which one must adapt. Well-being might be seen as the capacity to "wait it out" in one's movement toward the conclusion of a tedious career or the ability to "mourn" after it has all been left behind. Furthermore, the perception of a lack of adequate compensation is likely to be seen as pathological or, less severely, foolishly, an unfortunate legacy of childish impatience or adolescent idealism. Further still, once a rift has come to the point of being an experiential reality, the fears of being ostracized for one's excesses—too much dissatisfaction, too much disappointment—or of being "off time" (see Neugarten, 1979; Neugarten & Datan, 1975), and so on, are often more than enough to bring the "deviant" back into the fold of the given. The rift remains, as do the social conditions perpetuating it. In this context, we have been discussing, we might reflect here on the reluctance of employers to hire those who are approaching the age of retirement, perhaps because of the risks of the "investment," and the way this becomes transformed, subjectively, into a "fact" that must be accepted.

What we witness in each of these instances of adaptation to the status quo of things, acquiescence to given conditions, is the foreshortening of development. There has been recognition, the first moment of development, but that is all; far from proceeding to the second moment of distanciation, the rift has merely been assimilated back into the self, quieted; it has yet to be seized upon as a suitable object for developmental work. Proceeding in less detail through the other moments of the developmental process, questions concerning the transition from recognition to distanciation, and the processes and conditions of distanciation become a second area for research. Similarly, questions concerning
the process of articulation would entail looking for the various forms this process could take, describing dimensions that differentiate productive from non-productive processes, and perhaps most importantly, determining how and under what conditions articulation can be made to follow from distanciation, and how it can be made to lead into the final moment of development, appropriation. Questions raised in conjunction with the process of appropriation will be the most concrete, in that they will be concerned with praxis, meaningful, productive action. Here, we, as researchers, will seek to understand the relationship of self-understanding to "self-practice," the ways in which the process of development becomes incorporated into the self, and how we might best assess how well actions fit with and express the earlier moments of development.

Investigating the issues sketched above will require some different methods and approaches than are most often used. But they do exist: Interpretive methods, hermeneutics, discourse analysis, and a variety of other approaches have been fruitfully employed in related disciplines and recently, a number of works have proposed their use in the human sciences (e.g., Polkinghorne, 1983; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979; Thompson, 1984). Furthermore, that these approaches are not entirely antithetical to the methods most often used in current developmental studies is evidenced by some of the recent work by Bruner (1986), which juxtaposes linguistic and literary investigations with laboratory studies. What is most important, though, is what we might call a "research attitude" that acknowledges and is informed by the need to remain open to the variety of ways in which the process of development might be manifested in the lives of those we study. If we look only for movement toward those ends set forth in conjunction with normatively based grid theories, we cut short both our own potential understanding of human lives and, in some instances perhaps, our own process of development.

To a large extent, we are not implying that the answers to these research questions can become a model, a template, for what development is, in terms of specific contents; this would be a reification of precisely the sort we are trying to circumvent in the present formulation. The process of development changes with changing conditions, conditions that call forth new modes of both de-formation and re-formation. Therefore, the findings of which we are speaking would serve to illuminate instances of development as they occur in specific sociohistorical circumstances and, if used critically, to stimulate further processes of development in circumstances that are structurally similar. The upshot is that, much as development must be a continuously renewed process within the individual, the dynamics of cultural and historical change will compel us continually to reevaluate and formulate our own understanding of the developmental process, as applied to specific domains of experience. There is not—and there can never be—a discrete end to the study of development.

Let us conclude by stating generally that by expanding the concept of development along the lines we have set forth, and by seeking to understand both its presence and its absence, we may begin to provide a vehicle for An alternative approach to the study of lives furtheing the development of individuals themselves. Theorists and researchers are in no way social engineers, nor should they be; no one has the right to engineer the lives of others, no matter how filled with pain they might be. Changes must be taken by individuals of their own volition, as a function of what they perceive the conditions of their experience and their respective ends to be. It is by serving to articulate these conditions and these ends that we might not only find development where we thought there was none, but help to bring it about where we thought it impossible.

REFERENCES


