

Human Development
Chapter 10 – Middle Childhood: Personality & Sociocultural Development

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Children are expanding their emotional and social attachments beyond the family to include peers, teachers, and others in the community.

They must find ways of coping with stress and conflicts in their own families.

Learning about conflicts prepares children to make moral judgments.

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Personality Development in an Expanding Social World

Theoretical perspective (*psychodynamic, cognitive-development, social-learning*) influences views of how personalities develop/change during middle childhood.

Three Perspectives on Middle Childhood

Freud – *psychodynamic* – calls this period (6 – 12) *latency*.

- Family jealousies, turmoil, and sexual impulses become submerged.
- Focus turns to peer relationships, creativity, and cultural norms.

Erikson – *psycho-social* – said the focus in this period is the crisis between *industry* and *inferiority*.

Here, children are better at learning, problem solving, and achievement.

With success, they incorporate a sense of industry into their self-image.

Children who do not progress develop a sense of inferiority.

Piaget/Kohlberg – *cognitive-development* – wrote about concepts of *self* and *morality*, which is increasingly applied to personality and social development.

Social-learning theory – explains how specific behaviors are learned via the family and peer groups.

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Self-Concept

Self-concept involves who you are and what you can do. It interweaves personality and social behavior, and becomes more realistic during this period.

They begin to attribute specific *traits* – stable personality characteristics – to themselves and to others.

They try to behave consistently and expect others to do so as well.

Self-concept provides a filter through which they evaluate their own behavior and that of others. – Sarah Harter

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem adds an evaluative component to self-concept. It is the scale used to determine how much you like yourself.

It is significantly correlated to academic performance if the child's culture values academics.

Other values can affect self-esteem such as sports, music, family, peers, etc.

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Performance affects self-esteem which affects performance which . . . and so on.

Praise can boost self-esteem but only if it is legitimate and used in moderation.

Social Knowledge and Reasoning

Direct Socialization is one way children can learn how to deal with others. (behavioral approach – involving rewards and punishments) Observation and imitation is another way (Social learning theory).

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Development of Social Cognition

Social-cognitive theorists believe that all knowledge (scientific, social, or personal) exists as an organized system or structure, not as individual bits and pieces.

Social inference – guesses and assumptions about what another person is feeling, thinking, or intending.

- 6 yr. can infer when another person's thoughts differ from theirs.
- 8 yr. understand that people can think about each others thoughts.
- 10 yr. can infer what others are thinking and infer that others are inferring their thoughts.

Social responsibility – obligations of friendship (fairness, loyalty) respect for authority, legality, and justice.

Social regulations – customs and conventions are applied rigidly when first learned and become more flexible and thoughtful.

Piaget on Moral Reasoning and Judgement

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Social-learning theorists – morality is a result of conditioning and observational learning.

Psychodynamic theorists – morality develops as a defense against anxiety, guilt, and shame.

Cognitive-developmental theorists – morality develops in progressive, age-related stages. (as does intellectual development)

Moral sense arises from interactions between developing cognitive structures and expanding social experiences. – Piaget

At the *moral realism* stage, all rules must be obeyed as if written in stone.

For children in early middle childhood, moral judgments are made solely based on consequences and they are unable to judge intentions.

Children in late middle childhood reach the stage of *moral relativism* where it is recognized that rules are artificial constructs that can be changed as the need arises and that there is no absolute right and wrong.

At this stage they realize that morality depends on intentions not consequences.

Kohlberg's Six-Stage Theory

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Level 1. Preconventional (Based on punishments and rewards)

Stage 1. Punishment and obedience orientation (avoids punishment)

Stage 2. Naïve instrumental hedonism (gains rewards)

Level 2. Conventional (Based on social conformity)

Stage 3. Maintaining good relations/approval of others

Stage 4. Authority-maintaining morality

Level 3. Postconventional (Based on moral principles)

Stage 5. Morality contract, individual rights, accepted law

Stage 6. Morality of individual principles of conscience

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Gilligan's Alternative View

Carol Gilligan challenged Kohlberg on grounds of gender bias and proposed two distinct types of moral reasoning. (Concept of Justice vs. Human Relationships & Caring)

Other researchers failed to find gender differences in children under 10 yr.

10 or 11 yr. boys more often than girls give aggressive responses to judgement questions.

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Eisenberg's View

Nancy Eisenberg believes that moral development is not as rigid, predictable and narrowly determined as Kohlberg defined.

She found gender differences between 10 and 12-yr. girls and boys and explained that because girls mature earlier. Gender based differences appeared to go away in older adolescents.

Continuing Family Influences

Parent-Child Interactions and Relationships

In middle childhood, children are less likely to express direct anger toward parents, yell, whine, or hit them.

Parents are less concerned with routines and promoting autonomy and more concerned with work habits and achievement.

Well-monitored children receive higher grades.

Optimal Parenting

Researchers now feel that the major goal of parenting is to increase children's self-regulated behavior.

Children of authoritative parents tend to internalize moral values whereas children of authoritarian parents tend not to develop internalized standards and controls.

Coregulation – increasing the child's involvement (cooperation and shared responsibility) in decision making in preparation to the teenage years.

Coregulation may be viewed as a process lasting throughout the lives of the participants rather than control that transitions from parent to child.

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The Changing Nature of the Family

Early research focused on the "traditional" family. Now, single parent & two income families are commonplace.

1948 – 26% of mothers of school age children (6-17) worked for pay
1975 – 51% of mothers of school age children (6-17) worked for pay
1996 – 76% of mothers of school age children (6-17) worked for pay

The percentage of working women living with husbands doubled between 1960 and 1998.

