
CHAPTER 13

THE SCHOOLCHILD'S PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

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Thus already at ten years old, the boy found himself standing face to face with a dilemma that might have puzzled an early Christian. What was he?—where was he going?

—Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, 1907.

Moments to savor come for both Vicky and Jason in the fifth grade. For Jason it is the thrill of winning his first letter in athletics, in football. The agility that he has shown from the time he began to crawl (earlier than any other baby on the block) is still outstanding. Since athletic ability is admired by his peers, Jason's inborn grace and coordination, nurtured by his parents, pay off for him in achievement and in the respect of his classmates.

Vicky's big moment came when she learned that she would have the lead in her class play, a dramatization of a favorite book. Her interest in stories showed up in toddlerhood when her father performed his nightly ritual of reading to her, and her love of playacting was evident soon after as she donned "dress-up" clothes and played "pretend." On her bedroom wall hang photos of her playing a tulip in the first grade, a gypsy in the second grade, Little Bo Peep in the third grade, and Martha Washington last year. This year she'll be Meg in *A Wrinkle in Time*.

Both Vicky and Jason are lucky. Their special interests and talents help them achieve a measure of self-esteem and a secure spot within their peer groups. Their parents recognized these special penchants early and fostered them. Their lives have not been burdened by overwhelming stresses or traumas.

In this chapter we'll discuss how schoolchildren learn and identify with the norms of their culture, how they fit into their society, and how they continue to develop their own unique personalities. We'll begin by considering two theoretical perspectives: Freud's and Erikson's. We'll next explore several aspects of personality development and influences on children's lives: childhood society (children's lore, peer groups, and friends); children's own self-concept; sex typing in middle childhood; and the family. Then we take up emotional disturbances in childhood and how they may be treated. Finally, we return to a theme that appears throughout this book—children's resilience.

Theoretical Perspectives on Personality Development

SIGMUND FREUD: THE LATENCY PERIOD

We saw that Freud considered the preschool years to be a stormy period of sexual fears for boys and envy for girls. During that time boys must resolve the Oedipus complex, and girls the Electra complex. Having resolved these complexes, children adopt sex roles and develop superegos. With so much already accomplished, Freud says, middle childhood is a time of emotional calm. His name for this is the latency period—a time of relative sexual calm between the turbulent preschool years and the storminess of adolescence.

Latency period. In Freud's terminology, a period of relative sexual calm that occurs during middle childhood after the Oedipus complex has been resolved.

You may recall a scene in Woody Allen's movie *Annie Hall* in which the narrator says that he never had a latency period—he was always interested in sex. Many contemporary students of child development agree, saying that children in elementary school are not asexual. What Freud saw as a lack of interest seems to reflect schoolchildren's discovery that the adult world does not approve of their sexuality. At this stage children hide their interest, but during the years from age 6 to age 12, they still engage in sex play, masturbate, and ask questions about sex (Calderone & Johnson, 1981). One 18-year-old remembered sexuality during this period (Maynard, 1973):

All fifth graders are obsessed with sex—the boys, with their mostly bathroom and bosom humor, of course, and—a bit more secretly, but more profoundly, the girls. . . . Boys, coming home from school at three, would weave and spin on their bikes, making little orbits around us as we walked, standing up on the seats when they passed us, to call out some new and thrilling combination of four-letter words, or taking their hands off the bars and giving us the finger. And we would clutch our neatly lettered notebooks to what we still shyly referred to as our "fronts" and speculate about the sex lives of our teachers. (pp. 28–29)

ERIK ERIKSON: CRISIS 4 (INDUSTRY VERSUS INFERIORITY)

Like Freud, Erikson sees middle childhood as a time of relative physical and sexual latency. By the time they reach this stage, Erikson says, children have developed a sense of trust, autonomy, and initiative. Now, bolstering their advancement to the cognitive stage of logical thinking, the emotional calm of this period encourages rapid cognitive growth. Children are free to attend to their schooling, learn the skills required by their culture, and thus resolve the crisis of *industry versus inferiority*. This is the age when productivity becomes

Industry versus inferiority ✕
In Erikson's theory, the fourth crisis that children face; they must learn the skills of their culture or risk developing feelings of inferiority.



(Frances M. Cox/Stock, Boston.)

Erikson's crisis 4—industry versus inferiority—applies around the world. Here, a Kenyan child helps his mother spread pyrethrum blossoms out to dry. Pyrethrum is an important cash crop, and this child is learning that he is competent enough to contribute to the family's income.

important. No longer are children content to play; they must begin to work. Thus the Arapesh boy learns to make bows and arrows and to lay traps for rats, and the Arapesh girl learns to weed and plant and harvest. The Alaskan Inuit learns to hunt and fish. Children in industrialized countries learn to count, read, and form numbers.

Children's beginning efforts to handle the tools of their society help them to grow and to form a positive self-concept. These are important years for the development of self-esteem. As children compare their own abilities with those of their peers, they construct a sense of who they are. If they feel inadequate by comparison, Erikson believes that they may go "back to the more isolated, less tool-conscious familial rivalry of the oedipal time" (1950, p. 260). On the other hand, they may give work too important a place, with the result that they neglect their relationships with other people. The industrial tycoon who lives, breathes, and dreams business and rarely sees his family is, in Erikson's words, "the conformist and thoughtless slave of his technology" (1950, p. 261). Such a person may have been pushed in this direction during the school years.

Aspects of Personality Development

THE SOCIETY OF CHILDHOOD

"Mother," Jason says one day, "did you have a swimming hole to play in when you were my age?"

His mother laughs and says, "No." Then, remembering the polio scares of her childhood, she adds, "My mother didn't even let me go to a pool."

"She didn't?" says Jason, amazed. He had gotten the idea from television that in the good old days, all children went swimming in their own secret swimming holes.

The times do keep changing, and old ways can seem better. Whether they really were better is hard to judge and even harder to prove. Children today are more mobile than those born a few generations ago. They are more likely to change schools and are less likely to know many adults in their neighborhood. They frequently hear words that were once taboo, and they know more about technology, sex, and violence than children of previous generations.

The child psychologist David Elkind (see "Professional Voices") has called today's child the "hurried child" (1981). Like a number of other thoughtful observers, he is concerned that influences like these are making children grow up too soon and making their shortened childhoods too stressful. Today's children are pressured to succeed in school, to compete in sports, and often to meet their parents' emotional needs. On television and in real life, children are exposed to many adult problems before they have mastered the problems of childhood. Yet children are not small adults. They feel and think like children, and they need a period of childhood—not a premature adulthood—for healthy cognitive and emotional development.

In many ways, then, today's children are different from those of a generation or two ago. And yet there are still some eternal verities. One is the tendency to jealously guard their own songs, games, and social rituals, which they don't share with adults.

A CHILD'S WORLD . . . PROFESSIONAL VOICES



David Elkind is the author of several books about the problems of growing up in the United States today. Childhood, as a distinct stage of life, is a historically recent concept, and Elkind's work suggests that we may be losing that concept as marketing, the media, and other pressures deny the special nature of childhood.

