

The Role of the Family in Personality Development

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Environment occupies a significant place among factors that affect the development of personality. Many researchers believe that environment shapes one's personality. On the other hand, other researchers argue that personality is pre-determined at the time of birth, which means it is hereditary. However, it appears that both environmental and hereditary factors act as important determinants of personality. The relationship between these factors is one of the most ancient and fascinating issues that humans face. The nature-versus-nurture debate is one of the most enduring in the field of psychology; to what extent are human behaviors, ideas, and feelings innate, and to what extent are they learned? Almost 400 years ago, Descartes set out the view that individual human beings hold certain ideas that are inherent and that strengthen our approach to the world.

Conversely, and somewhat contemporarily, Hobbes stressed the importance of the role of experience in behavioral development. Both maturation and learning factors have

been key issues when studying personality development. In the last two decades, studies in behavioral genetics have afforded significant insight into the hereditary and ecological sources of stability and change in personality variations over time. They have shown that both factors are the driving forces of both continuity and change (Bleidorn et al., 2014). Genetic and environmental variables do not separately affect personality development; rather, the interaction of these factors and their involvement in stability, change, and personality differentiation vary across different age groups. This has significant theoretical repercussions for personality development (Specht et al., 2014).

From birth to old age, genetic factors play the most important role in determining continuity in personality differentiation, whereas hereditary and ecological variables contribute to individual differences in personality (Spengler et al., 2012). Studies concerning the interplay of different factors have emphasized the involvement of hereditary features

in rank-order differences, which decrease with age, signifying a declining genome-based plasticity (Baltes, 1997). Ecological sources of rank-order stability (i.e., environmental setting and changes such as grade change or the birth of a new sibling), on the other hand, tend to increase from the beginning of puberty to late adolescence (Kandler, 2012). Hereditary factors achieve their stability at the beginning of middle adulthood, which is consistent with the fact that personality differences in heritably induced maturation could be considered minor beyond the third decade of life (McCrae and Costa, 2008). Conversely, environmental variables seem to gradually stabilize personality differences throughout adulthood (Bleidorn et al., 2009). The reason for this is linked to the many social situations in which individuals are involved in relationship experiences that tend to stabilize during middle adulthood. That is, the social roles that individuals occupy within different situations may be relatively constant during middle adulthood, which may heighten the environmental continuity of individual differences (Roberts and Wood, 2006).

Psychological theories, in recent years, have proposed a profound paradigm shift in which personality is no longer defined as a set of inherited structures that mature within a social environment but is defined using transactional models in which the same internal structures are derived from an interpersonal field (e.g., Lynch and Cicchetti, 1998). This relational model of personality structures tries to overcome the dichotomy of nature and culture, conceiving individual development as an integration of traits deriving from constitutional and relational interaction (i.e., elements that constantly influence each other in a reciprocal manner throughout life). The fundamental theoretical crux of this position – which emphasizes the relational nature of human experience – is the need for intense and long-lasting relations. This view is based primarily on Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory, which offers an understanding

of the personality characteristics that exist within the interpersonal context. The same self-development reflects the needs, thoughts, and self-understanding of others.

Within this perspective, the study of the influence of family interactions on the development of personality can be considered one of the most critical issues. This chapter will highlight those studies and the theoretical models derived from them, in which basic themes of the psychology of family relationships have been linked to the development of personality. In particular, the following themes will be covered: the role of parental personality and the birth order of the child; the relationship between emotion regulation, attachment bonds, and personality; and, finally, the role of family in the development of personality disorders.

PARENTAL PERSONALITY

Belsky and Kelly (1994) proposed that parents' personalities would influence parenting and children's behavior. They emphasized the role of family systems, which are considered as determinants of the ability to organize interactive models that begin during pregnancy and are rearranged later, as a factor influencing the development of personality/psychopathology of the child. Recent studies have pointed out that the presence of psychopathic traits in the parents constitutes a risk factor that can affect the development of an adaptive personality in children and adolescents (Van Loon et al., 2014). From an epidemiological perspective, it has been shown that disorders in parents double the chance of maladaptive personality development (Maybery and Reupert, 2006). These parents often tend to establish a struggle for power and control through highly aggressive, intrusive, and punitive behaviors. Also, they tend to reverse the parent-child relationship and to force their children's relational mode, characterized by aggression,

hostility, control, and intrusiveness. Despite this, it is not correct to affirm that a deterministic relationship between psychiatric disease of parents and development of maladaptive personality in children exists. The parenting process is not reducible to a mechanical one-to-one relationship because it is necessary to take into account contextual variables (e.g., the presence/absence of support networks), the psychological variables of the actors (e.g., the experiences and the child's representations about the mental illness of a parent), and incidental variables (e.g., age of onset of the disease in the child's life).

