1. Beginnings: Early Conceptions of the Mother-Infant Relationship

1. The Oedipus complex actually consists of both positive oedipal and negative oedipal strivings. The “positive” Oedipus complex is associated with the wish for a sexual union with the parent of the opposite sex and a coterminous wish for the same-sex parent’s demise. However, in consequence of the fact that such wishes are inherently conflict-laden, giving rise to both ambivalence and vulnerability, “negative” oedipal strivings—consisting of the desire for a sexual union with the same-sex parent and feelings of rivalry with the opposite-sex parent—coexist with the positive ones. According to classical theory, the positive Oedipus complex supersedes the negative Oedipus complex, and this is considered a prerequisite for the emergence of a heterosexual orientation and cohesive identity in adulthood.

2. Fonagy and Target note that following the publication of Bowlby’s highly controversial 1960 paper, in which he took the position that mourning was indeed possible for infants and young children, his attachment theory became the target of a number of other criticisms by mainstream psychoanalysts. He was seen as “having renounced drives, the Oedipus complex, unconscious processes, particularly unconscious fantasy, complex internalized motivational and conflict-resolving systems … [for] having discarded the richness of human emotions, be these affects experienced by the ego and involving socialization or sources of pleasure rooted in the baby’s body … [for] ignoring biological vulnerabilities other than those rooted in the caregiver’s behavior and … blaming all pathology on physical separation … [for] ignoring negative attachment related to fear of the mother and trauma
other than physical separation … and for being reductionist[ic] in his emphasis on evolution at the expense of recognition of complex symbolic functioning” (2003, pp. 236–237).

3. The “environment” had not always been relegated to the ancillary status it came to have in Freud's libido theory, however. Interestingly, in his earliest publications, works such as the Studies on Hysteria (1893–1895), Freud had imputed a good deal of importance to “actual” experience in the formation of psychopathology. A prime example is his seduction theory, later abandoned in favor of a more purely psychological explanation, which made an explicit link between actual experiences of sexual abuse or incest and the psychogenesis of hysterical symptoms.

4. In contrast, Bowlby differed pointedly with Freud over what have come to be known as the “metapsychological perspectives.” The metapsychological perspectives, or simply metapsychology, was a collection of six axiomatic principles (topographical, structural, dynamic, economic, genetic, and adaptive) that served as the explanatory basis for Freud’s most important formulations about human behavior and psychopathology. Although untroubled by Freud’s emphasis on the structural (conflict-mediating structures), genetic (past persists into the present), and adaptive (the organism’s commerce with reality) viewpoints, he took exception to Freud’s topographical (layering of consciousness), economic (i.e., existence of psychological energy) and dynamic (existence of psychological forces) hypotheses.

5. While Freud relinquished his “seduction theory” in favor of a more purely psychological explanation for the psychogenesis of various neurotic disorders, he continued to believe that actual “seduction has retained a certain significance for etiology,” observing that in at least two cases with which he was familiar, those of Katharina and Fräulein Rosalia H, the patients had been sexually victimized by their fathers (Gay, 1988).

6. Klein’s fundamental premise was that the play of young children was equivalent to the free associations of adult clients; so long as the meaning of their play was interpreted to them, children, like adults, were suitable subjects for psychoanalytic treatment. Anna Freud’s position, however, was that small children could not be analyzed, since they had an inherently weak and rudimentary ego that would be incapable of managing deep interpretations of instinctual conflict (Mitchell & Black, 1995).


8. These ideas were especially troubling to Bowlby, who was critical of Klein’s notion that the significance of infantile anxiety could be fully understood only within the context of infantile aggression and, moreover, that aggression constituted the sole source of anxiety (Bowlby, 1973). Further distancing himself from Klein and her theoretical framework, Bowlby noted that Klein’s followers “have been slow to recognize that, significant though depressive and persecutory anxieties may sometimes be, the origin of separation anxiety cannot be understood in such terms, and, more important, that disturbances of the mother-child relationship that arise during the second and many subsequent years can have a far-reaching potential for pathological development” (Bowlby, 1973, p. 387).
9. In the early 1950s, Winnicott had written of the “well-known observation that the earliest anxiety is related to being insecurely held” and, further, that “it is normal for the infant to feel anxiety if there is a failure of infant care technique” (Winnicott, 1952).

10. Mahler’s separation-individuation theory is discussed in far greater detail in chapter 3.

11. Self psychological ideas about development will also be explored more systematically in chapter 3.

12. Evidently, Bowlby found this Winnicottian concept of the true/false self to be a serviceable one, making several references to it in his multivolume work on attachment, separation, and loss.

13. Although acknowledging that Winnicott’s conception of relationship always seemed “far less dominated by food and orality than” that of Klein (Bowlby, 1969, p. 372), Bowlby was nonetheless critical of the Winnicottian notion of the transitional object. He wrote that a “much more parsimonious way of looking at the role of these inanimate objects is to regard them simply as objects towards which certain components of attachment behavior come to be directed or redirected because the ‘natural’ object [defined as “an object towards which the behavior is directed in an animal’s environment of evolutionary adaptiveness”] is unavailable” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 312).

