DEVELOPMENT OF DEPENDENCY IN FEMALE ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

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Developmental changes in objects and modes of dependent behavior were examined in 766 female adolescents and young adults. A questionnaire consisting of 24 statements each describing a desire for concrete dependent behavior and a 16-item Dependency SCT were presented. The findings indicate that adolescents and young adults have a strong dependency motive and that this remains constant. Changes of dependency objects with an increase in age were clearly observed. Adolescents and young adults continued to have strong emotional ties with their mother. The closest friend of the same sex, less important for junior-high school girls, became the most important object in high schoolers, but among college students it was not so important again and the importance of love object increased as Ss grew.

This study aimed at describing features of the development of dependency in female adolescents and young adults.

Though the term "dependency" has been used to describe an aspect of personality, it has hardly been studied in adolescence. Textbooks of adolescent psychology say that an adolescent is motivated toward dependency, but this motive has not been studied directly. This comes from the misunderstanding that since childish over-dependent behavior disappears as children grow older, the dependency motive itself is expected to vanish as well.

But, even adults and adolescents who have healthy personalities seem to have the dependency motive as much as infants and young children. The dependency motive, i.e., the motive to live with others, to exchange warm attention and help, or to seek support of one's psychic life, is one of the most important elements of pro-social

motivation. When a person who is to be helped has the dependency motive and another person who can help him has altruistic tendency, these persons will seek to interact smoothly. Human beings, who not only are cared for by parents but also must help one another in order to live, will have a life-long motive for dependency. Ainsworth's opinion is quite consistent with this. She says, "Attachment does not necessarily imply the immaturity and helplessness. To describe an adult as attached to one or a few other persons implies a normal state of affairs; to characterize him as incapable of attachment connotes pathology (Ainsworth, 1972, p. 101)."

The dependency motive of an infant over six months of age will not be satisfied by just any person. He depends only upon some persons including a specific attachment object. Usually mothers are the most effective dependency objects and other familiar persons will be effective when mothers are absent. As children grow older, the number of dependency objects increases and functional differentiation among them becomes clearer. Among the dependency objects, some will become central and others peripheral. Modes of dependency behavior will vary according

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to the object.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the development of dependency from the age of 12–13 years (junior high school students) to 21–22 years (college students). We hypothesize that (1) in younger subjects, mothers will be more important than any other objects of dependency, but as they grow older, friends, especially friends of the opposite sex (love objects) replace mothers as the most important, and (2) that despite these changes in dependency objects, the strength of the dependency motive will not become weaker, but will remain constant even in this period of development, since human beings always depend upon some objects.

METHOD

Questionnaire and Sentence Completion Test²

In this study dependency is described in terms of (1) objects toward whom dependent behavior is directed, (2) modes of dependent behavior, and (3) strength of motive producing dependent behavior toward each object. A Dependency Questionnaire and a Dependency Sentence Completion Test (SCT), were constructed as follows:

Dependency Questionnaire. The Dependency Questionnaire consisted of 24 statements each describing a desire for a concrete form of dependent behavior. These 24 statements were chosen by first collecting more than 120 statements from previous studies mostly concerning dependency behavior in young children (Eguchi, 1966). Thirty-one statements representing each cluster of similar ones were then chosen. Considering our definition of dependency, 12 statements were newly added. As our Ss were adolescents, the wording of those 43 statements was modified. The data of 72 female college students (sophomores) were subjected to G-P analysis 36 statements were selected (Eguchi, 1964). Omitting 12 statements concerning purely instrumental dependency, we arrived at a final set of 24 statements.

Those statements can be classified into 4 modes as follows.

mode 1: Seeking proximity and attention (6 items)

For example, "If possible, I want to be with A all the time.", "I want A to be concerned about me."

mode 2: Seeking help (5 items)

For example, "I want A to take my side in anything that should occur.", "When I receive bad news, I want to be with A."

mode 3: Seeking praise and approval (7 items)

For example, "When I cannot decide about something, I want to ask A", "I feel reassured when A agrees with me."

mode 4: Seeking psychic support (6 items)

For example, "When I have a sad or bitter experience, I think of A.", "A makes me feel life is worth living."

Most of the previous researchers used modes 1 to 3 (Eguchi, 1966). Mode 4 is newly derived from our conception of dependency.