Patterson et al. (2002) stressed that the influence of parental personality/psychopathology on children's adaptation is mediated by its disturbing impact on parenting practice. With the same goal, Schofield et al. (2012) studied the role played by parents' positive personality features in predicting comparable adolescent personality characteristics over time. The authors highlighted that consistent levels of parental agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability were associated with higher levels of the same traits in adolescents. These findings suggest that parents' personality may play an important role in personality development during adolescence (Schofield et al., 2012). Even though parental personality can be considered a fundamental part of a child's developmental context, surprisingly few studies have linked parents' personality traits with parenting styles in determining a child's personality. Moreover, studies in behavioral genetics show that some parenting behaviors are heritable (Plomin, 1994; Spinath and O'Connor, 2003). Genetic influence on the environment is explained by the fact that the genes affect the personality of the individual and, consequently, the individual's ability to respond to environmental stimuli. For example, genes can affect unacceptable behavior; conversely, experiences of antisocial behavior can influence the distribution of these genes in the population (e.g., Rhee and Waldman, 2002; Robins, 1978). Men and

women will mate on the basis of their similarity in social behavior, and it often happens that couples in which both partners exhibit antisocial behavior tend to have more children than the norm (Farrington et al., 2001; Krueger et al., 1998). This means that, from generation to generation, the genes that are relevant to that particular phenotype present with a higher frequency in these families than they would if the couplings between individuals were completely random (Krueger et al., 1998). According to this position, maternal neuroticism has been linked to externalizing behaviors during childhood and, more generally, to delinquency during adolescence (Bates et al., 1991). In turn, these children – probably as a result of the high levels of stress in their parents – will display externalizing problematic behaviors. Thus, parents with scarce capacity for emotional stability could experience a failure in parenting effectiveness, resulting in further escalation of problem behaviors. Parents who are emotionally stable would be expected to provide the consistency and monitoring often lacking in the homes of antisocial children (Patterson et al., 1992). As a result, children might also develop personality traits that may lead to high levels of externalizing problem behaviors. Thus, personality development is often associated with the development of externalizing problem behaviors.

According to research findings, parents with a low level of conscientiousness would also present maladaptive traits such as low self-discipline and the tendency to act before thinking: their children may inherit a tendency toward low inhibitory control and may therefore exhibit rising levels of externalizing behaviors (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Even research that uses the five-factor model of personality has shown how parental personality might relate to parenting, pointing mainly to parenting as playing a mediating role between the personalities of the parents and those of their children. These studies have underlined that parents with high levels of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional

stability (or low neuroticism), and openness showed more supportive and responsive parenting and less negative, controlling parenting (Belsky and Barends, 2002; Verhoeven et al., 2010). Conversely, parents characterized by high negative emotionality and disagreeableness would have more harmful effects and would exhibit less nurturing parenting, whereas neuroticism was found to be associated with less sensitive, less affective, and less stimulating parenting (Belsky et al., 1995). Thus, parent personality would often play a crucial role on both positive and negative personality development in children.

In sum, personality development is complex. In fact, it can be considered the result of both biological and social components. At birth, a child is not a *tabula rasa*. Heredity and environment are inseparable in human development. From birth, personality is biopsychosocial. The evolution of personality includes the child–parent relationship, school experiences, relationships with peers, and the ability to assess oneself in a balanced way (Küçük et al., 2012).

The family's emotional climate is essential for the positive and functional development of a child. If a relationship of love and esteem exists between the parents and the child, then the child's personality is likely to develop in a positive way. In contrast, if dysfunctional conflict is frequent, then the child may experience a state of anxiety and emotional insecurity. The balanced development of the child's personality from a psychological and social perspective assumes that the child lives in an atmosphere of affective security, which is why children tend to demand exclusive affection from parents. The biological organism dynamically interacts with the environment during the life cycle. Recognizing that biology and experience influence each other poses new questions: to what extent are organisms born with behavioral skills already established? To what extent are such capabilities influenced by the family in shaping a child's personality? Environmental influences tend to

make children raised in the same family more different than similar (Lo Cascio et al., 2013). These influences are called 'non-shared environment' (Neiderhiser et al., 2007). The main aspects of the environment are not shared due to birth order, distance in age, the quality of a child's relationship with parents, and the different subjective perceptions or personal interpretations that the individual can develop in relation to the same situations.