ELKIND: The images presented of children and teenagers in the media can be insidious in the way they put pressures on young people to grow up before they're ready to. We can see a program or a movie that doesn't have any sex or violence, and we think it's okay for our children to watch. But such shows may be even more detrimental in the way they portray young persons and adults, because the way groups are portrayed affects the way people feel about themselves.

Over the past 15 years or so we've been seeing what are called in the media *adultified children*. These are children who are presented as wise, thoughtful, understanding, witty, intelligent, and clever—much more so than the adults around them. Even though these portrayals seem to be innocuous, the message they're coming across with suggests that children are wiser and more competent than adults. I think that this is a very pernicious message. Young people still need our wisdom, our guidance, our authority.

In the film *Back to the Future*, for example, the 15-year-old boy is presented as intelligent and competent, while his mother is shown as an alcoholic, and his father is bumbling and inept. It's only through the boy's elaborate manipulation that his parents become more competent themselves. In effect, he's bringing up his parents.

In the movie *Six Weeks*, a 12- or 13-year-old girl who is dying of leukemia is having dinner one night with her mother and the mother's boyfriend. The girl looks at them and says, "Mother, the two of you have such a beautiful relationship—why don't you go to bed together? Mother, you know you're sex-starved." If I had ever said anything like that to my parents, I'd have

ended up on the floor. Because nobody in the movie said anything to the effect that this was not an appropriate way to talk to adults, I think that an unhealthy message came through. It gives a kind of equality to a relationship that should not be equal.

Then in the film *My Bodyguard*, the father is presented as a womanizer, the grandmother is presented as a man chaser and an alcoholic, and the 14-year-old boy is shown as sensitive, wise, understanding, thoughtful, and intelligent. When the boy is beset by bullies at school, he, on his own, without consulting his father, decides to hire a bodyguard to help protect him against these creeps. The taller boy he picks out as his bodyguard has a number of personal problems and brushes off the smaller boy's request. But he continues to pursue the bigger boy, they become friends of a sort, and finally, with the skill and sensitivity of a trained psychotherapist, he gets his friend to have a cathartic experience in which he breaks down and cries and relates a traumatic experience with his brother. The friend gets himself back together, the two of them beat up the bullies, and the movie ends with the boys' helping the father and the grandmother reach an equilibrium.

If these movies were simply fantasies that people would then go home and forget about, that would be one thing. But I think that they do affect how children see themselves and how other people see them. They contribute to parents' hurrying kids and expecting too much of them, and they contribute to kids' feeling that somehow they should know it all.

In traveling around the country and holding seminars for kids, I'm impressed with how responsible they feel for their parents. A 12-year-old from the midwest told me how she tries to intervene when her parents fight. I try to tell these kids, "Look, tell your parents how unhappy you are when they fight, how frightened and angry you feel. Tell them that you think they should get help. But it's not your place to be a therapist to your parents."

I'm not sure how well these kids hear me; they're really convinced that somehow it's their responsibility to take charge and handle these situations, because they've seen this kind of image of kids so often in movies and on television.

Sources: Adapted from "Hurried Children, Stressed Children," speech given by D. Elkind at the tenth international conference of La Leche League International, Washington, D.C., July 25, 1985, and personal communication with S. W. Olds; *photo:* James R. Holland.

Children's Lore

Vicky sings jump-rope songs that her mother once knew but has long since forgotten. Jason brings jokes home from school that his father first heard when he was in school. Both children learn a folklore that has survived for generations in school yards and playgrounds. Parents forget the words to the songs and can't recall the rules of the games, and yet a steady flow of children preserve them as a special knowledge. Children rarely originate any of this lore. They imitate, adapt, and make creative mistakes (Opie & Opie, 1959).

In keeping with Piaget's findings about the rigidity of children's conceptions of rules and morality, children pass on what they have heard as revealed truth. They will not tolerate theories that contradict what they "know." Nor will they put up with alterations in familiar rhymes. While they eagerly seek out new jokes, stories, and rhymes, any slight variation in the old, familiar ones is heresy.

Children's rhymes provide a safety valve for the release of anger, frustration, and aggression against family members such as pesky little brothers and sisters (Butler, 1973), as in the following jump-rope rhyme:

I had a little brother,
His name was Tiny Tim.
I put him in the bathtub
To teach him how to swim.
He swam down the river,
He swam down the lake,
He died last night
With an awful bellyache.

Children's Games Visitors to baseball's Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, are often amazed by an ancient Egyptian painting that appears to show Egyptians playing baseball. Whether the game was like baseball is impossible to say, but the existence of ball games in the time of the pharaohs seems settled. Many other games that children play are probably also thousands of years old. Tag, catch, jacks, wrestling, fantasy role-playing, and even marbles are all within the technology of stone age peoples. Games serve children's needs by allowing them to have physical contact, giving them confidence in their ability to fill different roles, and teaching them ways to get along with others. They provide socially acceptable ways to compete, to use energy, and to act aggressively.

Some observers, however, have noticed new patterns that interfere with the traditional learning through playing. Television has seduced many children from active playing to passive watching. Computer games demand few social skills. Organized sports replace childlike rules with adult rules, and adult referees settle disputes without children's having to find ways to resolve matters between themselves.

Children's Humor Amid whispers and giggles, Vicky, aged 7, asks, "Do you want to hear a dirty joke?" Her friend nods. "A boy fell in the mud. Do you want to hear another one?" Again a nod. "A girl fell in the mud. Do you want to hear another? Yes? Okay, three came out." Raucous laughter follows snick-

(Frances M. Cox/Stock, Boston)



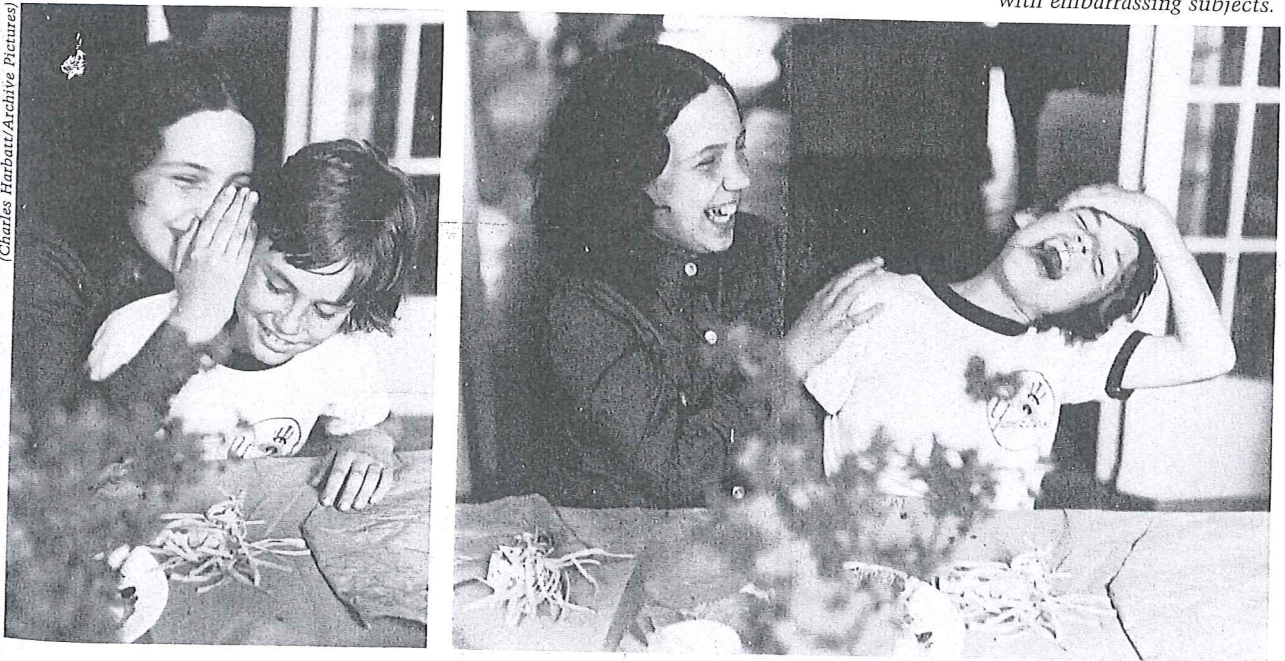
Children have been playing games for thousands of years, although the particular ones they choose owe much to the culture they live in. The intricate athletic maneuvers of "double-Dutch" jump rope are for the most part activities of inner-city girls.