14. Freud was actually the first to employ this term, though his use differs somewhat from that of Fairbairn. Freud conceived of primary identification as a primitive form of internalization characterized by its directness, immediacy, and the fact that it was unrelated to object loss (Moore & Fine, 1990).

15. Bowlby had also noted that “a principal point of difference” between his work and Fairbairn’s resided in the latter’s tendency “to identify attachment with feeding and orality and so to attribute a proportionately greater significance to a child’s first year or two” than he (Bowlby) did (1973, p. 256).

16. Balint based this claim on research reported in 1937 by Peto. Although relatively unsophisticated by contemporary standards, Peto’s observations are at striking variance with those of Mahler and, at the same time, appear to adumbrate the well-documented research of psychoanalytic researchers, such as Dan Stern, who have challenged the evidence upon which Mahler’s assumptions about the objectlessness of early infancy rests.

17. Nevertheless, Bowlby did acknowledge the importance of both Suttie’s and Hermann’s conception that frustrated attachment might explain the relationship of psychopathology to the “central role of separation anxiety” (1973, p. 397).

2. Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment

1. In a more general way, ego psychology became the predominant paradigm in the American psychoanalytic community and remained so for the next thirty years.
3. Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Attachment

1. The close parallel between Sullivan's use of this term and the social work paradigm of person-in-environment seems unmistakable here, although Sullivan has not often been cited by social work historians as having exerted significant influence on the evolution of social work theory.

2. This “need,” however, is put forward far more tentatively than many of Sullivan's other ideas about early development, a fact that did not escape the notice of John Bowlby (1969, pp. 374–375).

3. Researchers in the field of infant development have challenged such ideas, as the upcoming discussion of Margaret Mahler's separation-individuation theory will highlight.

4. This was particularly true with respect to the timing and characteristics of the phases (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).


6. Such libidinal object constancy is, however, not the equivalent of the Piagetian object permanence; the latter represents a milestone in cognitive development held to occur at eighteen to twenty months and concerned primarily with the child's relationships to the world of inanimate objects.

7. Bowlby had earlier (1973) taken exception to Mahler's (1968) assertion that separation anxiety was possible only after completion of separation-individuation and the attainment of object constancy. However, Mahler's use of this term gradually expanded to include infants in not only the rapprochement but also the practicing subphase (1978), which would appear to address Bowlby's objections.

8. Dr. Martin Loeb (deceased), a cultural anthropologist and social worker, shared an office with Erikson in the 1950s. He once recalled that one of Erikson’s greatest pleasures was simply to watch the children at play in the schoolyard across the street from their office building, a pursuit in which he spent countless hours (personal communication to J. Brandell).

9. Erikson’s detailed description and comparative analysis of child-rearing practices of the North American Sioux and Yurok tribes in Childhood and Society is one such example.

10. The first portion of this section was adapted in part from Brandell & Perlman (1997) and Brandell (2002).

11. The reader is referred to Fonagy & Target (2003) for additional discussion of the scientific status of self psychology.

4. Research on Attachment

1. These studies were quoted in Van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999.

5. Children

1. All clinical examples used in this chapter are derived from the first author's clinical practice.

2. Somewhat analogously, protective or mitigative factors (e.g., temperament, intelligence, quality of the child's social relationships, superior schools, safe neighborhoods) that may reduce the risk of childhood psychopathology have also been identified (Greenberg, 1999; Luthar & Zigler, 1992). Perhaps not surprisingly, secure attachment appears to confer at least some protection from potentially pathogenic influences and maladaptive outcomes (Greenberg, 1999).

3. A simple but time-honored technique of child psychotherapy originally introduced by D. W. Winnicott (1971), which calls for the clinician and child to take turns drawing "squiggly" lines and completing each other's squiggle drawings. The squiggle is made with one's eyes closed, although the other subject always completes the drawing with his or her eyes open. Winnicott characteristically used the squiggle content as a springboard for analytic investigation, although I have found it has considerable value as a "lead-in" to the story-making process with children such as Derek.


5. In an interesting parallel that may partially explain the strength of Nathan's adoptive mother's commitment to these three children, I later learned that she had been abandoned by her own mother in mid-latency. Although she had been deeply hurt at the time by her mother's abandonment of the family, her description of their early relationship suggested a relatively stable and secure attachment. She was subsequently raised by her father and stepmother, and was only many years later successful in her determined efforts to locate her mother and reestablish a relationship with her.

6. This symptom constellation appears often in post-traumatic conditions, according to H. Krystal (1993). J. McDougall (1984, 1985, 1989), expressing a similar viewpoint, prefers the term disaffectation to alexithymia to underscore her application of dynamic rather than neurobiological principles to explain the mechanism whereby a sort of psychological foreclosure of potential affects and affect representations occurs. The result is that “certain people are psychologically separated from their emotions and may indeed have 'lost' the capacity to be in touch with their psychic realities” (McDougall, 1989, p. 103).

6. Adolescents

1. The first two clinical illustrations, the cases of Ray and Karla, were contributed by the second author; the third vignette, Ben, was written by the first author.

2. Adapted from a case presentation originally presented by the first author at a mini-conference, “Challenging Moments in Clinical Practice,” sponsored by the

7. Adults