BIRTH ORDER

Does birth order establish the features of personality? Popular ways of thinking, including those regarding the personalities of siblings from the same family, propose simple and undemanding explanations of what we observe, but these are not always based on scientific data.

Determining the influence that birth order has on personality is a controversial subject, and the majority of studies have concluded that birth order does not shape personality (Beer and Horn, 2000). Some studies, however, have credited almost 35% of the variance in personality to birth order (Borkenau et al., 2001; Eaves et al., 1989). Others have highlighted that birth order affects behaviors and individual achievement and therefore has an impact on personality (Somit et al., 1996).

The study of birth order began in 1874 with Francis Galton, the eclectic scientist and cousin of Charles Darwin. Galton, the youngest of nine children, studied a sample of almost 200 British scientists and found that the majority were firstborn. According to Galton, this was because the firstborn child enjoys more consideration from his or her parents, which has a positive impact on intellectual capacity. Following in the same footsteps, Alfred Adler extended Galton's speculations on personality traits. According to Adler (1964), the firstborn, the last sibling, and the middle sibling have entirely different

social experiences and thus develop correspondingly different types of personalities. Adler noted that the firstborn occupies the center of the parents' attention until he or she is supplanted by a younger sibling. Consequently, according to Adler, the firstborn can develop an attitude of insecurity and hostility toward others. He said that criminals, neurotics, and alcoholics are often individuals of this type. The second child, in turn, tends to be highly ambitious, rebellious, and jealous, and continually attempts to overcome the older sibling. As for the youngest child, Adler considered those children to be the most damaged of all and the most likely to develop problematic behaviors both as children and as adults. Adler never provided any empirical support for his hypothesis, and his ideas remain deeply rooted in popular psychology despite decades of inconclusive studies.

More recently, Sulloway (1995) proposed family niche theory, which states that birth order affects the personalities of children who share the same family environment and who adapt to it by decreasing conflict and increasing collaboration. According to Sulloway, siblings are similar to Darwin's famous finches in that they rival other organisms for limited resources and adapt to survive. The firstborn is, during childhood, necessarily more physically imposing, which favors the development of supremacy. Younger siblings, in contrast, are free to choose any position in the family, and this helps the personality to develop imagination, extraversion, and sociability. Despite the enthusiasm generated by Sulloway's (1995) idea—especially in the field of non-academic psychology—most research has failed to confirm the author's hypothesis. For a long time, in fact, the author's ideas remained confined to a mere hypothesis refuted by empirical experience. Empirical studies on birth order and the development of personality have shown only a weak association between personality and birth order (e.g., Dixon et al., 2008). Moreover, various researchers (Healey and Ellis, 2007; Paulhus

et al., 1999) have recently stressed the relevance of the relationship between birth order and personality traits among children in the same family. As reported by Sulloway (2010) in a meta-analytic study, when adults are asked to compare themselves to their children in terms of different personality traits, firstborns are evaluated as achieving more and as careful, whereas late-born children are judged as more rebellious and open. Thus, according to Sulloway (1995), a high level of extraversion in late-born children is an attempt to attract parental consideration. The firstborn's self-descriptive characteristics, which differ from those of the lastborn, are evidence that some traits with which individuals define themselves are the result of a special relationship, in which every parent engages differently with each child as a function of his or her birth order. Healey and Ellis (2007) found moderate correlations between birth order and personality traits such as conscientiousness and openness in two separate samples. Paulhus et al. (1999) reported a weak-to-moderate influence of birth order on conscientiousness and rebelliousness in four separate samples. Furthermore, studies conducted with brothers underlined weak-to-moderate effects of birth order on personality (Damian and Roberts, 2015; Rohrer et al., 2015). To account for the birth order effects seen with parent ratings, Ernst and Angst (1983) suggested that 'first- and late-borns have specific parent-related behaviors because the attitude acquired toward them is different, without their personality being profoundly affected' (p. 171). In other words, differentiation in personality traits linked to birth order is only relevant within the family context due to parents' differential behaviors, but these differences may not be applicable in all other environments in which the individual develops his own personality. In like manner, birth order effects might be seen when studies gather the evaluations of relatives; however, they may not be seen when studies gather appraisals from contexts outside the family.

