MODELS OF FAMILY AND GROUP DEVELOPMENT

FAMILY

Families are transgenerationally produced and propagated human social systems whose main modes of organization and development might reasonably be expected to parallel generally those in other human systems at both the individual and the social levels.

Let’s agree to take the prototypical “family life cycle” as a process involving three successive generations, and to identify its beginning with the coming together of two young persons. Having reached, say, the GENTLEST STAGE of psychosexual development (as depicted in the columns to the left) they meet at a point in their lives at which (neuro-bio-psycho-socio-culturally speaking) both are ready, willing and able to differentiate enough from both their families of origin and their current peers in order to form a family unit of their own. The point at which “boy meets girl” begins a process of courtship and indicates the start of a new family system building process – which may take a variety of trajectories. The following entries trace a typical trajectory from the moment of courtship until the death of both spouses.

OTHER GROUPS

As this entire document attests, models involving stage or phase theories figuring prominently in our efforts to comprehend the organization and development of human social systems at all levels of size and complexity. It should by now be clear that the organization and development process has some generic features – to be expected in all human social systems.

Let us therefore take 9.70 as a close-to-home test case. Parallels to Freud’s and Erikson’s developmental tasks and crises will be emphasized. Can we identify any of the stages or phases of development through which our own 9.70 collaborative learning system has been and is in process of passing? Please compare and contrast the following account with your experience as a participant/observer in/of the organization and development of the 9.70 collaborative learning system. You should also feel free to consider whether this account appears to you to be applicable to the task of understanding the organization and development of other human social systems.

MODELS OF INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

SHAKESPEARE
As You Like It
(II, vii, 139)

All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being such a witness Against his words as he goes forth on
The way by which he came
Note that all stage/age boundaries are approximate. Case-to-case variations are to be expected.

BIRTH–3 MONTHS: ORAL PHASE: INFANCY: STAGE I:

PHYSICAL / BIOLOGICAL: SHAKESPEARE

At first the infant, Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms.

hman infant exhibits extreme neoteny (is born in a relative state of neurobiological, psychological and sociocultural immaturity in comparison to many other mammals); may be early defined by caretakers as “easy” or “difficult”; “fussy” or “calm”; sleeps a lot; its nervous system is anatomically and physiologically “incomplete”; it is relatively insensitive and unresponsive to environmental changes (noise, etc.); early reflexes include sucking, tonic neck, grasping, etc.; head needs to be externally supported; gaze alert.

Context/Focus: feeding; mouth/breast unable to distinguish between self and other, and between internal and external stimuli/sensations; net affirmative maternal responsiveness to needs (if consistent and neither excessively harsh nor unduly permissive, encourages infant to assume a “psychological set” of trustful passivity = “optimism”); net negative maternal responsiveness to needs or net inconsistency is liable to be experienced negatively by the child (nonverbally) as aversive or painful, thus encouraging infant to assume a “psychological set” of mistrustful passivity = “pessimism”

SPHERE OF SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL RELATIONS:
infant and primary caretaker (usually biological mother)

MAIN DEVELOPMENTAL TASK:

to get needs (mainly oral/nutritive) met;

MAIN DEVELOPMENTAL CRISIS:

basic trust vs. basic mistrust;

