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## Effects of personality, rearing styles and social values on adolescents' socialisation process

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### Abstract

This study was designed to investigate the relationships of the socialisation process with the Big-Five personality traits, empathy, parent-rearing styles and social values. The main aim was to detect which variables predict better socialisation outcomes. A socialisation battery for adolescents (BAS-3), the Big-Five Questionnaire (BFQ), Bryant's Index of Empathy (IECA), the Egna Minnen av Barndoms Uppfostran-My memories of upbringing (EMBU) and a Social Values Inventory (SVI) were applied to 832 Spanish adolescents. Also, 134 parent couples agreed to fill out the version of the socialisation battery for adolescents' parents (BAS-2). Results show that personality dispositions, parent-rearing styles and social values were related to socialisation reported by children. Patterns of relationships showed that different variables account for different socialisation outcomes. However, when these variables were related to the socialisation outcomes reported by parents, relationships were considerably lower. The implications of the present study are discussed.

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*Keywords:* Socialisation; Big-Five; Parent-rearing styles; EMBU; Empathy; Social values

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## 1. Introduction

The term socialisation refers both to a social end product and to the changes that occur by way of social interactions. In this way, socialisation can be seen as a set of processes for functioning within the different types of social life situations. These processes have to do with the maintenance of proximity under conditions of potential threat in social situations, establishing one's place in power-ranked hierarchies, and establishing ways of negotiating shared cost and benefits in work and play (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998). Following this view, the construct of socialisation would be focused on social behaviour of children and adolescents, especially on the inter-peer social relationships (Harris, 1995).

Thanks to the influence of advances in behaviour genetics, there is an increasing recognition of the role of individual differences in a wide variety of socialisation processes (Rowe, 1994). It is usually considered that well-socialized subjects are defined by traits of conformity, sociability, empathy, and emotional warmth, whereas poorly socialized subjects present traits of tough-mindedness, aloofness, a lack of sociability, emotional coldness, as well as an inability to respond to social cues with appropriate behaviour and emotion.

Eysenck (1997) has a well-researched biosocial theory of personality that includes the role of temperament in the development of social adaptation. Eysenck's theory has received some support, especially the link between Psychoticism and inadequate socialisation (Kemp & Center, 2000) or maladaptive behaviours and lack of responsibility (Kardum & Hudek-Knezevic, 1996). Psychoticism is considered a trait of disinhibition, lack of empathy, cruelty and resistance to societal rules and conventions of behaviour (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976). In school contexts, better socialized students tend to score lower on Psychoticism (Aluja, Ballesté, & Torrubia, 1999; Aluja & Torrubia, 1998).

Nowadays, the Five Factor model is considered as the dominant paradigm in personality research (Matthews & Deary, 1998). Following this model, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness are the basic dimensions of personality. Agreeableness is strongly implicated in the prediction of pro-social and aggressive behaviours. High agreeableness is associated with pro-social behaviour whereas low agreeableness is linked to aggressive behaviour (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). Also, high scores on Conscientiousness inhibit aggressive behaviours in adolescent populations (John, Caspi, Robins, Moffitt, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1994) and are related to higher academic achievement (Mervielde, Buyst, & De Fruyt, 1995). Note that both Agreeableness and Conscientiousness correlate negatively with Eysenck's dimension of Psychoticism (Aluja, García, & García, 2004).

In relation to personality dispositions, empathy could also play an important role in the socialisation process, especially in emotional actions towards others. Empathy can be understood as the vicarious affective responses with an emphasis on the congruent answer to the emotional state of others (Eisenberg, 2000). Empathy is considered an effective control of aggression in childhood and adolescence (Bandura, 1999; Tremblay, Pihl, Vitaro, & Dobkin, 1994), as well as an important predictor of pro-social behaviour, and the development of moral reasoning during childhood (Eisenberg, Miller, Shell, McNalley, & Shea, 1991).

Regarding parents' rearing styles, Smith, Pope, Sanders, Allred, and O'Keeffe (1988) found relationships between parents' beliefs and the process of socialisation in a student sample. Hostile subjects described their families as conflictive and less united. In this sense, the family environ-

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