ers, and the joke is told and retold until every second-grader in the school knows it and repeats it to anyone who will listen.

Much of children's humor derives from their abiding interest in body wastes and sexuality. By telling jokes about these taboo and often mysterious subjects, children can deal with things they'd like to understand better but are embarrassed to talk about more matter-of-factly.

Jokes help children deal with embarrassing subjects.

(Charles Harbutt/Archive Pictures)



Children minimize their anxiety about many different situations with the gift of laughter. When children want to gain mastery over something, they may tell a joke about it—as we can see in the following:

HOSTILITY TO SIBLINGS

"Boy, is my little sister spoiled!"

"She is *not*."

"Oh, no? You should see what the steamroller did to her!" (third grade)

FEARS ABOUT DEATH

"How do you make a dead baby float?"

"I don't know."

"Take a dead baby, some soda, and a couple of scoops of ice cream. . . ." (sixth grade)

Many jokes are told for the sheer joy of showing mastery over language—using mispronunciations and wrong words, making puns, telling riddles, and telling stories that depend for their humor on basic knowledge or on different meanings of a word, so that children can show off what they know.

The importance of children's cognitive development in their enjoyment and understanding of riddles, the favorite joke form of 6- to 11-year-olds, was confirmed by one study that posed 30 riddles from popular children's joke-books to 48 children in the first, third, and fifth grades. The children were asked to rate them on a scale of enjoyment and to explain what was funny about each one. The children's *understanding* increased steadily from grade to grade, while their *enjoyment* increased from the first grade to the third grade but decreased in the fifth (Prentice & Fathman, 1972). These findings confirm Zigler's principle of cognitive congruency (Zigler, Levine, & Gould, 1967) that jokes are funniest when they are moderately hard to understand. When we "get" a joke too easily, it's too obvious and not so funny.

Trading jokes is just one of the activities that children enjoy doing with their friends. There are many more.

The Peer Group

Life in the Peer Group As children grow older, they find that other children their own age become increasingly important. Although babies are aware of one another and preschoolers do begin to make friends, it's not until middle childhood that the peer group comes into its own. All societies today appear to have childhood subcultures, as did those of the past, although their strength and importance vary. In our own society the reduced importance of kinship ties may make the peer group especially important.

Sometimes it seems that children's involvement with the peer group and resultant separation from the parents are unprecedented. One developmental psychologist noted how little time children today spend with their parents:

Urbanization, child labor laws, the abolishment of the apprentice system, commuting, centralized schools, zoning ordinances, the working mother, the experts' advice to be permissive, the seductive power of television for keeping children occupied, the delegation and professionalization of child care—all of these man-

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ifestations of progress have operated to decrease opportunity for contact between children and parents, or, for that matter, adults in general. (Bronfenbrenner, 1970, p. 99)

We can question the assumption that children and parents were once closer, but segregation by age is a fact of modern life. Researchers heard from 766 sixth-graders that they spent an average of 2 or 3 hours a day over the weekend with their parents, while spending a little more time than this with groups of friends and an additional 2 or 3 hours a day with a single friend. They spent twice as much time with children their own age as with their parents (Condry, Siman, & Bronfenbrenner, 1968).

We saw in our discussion of day care that the quality of time spent with parents is more important than the quantity, and so we cannot assume that these findings mean that the family has become less influential. But they do indicate that peers have an increasingly important place in the life of schoolchildren as sources of information, intimacy, and development.

Functions of the Peer Group Within our peer groups we see how we compare with others. It is often in the reflected opinions of others that we form our opinions of ourselves—or, in the words of the poet Robert Burns, "see ourselves as others see us." The peer group provides children with a more realistic gauge for the development of skills and abilities than the parents, who are so much bigger and wiser and more powerful, or than baby brothers and sisters. Only within a large group of peers can children get a sense of how smart, how athletic, how skillful, and how personable they are.

The peer group helps children form attitudes and values. It provides a filter for sifting through their parent-derived values and deciding which ones to keep and which to discard. Through the medium of other children from different backgrounds and with different value systems, children can test their opinions, their feelings, and their theories to see how well they hold up.

Peers also offer emotional security. In some situations, another child can provide a kind of comfort that an adult cannot. Sometimes this comfort comes from learning that a friend has the same kind of "wicked" thoughts and behavior that would offend an adult. In fact, being able to work out forbidden fantasies in play with another child (like conspiring to poison a parent) can further emotional development (Asher, 1978).

The peer group helps us learn how to get along in society. We learn how and when to adjust our needs and desires to those of others—when to yield and when to stand firm. In Israel, the Soviet Union, and China, the peer group is used consciously and deliberately to mold behavior, and some behavior modification programs in the United States also use it for this purpose.

Children seek out peers who are like themselves with regard to age, race, sex, and socioeconomic status. In the elementary school years, groups are all-girl or all-boy, because of mutuality of interests, as an outgrowth of the group's function of teaching sex-appropriate behaviors, and because of the difference in maturity between girls and boys. Children who play together are usually within a year or two of the same age, although an occasional neighborhood play group will form of a summer evening, including small children along with older ones. Too wide an age range brings problems with differences in size, interests, and levels of ability.



Peer groups come into their own during middle childhood. They help children become independent from parents and establish their own standards (like styles of dress and codes of behavior), and they also provide emotional security. "Mugging" for the camera is more fun when you do it with friends.

Influences of Peer Groups on Children Vicky's parents are concerned about some of her fifth-grade friends. They seem to know more about the world than Vicky's parents like. They joke about serious things and make light of real dangers. Vicky seems as happy and sensible as ever, but her parents feel uneasy because they can see that so much of their daughter's security depends on her own strength and good sense. More than ever before, Vicky is her own person, living in the family, but not taking everything from it.

Children become most susceptible to the influence of peers in middle childhood and are less conforming in adolescence (Costanzo & Shaw, 1966). The higher a child's status in the group, the less conforming he or she is likely to be. When material to be evaluated is ambiguous, children's judgments are influenced most strongly by the group. This finding has grave implications for the child who is trying to make sense out of a world in which there are many ambiguous issues.