To test the objectivity of mode sorting, three psychologists, specializing in personality studies, classified the statements independently of this researcher. Agreement among all four was high; they all classified 9 items into one and same mode, three judges agreed upon 13 items and two on 2 items. (In the last cases the other two sorted the items into different modes.)

Six possible objects of dependency were chosen based on the previous findings (Eguchi, 1964): mother, father, most intimate sibling, closest friend, love object or most intimate friend of the opposite sex and most respected person. Ss made separate ratings for each of them on a 5-point scale ranging from "Yes, I certainly have [had such feelings]" (4 points) through "Yes, if I have to choose" (3 points) to "No, certainly not" (0). Each S was asked to imagine those objects not existing in his real life. The total score for each object over all 24 items is called the dependency score. Separate scores are calculated for each mode.

² The questionnaire is available from the author.

The highest dependency score of the 6 objects was considered the measure of strength of dependency motive.

Though it is most logical to consider as foci of dependency the n objects scoring highest in dependency, among which there are no significant differences, we simplified the procedure by regarding as significant any score difference of 10 or greater. That is, when the difference between the highest object and the second highest was more than 10, the highest one was designated as the focus and this pattern called a one-focus or single-focus type. When the difference between the two top objects was less than 10 and the difference between the highest and the third highest was 10 or more, the second highest was also accepted as a focus (two-focus type). Three, four, and five-focus types were determined in the same way. They were grouped as multi-focus types. When the differences among all the 6 objects (in some cases the total number of subjects being 5 or 4) were less than 10, the focus was called undifferentiated (UF type).

Dependency SCT. Dependency SCT is less objective than the dependency questionnaire but allows for a wider possibility of responses. It consists of (a) 5 items concerning objects supporting S (e.g., "the one that gives me moral support and a standard of judgment is —", "the one that makes me feel life is worth living is —", and (b) 11 items concerning the role and value of each possible object in her psychic life (e.g., "For me, mother is —", "For me, father is —", "For me, my closest friend is —").

S s' responses were analyzed as follows. In (a), objects written down by S s were classified into three categories, i.e., (1) human, (2) non-human or (3) self. The category "human" had seven subcategories; mother, father, family, sibling, love object, close friend, or others.

Descriptions of objects in (b) were classified into four categories, (1) positive-emotional (objects were emotionally accepted), e.g., "Mother makes my life worth living and I have a comforting feeling when I imagine my mother." (2) neutral (objects were defined by their instrumental value), e.g., "I would

like to have only economic benefit from my father." (3) negative (objects were rejected), e.g., "I am dissatisfied with my mother and I want to choose a different way of living from hers." (4) sympathetic (objects were not evaluated positively, but were accepted with understanding and/or sympathy), e.g., "I can not depend on my father, though he loves me more than anyone else does."

Whether or not the focus (or foci) elicited by the Dependency Questionnaire was the true focus was examined by responses in Dependency SCT. It was expected that they would often appear in the description of the source of psychic support (a), and would be described positively (b). However, even when foci could not be recognized as such by the responses to the Dependency SCT, they were treated as foci in the statistical tables below.

Subjects and administration

These tests were administered class by class to 168 college, 349 highschool and 249 junior high school students, all female, from October, 1964 to June, 1966. They took about 50 minutes to complete.

FINDINGS

The distribution of S s who have single-focus (mother, love object, etc.), two, three and four or more foci is shown in Table 1. From the table, we can see that importance of objects change as S s grew.

(i) Adolescents continued to have strong emotional ties with mother. There were many mother type S s even in the high school and college groups. In the junior high school group, there were more such S s. Among combinations of foci in the two-focus type, the Mother-another type appeared most often (45% in junior high school, 48% in high school, and 50% in college).