EMOTION REGULATION AND PERSONALITY

The fundamental roles performed by the family are social control and individual psychological development. Relatives arrange commitments to and confinements of individual flexibility with the aim of guaranteeing support and care. Family bonds play a fundamental role in shaping emotional systems, which manage the understanding and expression of emotional representations. According to Gross (1998), emotion regulation refers to how we try to influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express these emotions. For other scholars, emotion regulation represents the capability to emotionally answer environmental demands that arise throughout the course of one's life in a socially acceptable manner and in a manner that is plastic enough to permit spontaneous reactions (e.g., Cole et al., 1994; Di Maggio et al., 2016). Moreover, according to the authors, emotion regulation should allow individuals to manage these reactions. Individual differences in emotion regulation patterns reflect personality characteristics. Achievement of adaptive emotion regulation can be seen as a greatly important child development aim. This attainment seems, in fact, to play an important role in the process of personality building, affecting both social and emotional ability with emotion regulation being one of the most important protective factors against the development of psychiatric illness, which is most often associated with the dysregulation of early problems (e.g., Schore, 2003). The possibility for the child to have experiences of a positive emotional match with a caregiver first and with family members later, or to change negative affect into positive affect, is a primary process for the development of an adaptive personality.

According to Tronick (2005) and Emde (1999), emotion regulation allows the child to build a representation of the self; each one

within the mother–child interaction tries to increase the coherence of the meaning attributed to the self and to what the mother and child do together. When the interaction is well adjusted on the dyadic level, it creates the sense of a more coherent and complex world. According to Tronick (2005), this is the basis of human personality. The state of consciousness (SOC) is defined by Tronick as a state of psychobiological organization with a particular set of implicit and explicit meanings, intentions, and procedures. Dyadic states of consciousness (DSC) are realized when creating new meanings that are incorporated into both parties' states of consciousness. When mothers promote an emotional exchange with their children, the latter tend to acquire more expertise in decoding emotional experiences. Later on, the length of states of mind suggests that they are an integral part of personality traits, and research has supported this hypothesis (Emde, 1999). People who frequently feel positive emotions and rarely feel negative emotions are, in all likelihood, extraverted and sociable. Instead, those who frequently feel anger, revulsion, and contempt probably have a hostile and aggressive personality.

According to Emde (1999), healthy personality development depends on the proper development of cognitive, affective, and social interactions of the child with the external environment. The analysis of affectivity has been particularly influenced by individuals' psychic experiences, which are placed along a pleasure–displeasure axis. Based on the length, persistence, and mode of onset of affective states, they can be divided into feelings, emotions, and moods. Some empirical studies have confirmed the link between personality and emotion regulation. Eisenberg et al. (2010) underlined that both temperament and personality are intertwined with the development of emotion regulation processes; moreover, this interaction, they argued, is the most important factor affecting the quality of social functioning. Santucci et al. (2008) studied the relation among

indices of vagal tone and temperament as predictors of emotion regulation strategies in children with negative experiences of parenting, such as the parenting characteristics of a depressed mother. The data highlighted that a low-level vagal upturn and higher negative affectivity in temperament were associated with maladaptive emotion regulation in response to a feeling of frustration. These findings suggest that vagal tone and temperament are indicators of individual differences in emotion regulation (Passanisi and Di Nuovo, 2015). Nader-Grosbois et al., (2012) argued that personality traits such as agreeableness, emotional stability, and extraversion are associated with emotion regulation. The authors emphasized that the more a child is agreeable, emotionally stable, and extraverted, the better the child will be able to regulate his or her emotions. If the child is less agreeable, less emotionally stable, and less extraverted, he or she will have more difficulty in regulating his or her emotional experiences. Extraversion was positively linked with scores of emotion regulation and negatively associated with emotion dysregulation. The regression analyses showed that agreeableness, emotional stability, and level of intellectual efficiency explained 49% of the variance of the composite score in emotion regulation; agreeableness and extraversion explained 34.8% of the variance of score in emotion regulation; and emotional stability, extraversion, and agreeableness explained 61.3% of the variance of score in emotion dysregulation.