FAVORABLE OUTCOME:
drive and hope

UNFAVORABLE OUTCOME:
apathy and fearful-ness; autism; paranoia

The coming together (“engagement?”) is an encounter (negotiation process) in which the two individuals must somehow reconcile many and varied traces of their respective (and collective) pasts – including attitudes toward marriage and family that have been shaped by their respective experiences growing up in their own families of origin. Each arrives at this point with more or less different worldviews, value systems and lifestyles. Typically, this part of the process is marked by an interplay of “approach/avoidance” behavior by both partners, and by “family problems” traceable to differences, disparities and disapprovals on all sides. This initial “entry” phase involves the working out of basic trust/mistrust issues. From a structural/developmental point of view, can it be seen as a counterpart of the developmental processes described immediately to the left and right of this column? Consider the situation of an MIT undergraduate student poised, so to speak, at or before the actual point of entry into a particular classroom on the first day of a new spring term at MIT. What social influences are playing upon her or him? Has she arrived, at least at a provisional decision to consider committing to this class? Given that this one was chosen from among a number of other possible HASS elective classes to attend, are there still likely to be some unresolved commitment issues? How about personal and social demand characteristics of the upcoming semester? Is she operating under any significant academic/extra-curricular constraints/ foreseeable time conflicts? How (in what ways) and how much of what extent is her/his readiness, willingness and ability to act conditioned and constrained by social influences arising from a tension between having some genuine personal and social interest in being a serious student of the subject.
MODELS OF INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

SHAKESPEARE
As You Like It

PHYSICAL / BIOLOGICAL

ERIKSON
Freud (psychosexual
development –
viewing persons-
in-contexts)

3–6 MONTHS:
- gaze follows moving objects; eyes focus;
- smiles; responsive to mother's face, hand/
mouth activity; head erect; social responsiveness;
- laughter; eye-hand coordination;
- binocularity; sits supported; legs bear weight; reaches;
- localizes sounds; explores; cries easily

6–12 MONTHS:
- responds to own image in mirror; babbles;
- apprehensiveness with strangers; interest in people & toys;
- plays "peek-a-boo"; responsiveness to own name and "no!";
- moves from supine/sitting to prone; may begin creeping/crawling;
- approximates thumb and forefinger; supports own weight;
- vocalizes "ma" "ba" "da" etc.; social interest; independent movement;
- may walk with support; possible time of weaning;
- begins to feed self; exploratory behavior; "adventurousness" and self confidence; evinces teething-related discomfort; irritability; excitability; responsiveness; creativity

12–18 MONTHS:
- vocabulary; negativism; turns pages; climbs;
- plays; builds; scribbles; runs; hand preference; follows directions; 3-4-word phrases; points/tURNS toward named objects; dressing ability; alternates between independent and dependent activity; obeys and disobeys instructions

MODELS OF FAMILY AND GROUP DEVELOPMENT

FAMILY

OTHER GROUPS

before us and desiring to pursue, instead, some other competing interests? Are there any other boundary conditions to consider? How will it fit into your schedule? What is s/he instead thinking? Is s/he experiencing any approach/avoidance conflict(s)?

STAGE II:

"Marriage" (or its equivalent in terms of "commitment") and the establishment of a common household entails for both partners a transition from a state of relative independence to one of relative interdependence. Ideally (but not invariably) the new relationship is based on trust built up in the course of the preceding set of more or less explicit negotiations. Not atypically, this is a point at which unresolved (and perhaps transgenerationally "inherited") issues of power and control come to the fore. As each partner struggles (in his/her own habitual way) to realign connections/separations involving previous social relations (including families of origin), a further mutually and reciprocally acceptable cycle of conflict and reconciliation of differences necessarily takes place. Among the problems commonly encountered at this stage may be mentioned: residual ambivalence concerning loyalties to families of origin; issues of "commitment," distance regulation, sexual adjustment and disappointed initial expectations.

STAGE II AT THE POINT OF ENTRY:

Amid continuing approach/avoidance conflicts, one enters the place. Safely seated and beginning to settle in, the prospective participant is now concerned about personal safety and security issues. What will the class be like? Will it be a fun? Who are the instructors? Who are the other people here? Will the workload be heavy? What will I need to do to get through (or ace) it? How much time and effort will I have to put into it? Will I get what I want out of it (gradewise and otherwise)? Will I have a good learning experience?

Here, as a rule, approach/avoidance conflict gradually gives way to "attentive exploration" with a view toward resolving some of the basic trust/mistrust issues that must be dealt with in making even a provisional commitment to the process of becoming a member of the group. The underlying and frankly self-centered question at this point is, "What's in this for ME?"