(ii) On the contrary, emotional ties with fathers were weak. It was very rare that father singly became a focus in this phase of development. Only in the first year of junior high school did fathers often

TABLE 1
Number and type of dependency structure

	College group	High school group	Junior-high school group
One focus type	57	83	57
Mother type	15	23	27
Love object type	28	19	13
Closest friend type	4	25	8
Respected person type	8	10	6
Father type	1	3	0
Sibling type	1	3	3
Multi-focus type	106	255	180
Two-focus type	40	141	77
Three-focus type	40	80	63
Four or more foci type	26	64	40
Undifferentiated-focus type			
UF type	5	11	12
Total	168	349	249

appear as a double-focus with mothers. As *Ss* grew older, fathers became less important as dependency objects. Fifteen cases in 25 of the two-focus type *Ss* were of mother-father type among the 7th graders of junior high school, but among the 9th grade girls, the proportion fell to only six cases out of 22. In high school girls, the psychic distance between fathers and girls became even wider. (In a few cases where fathers aroused dependency, mode 3—seeking praise—was dominant.) Generally speaking, female adolescents and young adults had weak affectional ties with their fathers.

(iii) The closest friend of the same sex was the most important object of dependency in high school girls. Only during this period did best friends often become a focus. They tended to be given higher score than mothers. In junior high school, the closest friends were not so important, and among college *Ss*, they were not important enough to be selected as foci. In the college group, love objects seemed to play roles that had been played by closest friends during high school.

(iv) The importance of a love object increased in the course of development. There were love object type *Ss* even in the first year of junior high school. There were more such *Ss* in the high school group, and in the college group the love object was the most frequently selected focus. Generally speaking junior high school *Ss* seldom made mention of a love object, but in high school and college groups, those who did not have real ones tended to suppose that they did and answer hypothetically.

2. Means and standard deviations of the highest score were 74.4 and 9.8 in the junior high schoolers, 73.5 and 10.2 in the high schoolers and 75.4 and 9.5 in the college students, respectively. It is clear that the female adolescents had a rather strong conscious dependency motive and that this did not decrease as *Ss* grew older. (Though the college students were a more select group, this would not have given them any stronger than an average dependency motive.)

3. By qualitative case analysis of the data we observed that each *S* had a struc-

ture of dependency objects where functions of the objects included were clearly differentiated.

Among the college students, pure mother-type subjects (those who had mother as the single focus with dependency score of 73 or more) and their love object-type counterparts showed the following characteristics. Those who showed the highest score of 72 or fewer were excluded in this qualitative analysis, because differentiations among objects were expected to be less clear in those subjects.

(1) Pure Mother-types (11 cases)

Mother appeared at least once in SCT-a in all cases. They appeared most often in the sentences "the one that I depend upon", "the one that I use for psychic support when facing a bitter experience" and "the one that I imagine when I have a hard time". By SCT-b, the description of mother was positive-emotional in 9 cases. We can conclude here that mother was emotionally accepted and was the core of the dependency structure.

Let's see how dependency objects were ranked in this type. From the questionnaire, mother was ranked first in all modes, and father, sibling, and love object had higher scores than closest friend or most respected person. The mother-type was called "family-type" in cases where non-family objects, except love object, had lower scores than all immediate family members.

Close relationships with family members in this type were reflected in the results of dependency SCT, especially those about father and love object. Father seemed rather important in this type. In SCT-a, each of 2 cases denoted father in "to think of him when I have a hard time" and "the psychic support when facing a bitter experience". Five cases nominated father and mother (referred to as 'parents') as persons "to depend upon". Different from the core mother, the father was not named alone. Ten out of 11 mother-type Ss did not have "love objects". The one

who did described him just neutrally as "one who really understands me". Let's look at a typical case of this type.

Case 99: She was a freshman and lived with her parents and elder sister. From the pattern of dependency scores, mother was judged as a focus. (The scores for mother, father, sister and closest friend were 79, 64, 58 and 57 respectively.) She cited no love object nor respected person. Mother was given the highest scores in all modes, and defined positive-emotionally in SCT-b, i.e., "Mother is a good adviser and my best psychic support." In SCT-a, mother appeared three times ("The one that gives me support and standard of judgment is . . .", "The one that makes me feel living is worthwhile is . . ." and "The one that I imagine when I have a hard time is . . ."). Those whom she depended upon and used as the psychic support were her parents. Thus, it was confirmed that mother was really the focus of the dependency structure.

Father was defined rather neutrally, i.e., as "some one I can go to for advice." Though father's score in mode 4 was next to mother's with 6 points difference, he was given a higher score in mode 3. This suggests he was more instrumental than mother. The elder sister was defined as "a good consultant", and given a higher scores in mode 4 than in any other mode.