Peer groups often impose their values on the emerging individual. Children play games in groups and take part in scouting, in performances, and in other constructive activities together. Unfortunately, it's usually in the company of friends that children also shoplift, begin to smoke and drink, sneak into the movies, and do other undesirable things. Sixth-graders who are rated as more "peer-oriented" report engaging in more of this kind of behavior than "parent-oriented" children (Condry et al., 1968).

How does the group influence the individual? A classic study (Berenda, 1950) tested children's reactions to group pressures that contradicted the experience of their own eyes. Ninety 7- to 13-year-olds took a classroom test asking them to compare the lengths of lines on 12 cards, and to indicate which line was shorter or longer. They then repeated the test orally; this time the eight brightest children in each class sat in a room with a classmate. The eight had been told to give wrong answers to 7 of the 12 cards. The ninth child was caught unaware by the wrong answers and was torn between describing what he or she actually saw and going along with the group.

Lulled into security by the first two correct responses, each met the third (first wrong) answer with shock and bewilderment. Many a child would stand up in his seat, rub his eyes, look at all the others and then at the lines with a puzzled, embarrassed, and frightened expression on his face. Each child, without exception, felt ill at ease, fidgeted in his seat, or smiled uncomfortably at the others and at the experimenter. Many would whisper the right answer and turn to a neighbor for assurance. Some, after a few wrong group answers, would grow apathetic and look at the others in the group for the answer rather than at the lines. The situation was too puzzling, and being unable to explain it, they resigned themselves to it. There was always a note of relief when the majority gave the correct response. (Berenda, 1950, pp. 231-232)

In talking about the experiment afterward, children expressed their anxieties. One 11-year-old girl said:

I had a funny feeling inside. You know you are right and they are wrong and you agree with them. And you still feel you are right and you say nothing about it. Once I gave the answer they didn't give. I thought they would think I was wrong. I just gave their answers. If I had the test alone, I wouldn't give the answers I gave. (Berenda, 1950, pp. 232)

And a 7-year-old said:

I felt funny. I know it will be silly, but when they said an answer and I didn't think it was right, I felt like my heart-beat went down. (Berenda, 1950, p. 232)

Popularity We all want people to like us. What our peers think of us matters terribly. Our acceptance by others affects our present happiness, and it may well echo through the years to affect our well-being. Because the way other people feel about us has such a big effect on our lives, researchers have studied the characteristics of both well-liked people and those who are either ignored or actively rejected.

One *sociometric* technique that is useful in identifying popular and unpopular people is the *sociogram*, a "map" on which an observer can plot social interactions, as shown in Figure 13-1. Children may be asked to name their three best friends or the three they like the least; they may be asked more specific questions, such as which three children they like to sit near, walk home with after school, or serve with on a committee. The data are then plotted on a sociogram, and the researcher can determine which children seek out others and which ones are sought out, which ones are chosen most often and which ones are chosen least often, and which ones are asked for help and advice. They can then look at the characteristics of the children in the different categories to find personality patterns.

The popular child. Popular children tend to be healthy and vigorous, well poised, and capable of initiative; they're also adaptable and conforming. They're dependable, affectionate, considerate and are original thinkers (Bonney, 1948).

Sociometric Describing a quantitative study of interpersonal relationships.

Sociogram A diagrammatic representation of social relationships between members of a group.

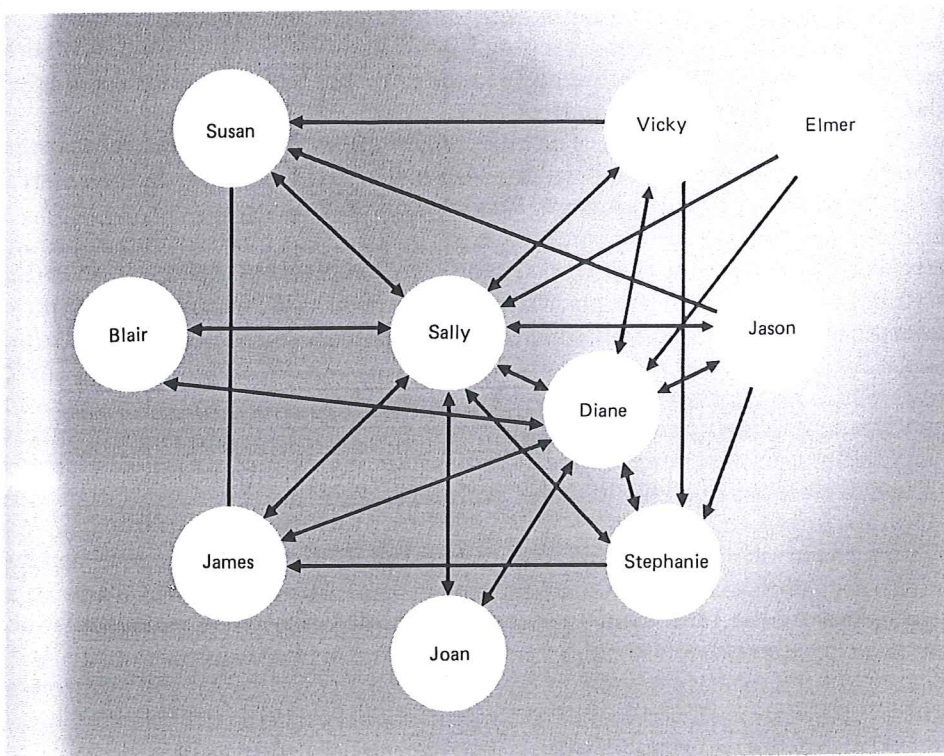
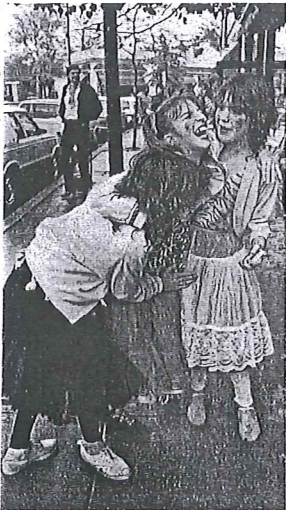


Figure 13-1 Sociogram. This hypothetical sociogram was plotted by asking members of a group whom they would most like to work with. Note the popularity of Diane and Sally and the "social isolate" status of Elmer. Note that neither Stephanie nor Susan wants to work with Vicky and Jason—although Vicky and Jason want to work with them. In this sociogram most of the relationships are reciprocal. In real life there's usually more imbalance.



Popular children are enjoyable to be with. That is one reason why other children gravitate toward them, especially when the activity is a costume party that brings out high spirits.

They think moderately well of themselves, rather than showing extremely high or low levels of self-esteem (Reese, 1961). They radiate self-confidence without being overbearing or seeming conceited. Popular children show mature dependence on other children: they ask for help when they need it and for approval when they think that they deserve it, but they don't cling or make babyish plays for affection (Hartup, 1970). They're not goody-goodies, but they make other people feel good about being with them (Feinberg, Smith, & Schmidt, 1958; Tuddenham, 1951). Popular children also tend to be more physically attractive than unpopular ones (Lerner & Lerner, 1977). This may reflect a desire by children to surround themselves with "beautiful people." An alternative explanation is that the attractive child is used to favorable attention from parents and other adults, has developed higher self-esteem as a result, and has turned into the kind of person who's enjoyable to be with.