Assuming that the goal is to develop a relatively open and cooperative (as compared with closed and competitive) learning situation (which is our stated aim), it is appropriate at this point for leadership: • to allow – indeed, to support – the need for group members to maintain their distance; • to let them approach at their own speed, while at the same time inviting trust; • to facilitate exploration of substantive curricular topics while stimulating/entertaining discussion of commitment issues; • to provide information regarding the demand characteristics of the situation, goals and objectives. The likelihood of dropouts is quite high here.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>As You Like It</td>
<td>FREUD (psychosexual)</td>
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<th>18–36 MONTHS:</th>
<th>ANAL PHASE:</th>
<th>TODDLER:</th>
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<tr>
<td>continuing postnatal myelination of spinal cord; capacity for bladder/bowel control</td>
<td>retentiveness/explosiveness; possessiveness; anal zone becomes focus in connection with &quot;power and control&quot; issues in connection with toilet training and/or maturation; child experiences pleasure from anal &quot;holding in&quot; and &quot;letting go;&quot; controlling/appropriately releasing urine and feces and, by extension, hygiene/cleanliness become issues; becoming independent requires discipline and self-control; &quot;learning styles&quot; begin to emerge with self development and interactions with others sowing seeds of future mental/behavioral patterns; for example: in the extreme, either &quot;obsessive/compulsive&quot; and &quot;impulsive/hyperactive&quot; behavior may develop out of early experiences with things and other persons (psychoanalysts are thus intensely interested in what they call &quot;object relations&quot; (including relations with both parents &amp; extended family)</td>
<td>SPHERE OF SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL RELATIONS: child and parents; nuclear family</td>
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With the birth of a child, the family undergoes a transition from a dyad to a triad. Here the focus of negotiation shifts to issues of parental interdependence in the face of mutual responsibility for the well-being of a highly dependent new family member. The new parents must concurrently adjust to big changes in their relations with each other as well as their conjoint responsibility for an extremely needy infant; common issues at this point in the process include increased feelings of abandonment and/or fear of the loss of the other’s love by one or both of the partners.

**MODELS OF FAMILY AND GROUP DEVELOPMENT**

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STAGE III POWER AND CONTROL:

Once their initial commitments to membership in a group have been made, prospective (now provisional) members must come face to face with the reality of the group and begin to negotiate various issues with each other within it (e.g. determining the parameters of their individual and collective responses to the demand characteristics of the unfolding situation).

What is really going on here? Who is in charge? How do I fit into this arrangement? What is my status/role here? What am I supposed to be doing, thinking, learning? Do I like it? Notice that these questions are only slightly less self-centered in topic and tone than the basic trust/mistrust questions listed above.

This is a phase of the process in which members of a group-in formation must needs struggle with each other and with the nominal leadership (where such exists) to arrive at some "definition of the situation" that is reasonable and workable for them, both individually and collectively. Who is to determine the nature and scope of the prevailing rules and goals? The likelihood of drop-outs continues to be quite high here, as is the probability of frankly hostile, aggressive, and negative behavior toward the group development process itself and those responsible for imposing it. Not uncommonly, the effort to gain a degree of power and control leads to proposals to formalize the proceedings by enacting rules, regulations, voting procedures, etc. The result of following these leads is invariably the establishment of a "zero-sum" game in which every disagreement is "resolved" by having some winners and some losers. During this rather chaotic phase, a leadership aiming for a more "win-win" approach needs to focus on allowing resistance to be expressed and rebellion to be developed within limits conducive to the protection of individual rights and general safety. In order to be effective, leadership will continue: a) to provide activities conducive to increased individual and collective competence, b) to clarify (insomuch as possi-
### MODELS OF INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