ATTACHMENT AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Every child has an active role in building and shaping relationships since birth (Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1973). In a significant relationship, there is a continuous and interactive exchange with a caregiver providing the child with opportunities for

self-regulation through a feedback system. Bowlby's (1973) studies have shown that early relationships between children and their caregivers are linked to an instinctive need in children to get in touch with components of their own species. Attachment behavior is behavior where the child becomes attached to a significant adult considered able to face the world appropriately (Van IJzendoorn and Kroonenberg, 1988). This behavior becomes fundamental, as every time children are scared, tired, sick, or relieved, they receive comfort and care. If the external goal of the attachment system is to ensure proximity to the caregiver, the internal one is to motivate the child to reach an adaptive level of internal security. The biological and psychosocial task of caregivers is to provide a secure base for the child, where the child can look out into the outside world and return knowing that he or she will be welcomed, nurtured, reassured, and comforted. In this sense, the role of the caregiver is to be available and responsive when called into action. The internal working model (IWM) is a core assumption that argues that children build representations of the self with respect to an attachment figure. The IWM includes a representation of the self and the caregiver in attachment relationships, organizes thoughts and memories, and guides future behavior of attachment. Attachment experiences during childhood influence personality and style relationships in adulthood concerning adaptation to environments and people. The experience of attachment is a significant part of an individual's life and constitutes the psychosocial background on the base of which develops personality. Internal working models are not passive filters, but contribute to the continuous and active re-creation of individual patterns of development. In other words, the attachment strategies that children develop in the early stages of life consolidate and give structure over time to the organization of personal experiences and emotional and cognitive systems as adaptive behaviors. Conversely,

the experience of insecure attachment is a risk factor for the construction of a solid ground of personality, as unmet basic needs are relegated to the background.

According to Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991), interactions between children and caregivers shape behavioral patterns that are reflected in later relationships. A clear example of development of personality, as a result of these bonds, can be seen in securely attached infants. As a result of sensitivity and responsiveness on the part of the caregiver, an infant may develop a 'secure' attachment style (Main et al., 1985; Rothbard and Shaver, 1994). Infants who develop 'secure' personality styles feel confident in their relations with others. They learn how to take turns, how to lead and follow, and how to express and receive. Studies on the topic of the relation between attachment and personality focus their topics on aspects of emotion regulations and social behavior that draw from the qualities of observed behavior assumed to belong to differing attachment patterns. Adults with a secure attachment style tend to evaluate their relationships and their attachment experiences consistently, both when they give a positive or a negative assessment to others. They consider these to be important experiences for the formation of their own personality (Pace and Zappulla, 2011; Pace et al., 2016). Shaver and Brennan (1992) have underlined that a personality quality relevant to attachment styles is extraversion. Individuals with secure attachments not only feel comfortable around others, but are actively drawn to them. Conversely, those with avoidant attachments should be intrinsically less likely to be drawn to involvement with others. Children who experience a rejecting primary caregiver (i.e., mother) who does not respond with openness, energy, and warmth to requests for help and comfort develop a defined pattern of attachment as adults and are 'anxious-ambivalent'. These people do not develop a personality that rests confidently on a secure base and do not have emotional security. This follows a mental

model of the self as a person unworthy of being loved who has to rely on himself or herself and a mental model of the primary caregiver as a bad person who does not expect anything good. This is an unconscious process that affects the development of personality. Finally, disorganized attachment leads to the development of aggressive behavior in children and conduct disorders, factors that could then contribute to the development of anti-social personality. Moreover, disorganized attachment style, as well as any other style of attachment, can have an intergenerational transmission. Parents who grew up in violent and abusive families send their fears and their unresolved conflicts to children through abuse or emotional deprivation. In this way, children live in a real paradox: on the one hand, the proximity to the parent increases the child's fears, and on the other, it soothes fears (Lyons-Ruth, 1996; Schimmenti et al., 2014). Longitudinal data suggest that early attachment relationships may affect personality traits later in adulthood (Hagekull and Bohlin, 2003). Some research has stressed that heritability estimates for the individual personality traits related to negative affect and impulsivity range from 40 to 50%, and it has been suggested that a considerable part of the residual variance in personality traits could be explained by attachment patterns (Fransson et al., 2013; Jang et al., 1998). Several studies have related adult attachment style to different personality traits, such as interpersonal behaviors, social competencies, emotional functioning (Fraley and Shaver, 1999), and social self-efficacy (Wright and Perrone, 2010). Studies investigating the relationship between adult attachment style and the five-factor model (FFM; Digman, 1990) personality traits support positive correlations between secure attachment, extraversion, and agreeableness, and there is a negative association of this attachment style with neuroticism (Bäckström and Holmes, 2001; Picardi et al., 2005). Similarly, research on the relationships between attachment and FFM personality traits during childhood has