The unpopular child. One of childhood's saddest figures is the child who is chosen last for every team, hangs around the fringes of every group, walks home alone after school, is not invited to any of the birthday parties, and sobs in despair, "Nobody wants to play with me."

Children can be unpopular for many reasons, some of which are in their power to change, while others are not. They're often the youngsters who walk around with a chip on their shoulder, showing unprovoked aggression and hostility. Or they may act silly and babyish, showing off in immature ways. Or they may be anxious and uncertain, exuding such a pathetic lack of confidence that they repel other children, who don't find them any fun to be with. Extremely fat or unattractive children, children who behave in any way that seems strange, and retarded or slow-learning youngsters are also outcasts.

A number of differences have shown up between popular and unpopular kindergartners. When 65 children were shown pictures illustrating story situations related to making and keeping friends and were asked to say what the fictional child should do, some differences emerged in the replies of the popular and the unpopular children.

There was a fair amount of similarity; about two-thirds of the most common responses of the popular children were also given by the unpopular children. This is encouraging, since it shows that unpopular children are not so different from their more popular peers. They are different to some degree, however. They're more likely to be aggressive (12 percent suggested that the fictional child should beat up a child who grabbed toys, compared with only 2 percent of the popular children). They're also less resourceful, giving vague suggestions or looking for help from a person in authority rather than coping with a situation themselves (Asher, Renshaw, Geraci, & Dor, 1979).

The researchers found other differences when they characterized the children's responses as *assertive*, *relationship-enhancing*, or *effective*. While both groups were assertive, the popular children's answers were more likely to maintain or enhance positive relationships and were also more effective.

One study of more than 500 children in the third through the sixth grades found that children's feelings of loneliness do relate to their position in a sociogram. At the same time, the study concluded that "the overall relation between loneliness and sociometric status [in the classroom] was modest" (Asher, Hymel, & Renshaw, 1948, p. 1461), and the researchers looked to see what other factors might make a child particularly at risk for suffering long-term damage due to unpopularity.

Some children who are not popular with their classmates are not lonely, because they know and play with other children, such as neighborhood friends and siblings. Their unpopularity stems more from being overlooked by their classmates than from anything they have done. Often these children can achieve a more favored position simply by joining another group. It makes sense, then, to transfer such a child to a new class, school, club, or camp, and then see what happens.

Other children, however, are actively rejected by their peers because they behave in ways that make others dislike them. These children, who are particularly at risk for becoming psychologically maladjusted, cannot be rescued simply by moving them somewhere else. They need to learn how to make other children like them. Fortunately, there are effective ways to teach social skills to these children.

Teaching social skills. Popularity in childhood is not a frivolous issue. Aside from feeling sad and rejected and having poor self-esteem, unpopular children are also deprived of a basic developmental experience, the positive interaction with other youngsters that helps them grow as individuals. Through normal give-and-take with others, children learn how to become properly assertive, when and how to reach out to help someone else, ponder the fine points of moral reasoning, and adjust to living in a world with other people. Children who have trouble getting along with their peers are more likely to have problems with mental health, to drop out of school, and to become delinquent (Lamb, 1978). Since getting along with other children is so vital to healthy development, a number of programs have been developed to teach social skills to unpopular children.

In one study, fifth- and sixth-graders received training in carrying on a conversation; they learned how to share information about themselves, how to show interest in others by asking questions about them, and how to give help, suggestions, invitations, and advice. When they had a chance to practice their new conversational skills in a group project with other children, they became better liked by the others and participated more with them (Bierman & Furman, 1984).

This study measured the children's success by testing them before the project began and then twice after it ended, once right away and then 6 weeks later. Tests included measures of conversational skills, rates of interaction with peers, acceptance by peers, and self-perception. These children were compared with three other groups—those who received the training in conversational skills from individual coaches but didn't take part in a peer-group project, those who took part in a group project but hadn't been taught any skills, and a control group which received no treatment. The only group that showed general and lasting improvements was the first one, showing that children not only need to know the skills but also have to be in situations in which they can use them and in which other children can see the changes in them. Otherwise, other children may hold onto their former opinions about these youngsters and may not give them a chance to show their new skills.

How Adults Influence Children's Peer-Group Dynamics Grown-ups cramp kids' style. Or they help guide them through life. The personality, attitudes, and behavioral style of the adults who come into contact with groups of children exert a great influence on the individuals within those groups and on the group

dynamics themselves. Would the boys in *Oliver Twist* or the girls in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* have behaved differently with different adults? Undoubtedly.

In one classic study several clubs of 10-year-old boys were set up and run in turn by authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leaders, so that each group experienced each type of leader. The children in the democratically led groups were more spontaneous, friendly, and fact-minded, while those in the other two groups showed more hostility toward one another. Under authoritarian leadership there was either a high level of aggression or a high level of apathy, which quickly gave way to aggression when the leader left the room and during periods of transition to a freer atmosphere. When the autocratic leaders left the room, work slowed down, sometimes to a halt, whereas the boys in the democratically led groups continued to work whether the leader was present or not. Children do best under the leadership and guidance of a respected adult who respects them, and they do least well with repressive adult leadership or with no adult leadership at all (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). (Table 13-1 summarizes the different leadership styles—authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire.)

Table 13-1 *Authoritarian, Democratic, and Laissez-Faire Leaders*

AUTHORITARIAN	DEMOCRATIC	LAISSEZ-FAIRE
All determination of policy is by the leader.	All policies are a matter of group discussion and decision making, encouraged and assisted by the group leader.	There is complete freedom for group or individual decisions, without any participation by the leader.
The techniques and steps involved in an activity are dictated by the authority, one at a time, and so future steps are always uncertain to a large degree.	Perspective on activities is gained during first discussion period. General steps to group goals are sketched, and where technical advice is needed, the leader suggests two or three alternative procedures from which a choice can be made.	Various materials are supplied by the leader, who will supply information when asked but takes no other part in discussions about work.
The leader usually dictates the particular work task and work companions of each member.	The members are free to work with whomever they choose, and the division of tasks is left up to the group members.	There is complete nonparticipation by the leader.
The dominator is "personal" in praise and criticism of the work of each member, but remains aloof from active group participation except when demonstrating. The dominator is friendly or impersonal rather than openly hostile.	The leader is "objective" or "fact-minded" in praise and criticism and tries to be a regular group member in spirit without doing too much of the work.	There are very infrequent comments by the leader on members' activities unless the leader is questioned, and there is no attempt to participate in, or interfere with, the course of events.

Source: Adapted from Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939.



Best friends help each other learn how to understand and help other people. Children discover their capacity to give and receive affection outside the family.

Friendship in Middle Childhood

Martha is Vicky's best friend. Like Vicky, Martha is 10 years old, but she is not in Vicky's class and does not live in Vicky's neighborhood. They met during recess when they both shrieked as a football sailed between them. Instead of feeling embarrassed by their fright, their shared scare made them feel comfortable together. So now Vicky and Martha seek each other out at recess, during lunch, and after school. They talk on the phone together and sometimes visit each other's homes on weekends. Both have other friends, but their best-friend relationship is important to them. The friendship makes each one more sensitive and loving, more able to give and expect respect.