**SHAKE SPEARE**  
*As You Like It*

**PHYSICAL / BIOLOGICAL**

**FREUD**  
(psychosocial development)

**ERIKSON**  
(psychosocial development – viewing persons-in-contexts)

**MODELS OF FAMILY AND GROUP DEVELOPMENT**

**FAMILY**

**OTHER GROUPS**

### 3–6 YEARS:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PHALLIC PHASE:</th>
<th>PRESCHOOLER:</th>
<th>STAGE IV:</th>
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| bodily control; both gradual and sudden changes from infantile physique, behavior (note the gender bias implicit in Freud’s pre-occuption with male psychosexual development and penises); genitals become focus; interest in sex differences and “where do babies come from?” and “how does the seed get in there?” etc. Freudian “Oedipal complex” presumes sexual identity of boys is significantly shaped by earlier interactions with mother; sexualized imagery (if present in sufficient kinds and significant degrees sows seeds of anxiety, hysteria, questions about own sexuality; phobias, rigidity; feelings of guilt, shame, alienation, awkwardness, helplessness, and incapacity in interpersonal relations. | SPHERE OF SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL RELATIONS: family and nursery school or daycare  
MAIN DEVELOPMENTAL TASK: to make; to go after, to imitate  
MAIN DEVELOPMENTAL CRISIS: initiative vs. guilt  
FAVORABLE OUTCOME: purpose and direction | The partial exit of the first child from the immediate world of the family unit and his/her entry into the larger world of the neighborhood, local community and school (or daycare) initiates another shift in parental relations. As the child begins to move toward relative independence, both parents and child(ren) continue to participate in sharing (consciously or otherwise) thoughts and feelings, and doing things together. If and when additional offsprng arrive, problems come to include sibling rivalries and the differential treatment of relatively preferred and rejected children. |

### 6–12 YEARS:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>LATENCY STAGE:</th>
<th>YOUNG CHILD:</th>
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| extension of object relations beyond family; sense of personal/social competence engenders and reinforces sense of “self-esteem”; ego identity; frequency and intensity of incidents in which family norms are being tested (and possibly found wanting) through encounters with social influences arising from community and peer groups; devaluation of parental omnipotence | SPHERE OF SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL RELATIONS: neighborhood and school  
MAIN DEVELOPMENTAL TASK: to make things; to compete and cooperate with peers  
MAIN DEVELOPMENTAL CRISIS: industry vs. inferiority  
FAVORABLE OUTCOME: self-esteem, competence and skill  
UNFAVORABLE OUTCOME: low self-esteem |

...Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face,  
Creeping like a snail Unwillingly to school.
### MODELS OF INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