All of this led us to conclude that this S's dependency was of the family-type. The closest friend and only non-family object was described as a good adviser sometimes, and was given high scores in rather childish modes, i.e., modes 1 and 2.

(2) Pure love object-type (26 cases)

Among love-object type students' responses to SCT-a, love object, mother, father and "family" appeared equally often as the support of one's being or existence. Though the love object was not the only object supporting one's being, it was only in this type that the love object appeared in responses to SCT-a. Especially it should be noted that the love ob-

ject was named in 5 cases as "one that makes me feel life is worth living." Human beings seldom appeared in this context in other types. In responses to SCT-b, the love object was always defined as emotionally positive. He was described as "He is everything for me", "He is important next to [my] life itself" or "He fills my heart."

According to the questionnaire data, the love object was given the highest dependency score in almost all modes. In immature modes (1 and 2) family members were given higher score than the respected person and/or the closest friend, but in mode 3, the latter were higher. Among love object-type students, other non-family objects played important roles in the dependency structure, but its core objects were love object and parents.

A typical love-object-type student will be described:

Case 53: She is a junior and lives with parents, an elder brother and an elder sister. Dependency scores ranged from 96 (love object) to 49 (respected person) with mother, father, elder brother, and closest friend in the middle.

Love object, given the highest possible score in all modes, was defined as "He is everything for me", and occupied four functions out of the five in the responses to SCT-b.

Parents seemed to have differentiated roles; mother was described as, "I want to be with her all the time. I need her from morning to night. I respect her best", while father, "He becomes important when I face a big and/or difficult problem." Though both parents had high scores in mode 3, mother's was higher than father's in modes 4 and 2 (second highest in these modes). Mother seemed to be near the core of dependency structure. Father was less important as to psychic support, but was nearer the core than siblings. The elder brother, described as "He was my first love and I trust him best among all males", was given the highest score in

mode 3 than any other modes. He was depended upon by her in a more general way. The closest friend and the respected person were also given high score only in mode 3. This suggests they were less important than other dependency objects. She wrote that without any friends, she would feel lonely, but as she could make friends at any time and in any place, she did not want to have an intimate friend. She also reported that she did not have any emotional ties with any friends at that time.

Generally speaking, Ss had a dependency structure consisting of a core object as focus and many other objects playing supplementary role.

DISCUSSION

It was found that not only infants and young children had the dependency motive, but so did adolescents and young adults. Moreover, the strength of dependency motive did not decrease as Ss approached adulthood.

This finding supports our basic assumption that it is not childish for Ss to have the dependency motive. Further studies will be needed as to how the strength of one's dependency motive is related to psychological health and/or ego-strength, how the relation changes as Ss grow older, and how the dependency motive is related to other more active, prosocial motivation, e.g., the motive to be of use to another or to otherwise please him, etc. For the present, though we can not say anything certain about whether most of the Ss are healthy in personality, we can conclude that it is very natural for adolescents and young adults to have a strong dependency motive.

Our findings make clear that the strong dependency motive is maintained different important dependency objects appear in turn in the course of development. Among the female adolescents, though the dependency motive toward mother is rather consistently strong, it becomes gradually

weaker as Ss grow older. On the other hand, the closest friend becomes the most important dependency object in high-schoolers, and the love object gradually steps into the closest friend's shoes in their college days. That is to say, though the object of the dependency motive changes, the total strength of dependency motive does not decrease.

The results of the above examinations of the structure of dependency objects suggest that because of the multiplicity of dependency objects and their functional differentiation, the adolescent who has the dependency motive can become independent. We human beings are supported by many dependency objects: the focus or foci of dependency which supports us in the most important parts of our self, one or more objects which support us in secondarily important parts of our psychic life, and many objects which support us in less important parts.

Since we depend upon a multiplicity of objects, each with a different function or a set of functions, no single dependency object has an excessively potent influence, and the unforeseen loss of any of them can

be compensated for in the long run. Dependency may exist even when behavior vis-a-vis the object is ostensibly independent.

It is difficult to think that the transition from dependence to independence is caused by the decline of the dependency motive or the development of dependency anxiety counteracting the dependency motive. Rather independence develops in the process of the development of dependency.

The analysis of the dependency structure and just how it develops, will be the next task for us.

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