Robert Selman has traced forms of friendship, through five stages, 0 through 4, basing his conclusions on interviews with more than 250 people between the ages of 3 and 45 (Selman & Selman, 1979). (These stages have been validated by Gurucharri and Selman, 1982; Smollar and Youniss, 1982; and Youniss and Volpe, 1978.) Selman's five stages are described below:

- *Stage 0: Momentary playmateship.* This is the *undifferentiated* level of friendship, since children between the ages of 3 and 7 have trouble considering another person's point of view and tend to think only about what they want from a relationship. As a result, most very young children define their friends in terms of how close they live ("She's my friend—she lives on my street") and value them for their material or physical attributes ("He's my friend. He has a giant Superman doll and a real swing set").
- *Stage 1: One-way assistance.* The *unilateral* level lasts from about age 4 to about age 9, when a "good friend" does what the child wants the friend to do ("She's not my friend anymore, because she wouldn't go with me

when I wanted her to" or "He is my friend because he always says yes when I want to borrow his eraser").

- *Stage 2: Two-way fair-weather cooperation.* This *reciprocal* level, which overlaps with stage 1, spans the years from age 6 to age 12. It involves give-and-take, but it still serves many separate self-interests, rather than the common, mutual interests of both parties to the friendship ("We are friends; we do things for each other" or "A friend is someone who plays with you when you don't have anybody else to play with").
- *Stage 3: Intimate, mutually shared relationships.* This *mutual* level of friendships runs from about age 9 to age 15. Children view a friendship as having a life of its own. It's an ongoing, systematic, committed relationship that incorporates more than doing things for each other. It tends to be treasured by the friends, who become possessive of their tie and often demand exclusivity ("It takes a long time to make a close friend, so you really feel bad if you find out that your friend is trying to make other close friends too"). Girls tend to develop close friendships with just one or two other girls, while boys develop many more friendships which are less intimate.
- *Stage 4: Autonomous interdependence.* *Interdependent* is the key word for describing friendships in this stage, which begins at about age 12. Now children respect their friends' needs for both dependency and autonomy ("One thing about a good friendship is that it's a real commitment, a risk you have to take; you have to be able to support and trust and give, but you have to be able to let go too").

Having a friend is a milestone in development, as the mutual affection that bubbles forth in these relationships enables children to express intimacy with another person, to bask in a sense of self-worth, and to learn what being a human being is all about (Furman, 1982; Sullivan, 1953). It's important to note that children cannot be or have true friends until they achieve the cognitive maturity that lets them consider other people's needs and viewpoints as well as their own.

THE SELF-CONCEPT OF SCHOOLCHILDREN

Probably the most important key to success and happiness in life is a favorable self-image. Lucky Jason, who likes himself! Confident in his own abilities, he approaches life with an open attitude that will unlock many doors for him. He can take criticism without going to pieces, and when he feels strongly about something he wants to say or do, he is willing to risk making other people angry. He often challenges parents, teachers, and other people in authority. He feels that he can cope with obstacles; he is not overburdened by self-doubt. He solves problems in original, innovative ways. Because he believes that he *can* succeed in the goals he sets for himself, he generally *does* succeed. His success renews his self-respect and makes it easy for him to respect and love others. They, in turn, admire and respect him and enjoy being with him.

On the other hand, Peter, who does not feel good about himself, is hampered wherever he turns. Convinced that he cannot succeed, he does not try

very hard. His lack of effort almost always assures continued failure, resulting in a downward spiral of lack of confidence and lack of success. He worries a lot about whether he is doing the right thing, he is destructive both of material things and of other people's feelings, and he is constantly plagued by one *psychosomatic* pain after another. He tries very hard to please others—often too hard—so that while he goes along with what other people want, he often strikes them as “wishy-washy.” Because of his self-doubts, he's not much fun to be with, and so he has trouble making and keeping friends—which, of course, drives his opinion of himself to even lower depths.

Psychosomatic Concerning a physical symptom with a psychological cause.

Self-Recognition

The point of first *self-recognition* comes at about 18 months. In an experiment with babies aged 6 to 24 months observers began by counting the number of times the babies touched their noses. In the second step of the experiment the observers had the babies' mothers apply dots of rouge to the babies' noses. The babies were then put in front of a mirror, and the observers noted whether they touched their noses more often than before the rouge was applied. The big increase in nose touching that took place among the babies who were about 18 months old suggested that babies recognize themselves in a mirror at about this age (Lewis & Brooks, 1974).

Self-Definition

At about the age of 3, children think of themselves mostly in terms of external characteristics—what they look like, where they live, what they're doing. (This kind of *self-definition* follows many people into adulthood as they define themselves by the image they see in the mirror, the work they do, and the neighborhood they live in.)

Not until about age 6 or 7 do children begin to define themselves in psychological terms. They now develop a concept of what they are like (the *real self*) and also of what they would like to be like (the *ideal self*). The ideal self incorporates many of the “shoulds” and “oughts” they have learned, and it helps them control their impulses for the sake of being considered a “good” person. Surprisingly, a large gap between a child's real and ideal selves is usually a sign of maturity and social adjustment (Maccoby, 1980). Apparently, children who set high standards for themselves are aware of the difference between what they are and what they would like to be, and working toward that goal is a maturing influence.

Real self A person's concept of what he or she is like; compare with *ideal self*.

Ideal self A person's concept of what he or she would like to be like; compare with *real self*.

Self-Esteem

In middle childhood, then, children evaluate themselves. They may like what they see when they look within themselves, or they may think poorly of themselves. Since a favorable self-image is probably the most important key to happiness and success throughout life, findings on self-esteem are extremely significant. The key study on self-esteem in children was reported by Coopersmith in 1967. Even though the sample was limited to middle-class white boys in the fifth and sixth grades, the study's findings may have relevance for a much wider group.

Coopersmith originally administered a questionnaire on self-esteem to hundreds of fifth- and sixth-graders, both male and female. The boys and girls in this initial sample didn't differ on the average, but for the 85 students that Coopersmith selected for intensive study he chose only boys, to eliminate any findings that might be associated with sex. He then interviewed these boys and their mothers, tested them, and observed them in a number of different situations.

Coopersmith concluded that people develop their self-concepts according to four bases: *significance* (the way they feel they are loved and approved of by people important to them); *competence* (in performing tasks they consider important); *virtue* (the attainment of moral and ethical standards); and *power* (the extent to which they influence their own and others' lives). While people may draw favorable pictures of themselves if they are rated high on some of these measures and low on others, the higher they are rated on all four, the higher they will rate themselves.

