

Preface

Life courses or individual development can only be adequately understood longitudinally. Cross-sectional studies provide valuable comparisons among individuals at certain points in their lives. But the actual trajectories of individuals' lives are only accessible when the same people are studied at different ages. Longitudinal studies therefore have a long history in developmental research. And yet, because they are always designed and interpreted in the context of prevailing theory, methods, and culture, they are never entirely satisfactory. The coherence and impact of a longitudinal study depend on a productive back-and-forth movement between meaning, provided by a rich theoretical framework, and methods for translating theory into age-appropriate assessment. Ultimately, coherence and meaning also depend on the context provided by other studies, and certainly on future developments regarding the value of close bonds between children and parents.

No area in developmental psychology has a richer legacy of truly long-term longitudinal studies than attachment research in the Bowlby–Ainsworth tradition. The major longitudinal studies of attachment and its role in individual development are masterpieces of methodological problem solving and monuments to developmental analysis. Their key results are well known and widely cited. But each study touches on a wide range of topics, and results are necessarily reported in diverse venues and over the span of many years. Consequently, key results often stand out more clearly than the overall design of the studies. Solutions to difficult problems in age-appropriate assessment, research design, and theoretical work are rarely or only occasionally at center stage. These insights into the art of longitudinal research are as satisfying as specific empirical results, and as important to pass on to the next generation of longitudinal researchers.

In organizing this volume, we have invited the principal investigators from three decades of longitudinal attachment studies to reflect on how their projects originated, on the shape they eventually took, and on how

their perspectives changed as the projects went forward. We also asked them to think about the lessons they learned that can be useful to a new generation of longitudinal researchers.

Attachment from Infancy to Adulthood: The Major Longitudinal Studies presents the first collection of original contributions on the major longitudinal attachment research projects. Each project sheds some light on central developmental questions: What actually develops in attachment development? What role does attachment play in the coherence of individual development from infancy to adulthood? And how do we attach meaning to change?

Robert A. Hinde (Chapter 1) shows how important evolutionary theory in general, and ethological observations in particular, were for John Bowlby when he formulated attachment theory. Inge Bretherton (Chapter 2) deepens our understanding of internal working models and the role this concept has played in attachment theory and research.

In this vein, L. Alan Sroufe, Byron Egeland, Elizabeth Carlson, and W. Andrew Collins give the first overview of their unique study of individual, social, and family development in difficult circumstances and across three generations (Chapter 3). Jay Belsky (Chapter 4) has also investigated attachment development in the family context and beyond. Karin and Klaus E. Grossmann and Heinz Kindler (Chapter 5), as well as Howard and Miriam Steele (Chapter 6), point to the distinctive influence of fathers as compared to mothers. Avi Sagi-Schwartz and Ora Aviezer (Chapter 7) have studied the impact of nonparental care.

Beyond specific relationships, Joan Stevenson-Hinde analyzes the interplay of attachment and temperament (Chapter 8). Judith Crowell and Everett Waters focus on secure-base behavior and attachment representations during the development of marriages (Chapter 9). And Mary Main, Erik Hesse, and Nancy Kaplan (Chapter 10) summarize for the first time the longitudinal project that has contributed so much to their thinking on attachment assessment. In the concluding chapter, Mary Dozier, Melissa Manni, and Oliver Lindhiem reflect on the implications of the work assembled here—great improvements in our understanding of developmental trajectories under a range of circumstances, but also issues that remain unresolved.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mary Ainsworth's reports of her observations in Uganda and her Baltimore Longitudinal Study set the course for several generations of attachment study. Scholars in earlier periods had made extensive observations of mother–infant interactions (see Grossmann, 1995). But John Bowlby's attachment theory, and his and Ainsworth's commitment to ethological-observational methods, were new. As Hinde (Chapter 1) points out, it was part of Bowlby's genius to realize that behavioral biology provided both a theoretical and an empirical frame

for developmental psychology. Infants are equipped with behaviors and expressions of emotions that are—under normal circumstances—intuitively understood and responded to by their caregivers, ensuring the survival of the infants. Bowlby knew about René Spitz's observations about maternal deprivation in orphanages, and he saw with his own eyes the devastating effects of maternal deprivation, depression, and "psychological death" in the infant rhesus monkeys studied by Harry Harlow (Blum, 2002).

Thus Bowlby recognized that an evolutionary ethological perspective must include the environment in which life-history strategies have evolved, and must take into account the "ordinary expectable caregiving environment" in which development occurs. Bowlby had also learned from Konrad Lorenz about the implicit cultural nature of human beings. The question for developmentalists, therefore, is this: What are the limits to adaptability if rearing conditions diverge too much from the "environment of evolutionary adaptedness"?

Bowlby's emphasis on real experience and his lifespan perspective were comfortably integrated with sophisticated ideas about mental representations drawn from cognitive psychology. The wide range of imaginative solutions to research design and age-appropriate assessment studies in this volume drew heavily upon these diverse influences. Here, perhaps more than in any other aspect, we see the critical role of Bowlby's and Ainsworth's theoretical, descriptive, and methodological insights as a "secure base from which to explore close relationships" and an unflinching framework for integrating new and unexpected findings (Waters & Cummings, 2000). These have been central to keeping assessment close to key theoretical constructs.

After more than three decades of attachment study, we are just beginning to realize Bowlby's goals of integrating empirical research on typical and atypical developmental trajectories and applying this research in significant ways to prevention and clinical practice. This is in line with Bowlby's original interest in clinical aspects of attachment development guided by well-posed questions from psychoanalysis. Like Freud, Bowlby considered typical and atypical development to be reflections of the same principles. Understanding attachment and its place in development requires "two stout pillars of evidence—individual development and developmental psychopathology—and a crosspiece of theory" (Bowlby, 1988, p. 2).

The contributors to this volume have integrated many different approaches to the study of attachment and its psychological implications across the lifespan. These pioneering researchers all view attachment development as an open-ended process of discovery from infancy to adulthood. As the reader will see, longitudinal research is a rather uncertain but still intense investment. We like to believe that the lifetime investment of these researchers has been a successful enterprise in helping to establish attachment theory and research as a major branch of developmental psychology.

In July 2003, Klaus and Karin Grossmann invited the contributors to this volume to Regensburg, Germany, to reflect on their careers in longitudinal attachment research. The rest of us (Everett Waters, the contributors, and the discussants) thank them for going beyond the usual “scientific” reports to share their very personal reflections on their own work.

We editors and contributors also thank the colleagues who, along with the editors, have commented on each chapter. These include especially Marinus van IJzendoorn, Peter Zimmermann, Gottfried Spangler, Lieselotte Ahnert, Isabel Soares, and Gabriele Gloger-Tippelt, whose knowledge and research greatly enriched the Regensburg discussions and this volume. The contributions collected here are reflections on attachment study and a foundation on which to continue building.

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