underlined that attachment is a significant predictor of personality traits, particularly extraversion, openness, and neuroticism (Hagekull and Bohlin, 2003). Attachment experiences during childhood influence the personality styles and relationships in adulthood concerning the adaptation to the environment and to people. The IWM filters the incoming information, processes the outgoing information, and triggers processes of selective attention, selective perception, and selective memory, all of which occur unconsciously for the individual. This happens due to a need for consistency by the individual, who selects the information consistent with his or her expectations. Furthermore, this is a system to prevent and defensively exclude information that could reactivate the attachment system.

THE IMPACT OF ATTACHMENT STYLES ON PERSONALITY TRAITS

Studies that have analyzed the direct relationship between attachment styles and personality traits have shown interesting results. These results are often consistent with each other and often relate internal working models to both regulatory personality traits and personality disorders, a topic that will be discussed in more detail in the next paragraph (Weinfield et al., 2008). Besides positive caregiver behaviors, a constructive view of self and others makes adaptive all the aspects of social skills, first of all cooperation and reciprocity, which are core constituents of agreeableness (Fransson et al., 2013).

Results derived from studies on the relation between attachment and personality traits indicate that avoidant attachment is inversely related to extraversion, whereas secure attachment was related positively to extraversion and agreeableness, but also significantly negatively correlated to neuroticism (Shiota et al., 2006). Individuals with

a high level of neuroticism are typically reliant in nature, often having relationships that are important, and they depend on people, especially on partners. Need for approval and a sensation of being embarrassed and insecure when talking with others (Feeney et al., 1994) are significantly negatively correlated to extraversion. Extraversion is characterized by assertiveness, dominance, lack of reflection, impulsivity, risk-taking behavior, and other similar behaviors. Preoccupation, worry over relationships, and feelings of disappointment are significantly positively correlated to neuroticism (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2012). Nofhle and Shaver (2006) found similar results, such that avoidant attachment – which is found in people who are comfortable without close emotional relationships and who often deny needing close relationships – was significantly negatively related to extraversion. In contrast, attachment anxiety is significantly negatively correlated with extraversion and significantly positively correlated with neuroticism (Nakash-Eisikovits et al., 2002). People belonging to the anxious attachment style agree that they want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but often find that others are reluctant to get as close as they would like. Individuals with this style of attachment look for elevated amounts of closeness, endorsement, and responsiveness from their accomplices. In this sense, it might explain the negative relationship with extraversion. They tend to focus on only one relationship, being greatly clingy in it and not blending with other individuals. They can value closeness to the point that they turn out to be excessively reliant on their caregivers (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). Nakash-Eisikovits et al. (2002) found that secure attachment was negatively correlated with personality pathology. Confidence is a characteristic of a secure attachment style that signifies feelings of worthiness, confidence, and ease in getting close to a person (Hazan and Shaver, 1987); hence, it is negatively correlated with psychoticism and

neuroticism, which predispose individuals to pathology. According to Bowlby (1973), the child has confidence in the availability of his or her attachment figure, so he or she feels free to explore the world. The child feels a lack of closeness with the primary caregiver when they are apart, protesting vigorously, and when the primary caregiver returns, he or she calms down and seeks closeness. This type of attachment is due to a tangible form of the child's signals, as the caregiver is helpful and ready to give support and comfort when the child requires it.

Experiences regarding first relationships with attachment figures serve as the foundation for the achievement of potential skills, such as emotion regulation and exploratory behaviors (e.g., Sroufe et al., 2005; Weinfield et al., 2008), strictly linked to personality development. Hence, sensitivity and understanding on the part of caregivers will lead to a secure attachment and introjection of positive working models of self and others (Bretherton, 1985). When the communication efforts of a small child have success in stimulating care and comfort by adults, they begin the development of good social effectiveness (Schneider et al., 2001; Tronick, 2005): a positive view of self and others who facilitates aspects of social skills, such as cooperation and reciprocity, which are core constituents of agreeableness (Bohlin et al., 2000). Moreover, when an individual feels secure (or *sine cura*, without any concern), he or she is also able to explore and to be autonomous: a social correspondent of this feeling is a high openness to experience. If the child feels safe and reassured by the primary caregiver, he or she activates exploration patterns of behaviors, but if the primary caregiver transmits warning signs or is absent, then the child ceases to explore. A balanced and competent primary caregiver is then able to gradually encourage exploration and, consequently, the autonomy of the child, without exposing him or her to dangers or, in any case, with an acceptable safety margin. On the contrary,