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<td>12–18 YEARS:</td>
<td>PUBERTY:</td>
<td>ADOLESCENT:</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>puberty; major growth spurt occurs earlier; gradual/sudden appearance of secondary sexual characteristics; increasing differentiation/integration of personal mental and behavioral characteristics (attitudes, beliefs and values, actions, practices) characterize <em>adolescence</em></td>
<td>return or reactivation of phallic phase coupled with sexual maturation; depending on prior experience acquired in earlier stages, narcissistic object love (see Shakespeare’s description) may or may not become focus</td>
<td>SPHERE OF SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL RELATIONS: peer groups; same and opposite sexes</td>
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<td>...And then the lover, Sighing like a furnace, With a woeful ballad Made to his mistresses eyebrow.</td>
<td></td>
<td>MAIN DEVELOPMENTAL CRISIS: identity vs role confusion</td>
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<td>...Then a soldier, Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard, Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel, Seeking the bubble reputation Even in the cannon’s mouth.</td>
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<td>UNFAVORABLE OUTCOME: inauthenticity; delinquency; neurosis; psychosis</td>
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<td>18–30 YEARS:</td>
<td>GENITAL STAGE:</td>
<td>YOUNG ADULT:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>peak of physical development and sexual activity</td>
<td>(early adulthood); depending on prior experience acquired in earlier stages, narcissistic object love (or its equivalent) may or may not be increasingly supplanted by couplings involving more mutual and reciprocal relations; conflicts between dependence upon and independence from family of origin</td>
<td>SPHERE OF SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL RELATIONS: adult community apart from family of origin</td>
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<td>MAIN DEVELOPMENTAL CRISIS: intimacy vs. social isolation</td>
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<td>UNFAVORABLE OUTCOME: isolation, loneliness; alienation; anomie</td>
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<td>The partial exit of the youngest child from the family and his/her entry into the larger world continues the pattern of partial separations; Children in school bring family beliefs and values and practices into confrontation (and sometimes conflict) with those of the surrounding community with discrepancies provoking and increase in tensions within the family.</td>
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<td>As evidence of competency grows (in terms both of intimacy and task orientation), the cohesiveness of the system becomes increasingly apparent as does the somewhat paradoxical fact that group unity depends on the readiness, willingness and ability of the membership to recognize that their own (formerly highly problematic) diversity as a source of their own great and unique strength. Freer expression of thoughts and feelings in a social context that demands mutual respect and support and honest/forthright constructive criticism as well as positive feedback leads to a lessened preoccupation with power problems. Leadership comes to be seen less and less as the power/responsibility of identifiable “leaders” and serves increasingly as a function that simply moves around in ways that are responsive both to collective needs and personal imperatives. The group itself comes to be viewed by its members as a more or less distinct compositely unified system with a definite identity. “Giving to” the group (and its members) comes to be regarded as a value complementary to “getting from” them. (Compare with Stage II) Traditions begin to develop; repetitive tasks become increasingly regarded as merely “going through the routine”, cooperation/collaboration increases at small group levels; more slowly at large group level; complaints of dissatisfaction and “boredom” occasionally resurface; but – if previous crises have been properly negotiated – there is a possibility for intimacy-building and goal oriented activities to become increasingly effective and sustained.</td>
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...And then the justice,
In fair round belly
with good capon
lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances.
And so he plays his part.

...The sixth age shifts
into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side.
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank,
and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound.

... Last scene of all,
That ends this strange evenentful history,
Is second childishness,
and mere oblivion.
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans everything.

As children reach adolescence, acquire
more autonomy and come increasing-
ly under the influence of peer group
norms; family ties are increasingly
tested. Amid conflicts between them
and their children, parents revisit or relive
their own adolescent conflicts
with their parents. This stage or phase
begins roughly at the point at which
the first child exits the family to es-
establish an independent household.
As children individuate and become more
independent of and separate from
their parents, the latter begin to antic-
pate the exit from their living unit of
the last child.

In its final phase, the life cycle of a
human social group may be experi-
cenced in a similar way by at least
some of its members. To be more pre-
cise, members tend to separate from
groups in ways that are both disposi-
tionally and situationally influenced.
Thus, all other things constant, our
approaches to leavetaking tend to be
fairly consistent for each of us from
one situation to the next. For most
people, endings are usually marked by
a mixture of feelings, including sad-
ness and happiness, resistance and
relief. (It deserves note that, for some
people, in at least some situations,
acquired tendencies toward the denial
and repression of feeling may blunt
awareness and expression of both neg-
ative and positive attitudes toward
both the group process and its termi-
nation.)

Insofar as possible, time should be
taken at the end of a group learning
experience to review and evaluate the
experience as a whole within the con-
text of a coherent conceptual frame-
work. This will hopefully prove con-
ductive to the development of a valid
and reliable basis for "grading" the
quality of the performance of the sys-
tem as a whole and of its constituent
subsystems (including study groups
and individuals). Evidence of group
development (or lack thereof) may be
derived from a review and/or re-enact-
ment of attitudes and behavior from
the point of entry onward (e.g. com-
pare/contrast journal entries, minutes,
etc.) from early and later stages.