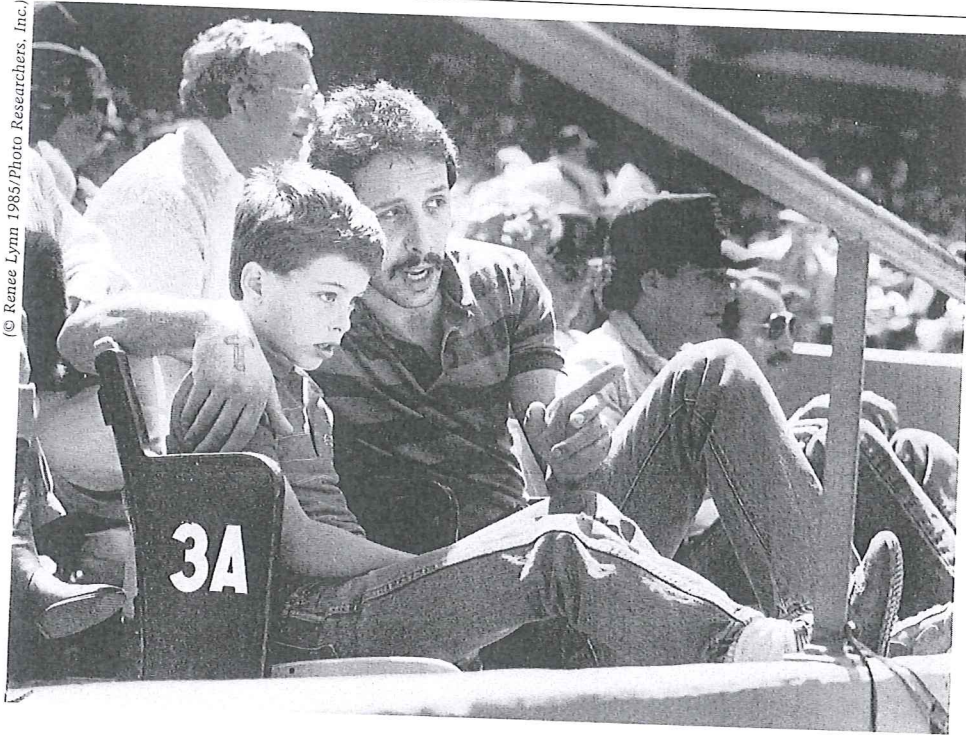
Not surprisingly, the children in Coopersmith's study with high self-esteem were more popular and did better in school, while those with low self-esteem were more likely to be loners and to have such behavioral problems as bed-wetting and poor academic performance. No relationship showed up between self-esteem and height, physical attractiveness, or family size, and there was only a slight relationship between self-esteem and social status. Treatment by other people—especially parents—did seem important. Firstborn and only children, children with warm parents, and boys with dominant mothers, had higher self-esteem.

Parents and Self-Esteem By and large, the parents of children with high self-esteem seem to be cast in Baumrind's mold of the *authoritative* parent (described in Chapter 10). These parents love and accept their children—and make greater demands for academic performance and good behavior. Within clearly defined and firmly enforced limits, these parents show respect and latitude for individual expression and rely more on rewarding good behavior than on punishing bad behavior. The parents have high levels of self-esteem and lead active, rewarding lives outside the family.

Parents who are both democratic and strict, says Coopersmith, help their children in a number of ways. By establishing clear, consistent rules, they let their children know what is expected of them. Children who break a rule know that they are breaking it and know what they can expect. Such predictability in the environment helps children be in control of their lives. As children function within such rule systems, they learn the difference between themselves and others and take into account the demands of the outside world. Finally, these children interpret their parents' demands as evidence that their parents have confidence in their ability—and that their parents care enough to show concern for their well-being.

There are two ways to look at the relationship between parenting style and children's self-esteem. The most obvious, of course, is that the way parents like those described above treat their children makes the children feel good about themselves. It's also possible that children with high self-esteem have characteristics that encourage their parents to be loving, firm, and democratic. Children who are self-confident, cooperative, and competent are easy

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Parents continue to be very important in their children's lives. Fathers who enjoy spending time with their children are more likely to raise children who feel good about themselves—and about their parents. Taking one's son to a ball game is a time-honored American tradition.

to parent. Thus it's probable that parents and children continually influence each other (Maccoby, 1980).

Prejudice and Self-Esteem Self-esteem often builds on praise from others. Conversely, prejudice can do terrible damage. Some targets of prejudice accept the evaluation and abandon their self-esteem; others retain their self-esteem by denying the worthiness of the prejudiced group. Either way, if prejudice is rampant, pain and alienation flourish. In our society, prejudice abounds. It is demonstrated by children as young as 2, and it flourishes among people of all ages.

Studies conducted during the 1960s and mid-1970s on racial prejudice found it in very young children. Both black and white preschoolers from Virginia and Boston were already aware of racial differences and were imbued with the idea of the superiority of whites (Morland, 1966). In another study, both white and black children were found to be biased in favor of whites, starting at preschool levels and continuing through the early school years for blacks and into the second grade for whites (J. Williams, Best, & Boswell, 1975).

In nonracial situations, both black and white preschoolers tend to evaluate the color white more favorably than black. For example, they perceive a white horse to be kinder than a black horse (J. Williams, Boswell, & Best, 1975). Children who strongly prefer white over black carry this preference over to their attitudes toward people and demonstrate more of a prowhite, antiblack bias there, too (Boswell & Williams, 1975). The authors of these studies speculate that young children develop initial preferences for white over black as

a result of their early personal experiences with light and darkness. In fact, children who are afraid of the dark do show more of this bias (Boswell & Williams, 1975).

An encouraging note is struck by recent research which has found a more positive picture of children's acceptance of racially different youngsters. In a longitudinal study of midwestern children who had been in integrated classrooms from kindergarten on, Singleton and Asher (1979) looked at 38 black and 116 white third-graders in 1973, at the same children in the sixth grade in 1976, and at a new sample of 52 black and 153 white third-graders in 1976. At each time, the children were asked how much they liked to work and play with each of their classmates.

These children were tested on a sociometric measure that tried to assess the extent to which they liked and accepted one another, rather than the extent to which they selected others as their best friends. This difference in methodology may account for some of the more positive findings, since, as the authors point out, "It is probably unrealistic to expect many cross-race best friendships to develop given the social climate in which desegregation often takes place and given the fact that black and white children often come from different neighborhoods" (Singleton & Asher, 1979, p. 936).

While these youngsters did show a preference for members of their own race, they still rated their classmates of the other race quite positively. The white children's acceptance of their black classmates remained constant from the third to the sixth grades, but the black sixth-graders showed more preferences for classmates of their own race than the black third-graders did. So while integration from the beginning of school may have contributed to these children's acceptance of one another, merely being together in the upper grades does not necessarily improve interracial relations. Singleton and Asher recommend the institution of programs especially designed to improve these relations, which have proved effective with fifth-graders and junior and senior high school students. It's possible that stepping in as early as the third grade could help children of all backgrounds become increasingly more accepting of one another.

Fortunately, there are ways to step in. In one study, four different techniques were effective in countering the racially biased attitudes of white second- and fifth-graders (Katz & Zalk, 1978):

- 1 *Increased positive racial contact.* Children worked in interracial teams at an interesting puzzle and were all praised for their work.
- 2 *Vicarious interracial contact.* Children heard an interesting story about a sympathetic and resourceful black child.
- 3 *Reinforcement of the color black.* Children were given a marble (which could be traded in for a prize) every time they chose a picture of a black animal instead of a white one.
- 4 *Perceptual differentiation.* Children were shown slides of a black woman whose appearance varied depending on whether she was wearing glasses and one of two different hairdos and on whether she was smiling or frowning. Each different-appearing face had a name, and the children were tested to see how well they remembered the names.