Families and Stress

A child or an adult who can cope with one stressful event may be overwhelmed if several happen at the same time.

Knowing what to expect from a stressful situation (e.g. going to school for the first time) can make the transition more successfully.

Temperament and early personality characteristics (*resilient children*) influences a child's ability to cope with stressful situations (Werner – Hawaiian children of poverty – ability to find support they needed)

Coping with Single Parenting

13% of US families with 2 incomes have incomes below the poverty line.
50% of single mother families live in poverty.

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90% of single mother families live in poverty if she did not graduate high school.

Risks of growing up in poverty include;

- lower economic status
- lower social status
- frequent moves
- poor nutrition
- crowded living conditions
- poor medical care
- psychological stress, depression, anxiety

The situation is likely to be passed on to subsequent generations.

Children of Divorce

About 50% of all US marriages end in divorce representing over 1,000,000 children experiencing family breakup.

Psychological Consequences of Divorce

Children who experience divorce also experience tension and stress before the actual event.

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Table 10-3 Seven Guidelines for Single Parenting

1. Accept responsibilities and challenges. Maintain a positive attitude and feeling that solutions are possible.
2. Give the parental role high priority. Successful single parents are willing to sacrifice time, money and energy to meet their children's needs.
3. Use consistent, non-punitive discipline.
4. Emphasize open communication. Encourage trust and open expression of feelings.
5. Foster individuality within a supportive family unit.
6. Recognize the need for self-nurturance. Parents must understand the need to take care of themselves in order to be able to help their children.
7. Emphasize rituals and traditions, including bedtime routines, holiday celebrations, and special family activities.

Children's egocentricity causes them to center on how divorce will affect them and their inability to influence the situation and they are often used as pawns in the conflicts between the parents.

Factors that determine how children react to divorce;

1. The amount of hostility accompanying the divorce.
2. The amount of actual change in the child's life.
3. The nature of the parent child relationship.

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Consequences in Daily Life

Children between ages 5-7 are confused – unpredictability is now the rule.

Children seriously hurt by divorce are more likely to have to repeat a grade.

Teachers can help by providing constancy (rules & expectations) and emotional support.

Reconstituted Families

Reconstituted families – Also called *step families*, *bonus families*, etc., where the mother or father remarries to produce a new family.

Some children welcome the stepparent while others find the adjustment difficult.

Uncertainty about the newcomer (displays of affection, discipline, guilt concerning the non-custodial parent) may cause additional stress.

How Enduring Are the Effects of Divorce on Children?

Effects can be minimal or profound emotionally, socially, and academically.

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Children of divorced families are 2 to 3 times as likely to drop out of school, become pregnant, or engage in antisocial and delinquent behavior.

Children moving out of disruptive or abusive families can actually do better.

Peer Relationships and Social Competence

Peer relationships become increasingly important in middle childhood and exert a major influence on social and personality development.

Concepts of Friendship

The ability to infer thoughts, expectations, feelings, and intentions of other is central to being a friend.

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Table 10-4 Selman's Stages of Friendship Development

Stage 1 (6 and under)

- Friendship is based on physical or geographic factors
- Children are self-centered
- They possess no understanding of the perspectives of others

Stage 2 (7 – 9)

- Friendship begins to be based on reciprocity
- Awareness of other people's feelings emerges
- It begins to be based on social actions and evaluation by others

Stage 3 (9 – 12)

- Friendship is based on genuine give-and-take
- Friends are seen as people who help each other
- Mutual evaluation of actions occurs
- The concept of trust appears

Stage 4 (11 – 12 and older)

- Friendship is seen as stable & continuing
- It is seen as a relationship based on trust
- Children can observe the relationship from a third party perspective

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Functions of Friendship

Friendships help children learn social skills, self-esteem, group norms, attitudes and values.

Stable friendships feel better about school and achieve more.

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Peer Groups

More than just a group of kids, they are relatively stable, members interact regularly, possess a hierarchy and status.

Peer Group – A group of three or more people of similar age who interact with each other and who share norms and goals.

Developmental Trends

In early middle childhood, peer groups are relatively informal, created by the children, have few operating rules, and turnover is rapid.

In ages 10 – 12 conformity becomes extremely important and pressure is effective. The form formal structures, requirements, meeting and initiation rights.

Group Formations

When kids are thrown together, groups form quickly based on interests and values.

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Research on 5th grade boys in summer camp found that groups form quickly, develop shared values and norms, and named their groups.

Status Within the Peer Group

Academic and athletic performance influences popularity.

The teacher can affect acceptance.

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Popularity is affected by extreme aggressiveness and extreme timidity.

Rejected children tend to blame others for unsatisfactory relationships and loneliness.

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Peer Group Conformity

Conforming to a peer group can be normal, healthy and desirable unless conformity is excessive and when the standards are not helpful to the individual, or society at large.

Characteristics of highly conforming children

- Feelings of inferiority
- Low ego-strength
- More dependant or anxious
- Sensitive to social cues for behavior
- Self-monitor themselves closely
- Concerned about their appearance to others
- Constantly compare themselves to their peers

Children are more likely to conform to peer group pressure when it is positive.

Peer group conformity can lead to prejudice against those who are different.

In-groups, Out-groups, and Prejudice

Prejudice – negative attitudes toward people based on ethnic, religious, or other attributes.

Discrimination – Acting on the basis of prejudice.

The ability to think and view multi-dimensionally is offset by conformity to peer groups.