an absent or apprehensive primary caregiver does not favor the development of a motivational and behavioral exploration system and the consequent construction of autonomy of the child. Children who have experienced a secure attachment will be able to implement a physical separation from the caregiver without problems, for example, at the time of schooling, and progressively develop a balanced personality and a flexible attitude toward themselves and toward external reality. In this case, the primary caregiver would accept the requests for proximity and would encourage exploration, according to the following epistemological criteria: I trust him/he trusts me – I am worth/he is worth. In contrast, when a child was characterized by anxious-resistant attachment, he or she would show problems at the time of schooling, showing a phobic attitude characterized by difficulty in exploring and socializing. Also, even if conscientiousness in part might be a higher-order cognitive ability, secure attachment has been associated with a higher level of postponement of fulfillment, decision-making ability, and plasticity of thought (Jacobsen et al., 1997; Main, 2000; Passanisi and Pace, 2017). Attachment patterns are considered to be associated with regulation strategies; these strategies fulfill the function of simultaneously assessing the environment, the state of the organism, the availability of attachment figures, and the eventual success of the attachment behavior in maintaining a sense of internal security. From birth, building an affective regulation system between primary caregiver and child allows a continuous oscillation between successful and erroneous communications (Hagekull and Bohlin, 2003; Roisman et al., 2007). From the beginning, primary caregivers play a transformative function in the emotions of a child, especially negative ones. Failure in transformative and regulative processes might lead to prolonged use of forms of self-regulation that may negatively affect the child's social skills

(Tronick, 2005), which represents one of the most frequent characteristics of a personality characterized by neuroticism.

FAMILY AND PERSONALITY DISORDERS

The American Psychiatric Association (2013) defines a personality disorder as a pattern of internal experiences and behaviors that diverge considerably from the expectations of an individual's culture. These patterns produce important emotional pain and/or life impairment. Individuals who suffer from personality disorders may express a broad variety of emotions and behaviors that can be considered damaging for adaptive relationships. The transition from personality traits to personality disorders does not occur often with traumatic modes; in other words, such transitions rarely happen instantaneously, but rather happen slowly over a series of exposures and reactions. Thus, individuals can slightly assume maladaptive patterns and models of thinking, behaviors, or attitudes, thus passing from a personality style to a personality disorder. Among potential causes of personality disorders are genetic factors, a family history of disorders and upbringing, and failures in family relationships. Dysfunctional family interactions during early childhood and adolescence can develop into personality disorders during adulthood (e.g., Stepp et al., 2011; Verhoeven et al., 2010).

An important part of the psychological literature involves studies linking personality disorders to abuse propagated by family members during childhood (i.e., physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; witnessing violence) as well as to genetic influences relating to the temperamental characteristics of affected individuals. A great deal of research has studied the relationship between family relationships and the development of personality disorders. Data have shown that relatives of individuals suffering from

personality disorders have had, in turn, family experiences characterized by uncaring, conflict, invalidation and criticism, less nurturing, emotional withholding, hostility, or, conversely, over-protection (e.g., Wilson and Durbin, 2010; Winsper et al., 2012). People who suffer from personality disorders have intense difficulties in processing adaptation and are characterized by particular styles of thought and behavior that remain rigid over time and in different contexts (Riso, 2013). Several studies have suggested possible communication difficulties from parental rigidity in adult roles in relation to their children. For example, Cohen et al., (2005) highlighted that the presence of personality disorders in caregivers leads to critical parenting and risk to the developmental trajectories of children. Other studies have shown that personality disorders are associated with a variety of maladaptive parenting behaviors, particularly harsh punishments, disciplinary incoherence (Ehrensaft et al., 2003), poor supervision, poor sensitivity, and behavior that is rarely affectionate (Eiden et al., 2014; Finger et al., 2010). Research has also shown that certain clusters of personality disorders are more strongly linked to dysfunctional parenting than others (e.g., Walsh and Wu, 2008). Particularly, parents with dramatic, emotional, or erratic disorders, such as personality disorders belonging to Cluster B (antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorder), are more likely have children with maladaptive development in comparison to parents with disorders belonging to other clusters. Walsh and Wu (2008) found, for example, that mothers with a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorders tend to establish problematic relationships with their children, who are six times more at risk of being victims of abuse. Moreover, recently, Wilson and Durbin (2010) showed that mothers with higher levels of Cluster B personality disorders demonstrated lower levels of sensitivity to children, providing good evidence that mothers with this kind

of personality disorder showed disturbances of affective communication with their children, especially communications characterized by frightened and disoriented behavior (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Moreover, they underline difficulties with the perception of identity, also showing incapability in the perceiving of human gradation, categorizing people only through strict modes. Finally, other common symptoms of the disorder are feelings of isolation, difficulty feeling empathy for others, anxiety, worry, depression, and self-destructive and dangerous behaviors, including suicide. Several empirical studies offer insight into borderline personality disorder (BPD) individuals' bonds with their mothers. Mothers who are the subject of these studies showed egocentric and ego-gratifying needs and lower levels of caring (Johnson et al., 2001). Adults with BPD have described their parents as invalidating, emotionally over- or under-involved, and indifferent (Gunderson and Lyoo, 1997). These individuals also describe relationships with caregivers and the ambience in their households as conflictual and inconsistent (Winsper et al., 2012). Several studies have outlined parental psychopathology as antecedent of BPD (e.g., Gunderson and Lyoo, 1997; Stepp et al., 2011). BPD, antisocial personality disorder, substance abuse, depression, and anxiety have been found to be over-represented in parents of children with BPD.

Trull et al. (2003) emphasized not only the relevance of traumatic and adverse life events in the development of BPD, but also the importance of a broader family context in which the traumatic events take place. Winsper et al. (2012) emphasized that traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence of people with BPD often occur in a context of an extensive family dysfunction where parents with significant psychopathology fail to establish a secure and predictable family context by not protecting children against trauma, or by being themselves the perpetrators. Borderline patients can be seen

as people who continually relive early childhood crises in which fear is linked to every separation from the mother, meaning she has disappeared. For this reason, they are therefore unable to tolerate periods of loneliness and are constantly afraid of being abandoned by others. Gunderson and Hoffman (2016) emphasize how patients with BPD usually consider their relationship with their detached mother as oppositional and avoidant. Moreover, in borderline families, the lack of fatherly presence is an even stronger determinant than the relationship with the mother. Results show that a unique dysfunctional family background was associated with dependent personality disorder. The distinguishing features of this family environment were low expressiveness and high control in the families of the dependent personality group (Head et al., 1991).

CONCLUSION

In the present chapter, we sought to examine the studies and the theoretical models in which the psychology of family relationships has been related to the development of personality. In particular, we highlighted the role of parental personality, the birth order of children, and the link between emotion regulation, attachment bonds, and the development of certain personality traits, and we placed a final focus on the role of the family in personality disorders.

In conclusion, personality development is a critical issue that may be considered the result of both biological and social factors as inseparable components of human development. The evolution of personality is based on the child-parent relationship, relationships with peers and educators, and the capacity to assess the self in an equilibrated way. We have seen that differences in personality traits related to birth order only make sense within the family context as a result of parents' differential behaviors.

Moreover, we focused on studies that have explored the relationship between personality and emotion regulation. According to Eisenberg et al. (2010), both temperament and personality are fundamental for the development of emotion regulation processes. Further, family bonds play a crucial role in shaping emotional systems as well as in giving the child a self-regulation system through the feedback exchanged with the primary caregiver. According to massive research, secure attachment is positively associated with the development of functional personality traits and negatively related to dysfunctional personality traits (i.e., neuroticism).

Finally, this chapter focused on the potential causes of personality disorders as genetic factors, family history of disorders and upbringing, and failure in family relationships. Research showed that dysfunctional family interactions during early childhood and adolescence can develop into personality disorders during adulthood.

Considering all these aspects, we see that the solidity of an individual's personality is very important and that family is largely responsible for 'creating' a healthy individual, as the child inherits his/her temperamental traits from the parents and the development of his/her personality is affected by the experience he/she lives in the environment. Unfortunately, the importance of family in development has often been overlooked, despite research demonstrating that young people are likely to have positive outcomes if their lives are characterized by the presence of caring and continuous relationships with healthy significant others. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the family, both as context and inheritance, as it is responsible for the development of functional personality traits.

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