Before the experiment and again 2 weeks after it, the children's levels of

prejudice were measured. All the groups who had been exposed to any of the four techniques showed less prejudice than children in the control groups. Four to six months after the experiment, a second posttest showed that the children who had learned to tell the black faces apart and those who had heard the stories about black children had more positive attitudes than those in the other two groups. Younger children showed more gains, suggesting that prejudiced attitudes can be altered more easily during the early grades. This study shows that young children's attitudes *can* be changed. As the authors point out, "Schools could probably be doing a good deal more to counteract racial prejudice in children than they are now" (Katz & Zalk, 1978, p. 460).

Another successful program is the *jigsaw technique*. Teachers assign different parts of a project to different children from various ethnic and racial backgrounds. The children soon learn that they can do their assignments more easily if they consult, teach, and listen to one another. They end up liking school better, liking one another better, and liking themselves better (Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979; Aronson, Stephan, Sikes, Blaney, & Snapp, 1978; Geffner, 1978).

Schools provide many opportunities to rout prejudice. Some school districts have made good starts in this direction by recruiting and training more minority-group teachers, emphasizing the cultural contributions of minorities, educating young children about drugs, and giving scholarships to minority-group youngsters.

SEX TYPING IN THE MIDDLE YEARS

A form of prejudice that has received increasing attention over the past 20 years is *sexism*, that is, judging one sex (usually the male) as superior. This kind of thinking has been common for years, as we see in these statements by 8- to 11-year-old boys who, in the 1950s, described what men need to know and be able to do:

Sexism Prejudice against a person based on his or her gender.

They need to be strong; they have to be ready to make decisions; they must be able to protect women and children in emergencies. . . . They are the ones to do the hard labor, the rough work, the dirty work, and the unpleasant work; they must be able to fix things; they must get money to support their families; they need "a good business head." . . . They also need to know how to take good care of children, how to get along with their wives, and how to teach their children right from wrong. (Hartley, 1959, p. 461)

And what did they think of women?

They are indecisive; they are afraid of many things; they make a fuss over things; they get tired a lot; they very often need someone to help them; they stay home most of the time; they are not as strong as men; they don't like adventure; they are squeamish about seeing blood; they don't know what to do in an emergency; they cannot do dangerous things; they are more easily damaged than men; and they die more easily than men. . . . They are not very intelligent; they can only scream in an emergency when a man would take charge. . . . Women do things like cooking and washing and sewing because that's all they can do. (Hartley, 1959, p. 462)

Two decades later, children still showed sex-stereotyped attitudes. A survey of 1600 fourth-, sixth-, eighth-, and tenth-grade students from various social classes revealed some decidedly stereotyped ways of thinking. But it also showed that many students, especially older girls, express a willingness to "grant women greater participation in the social, economic, and political spheres" (S. B. Greenberg, 1972, p. 9). While 70 percent of the boys thought that a female doctor would be as good as a male doctor, only 33 percent thought that a trained female garage mechanic could fix a car as well as a male mechanic. While 66 percent of the boys thought that female scientists were as smart as male scientists, only 35 percent thought that we should have female astronauts. The students' social class did not affect their answers. Girls were consistently more open-minded than boys, as were older students (after the fourth grade for boys and the sixth grade for girls), possibly because they had a better understanding of the social issues involved and had thought more about them.

Within the space of one generation, however, we can see that there have been major changes in children's ideas about appropriate behavior for males and females. When 283 kindergartners, fifth-graders, and eleventh-graders were asked whether males, females, or either sex should do a number of specific jobs and were also asked their own occupational goals, the older children were much more liberal than children of the past were (Archer, 1984).

The same study also suggested that children become more equality-minded as they grow older. The kindergartners, especially the boys, were rigid and conservative, holding on to social stereotypes. The older children were more equality-minded. In the upper grades the boys were as open-minded as the girls. Of course, we cannot be sure that the differences found in this research constitute actual changes due to age. We need longitudinal studies to determine whether the changes come over time.

In talking about their own future careers, boys and girls envisioned nearly equal numbers of jobs. Some vestiges of sexism remained, of course. While a number of the girls chose careers traditionally thought of as male-oriented, few of the boys chose careers traditionally pursued by women. The extent of the change can, however, be seen in the fact that not one fifth-grade girl saw her future career as a housewife or mother.

THE CHILD IN THE FAMILY

"I'm home!" shouts Vicky as she bursts in the door, cheeks glowing from the cold and snow cascading from hat, mittens, and boots. She tries—she honestly does try—to take off all her dripping clothes before she reaches the new rug, but because she's bursting with news of the day to share with whoever's home, it isn't always possible for her to remember such trivia.

Vicky spends more time away from home than ever. School, friends, games, and shows all draw her from the house and keep her apart from her family. Yet the family continues to be a major influence in her life. Let's now look at four significant aspects of family life for children in the middle years: (1) working mothers, (2) sibling relationships, (3) divorce, and (4) single parenthood.

Children of Working Mothers

All mothers, of course, are "working mothers," since rearing children and caring for a family are valuable—although unpaid—forms of work. Here, however, we'll define the working mother as one who works for pay, usually outside the home. In 1969 a turning point occurred in the history of American women: for the first time, more mothers of school-age children were holding down jobs than not. Since then the numbers have risen steadily, especially among married mothers of children who are not yet in elementary school. Now almost 6 out of 10 mothers whose youngest child is 3 years old and almost half of those with babies 1 year old or younger are in the labor force, most of them working full time (Hayghe, 1984).

In the past much of the literature on employed mothers concentrated on how these mothers could compensate for the smaller amounts of time and attention they could give to their children, but now the emphasis has shifted, and today many researchers emphasize the positive effects of the mother's employment on the entire family. The mother's self-esteem often rises because she feels more competent, more economically secure, and more in charge of her life. In general, the more satisfied a woman is with her life, the more effective she is as a parent (L. Hoffman, 1979).

The father can relax more, knowing that he is not the only adult responsible for the financial support of the family, and he's less likely to hold a second job. The father who becomes more active in taking care of his children because of his wife's employment is more nurturing: he shows his love to his children, tries to help them with their worries and problems, can make them feel better when they're upset, and gives them continuing care and attention (Carlson, 1984). Thus he can express a side of himself that has traditionally been underemphasized in men, permitting him to be a more fully realized person.

The children benefit from their exposure to new role models: working women and child-rearing men. Daughters of working women and sons of fathers who participate in child care have fewer stereotyped ideas about sex roles than children in "traditional" families (Carlson, 1984; L. Hoffman, 1979). In assessing the general effects of the mother's employment on children, we have to consider the children's ages. L. Hoffman (1979) analyzed and summarized research findings about the effects of the mothers' working outside the home on children of different ages.

Infants and Preschoolers A number of studies have looked at this early period in children's lives, with regard to the effects of their mothers' being away from them for part or most of the working day. The works of Bowlby and of Spitz (discussed in Chapter 9), often cited to show the detrimental effects of the mother's absence, are not really applicable, because they pointed out the dire effects of placing children in understaffed institutions where they are totally separated from their families and their homes. This, of course, is not the typical situation for the typical child of working parents. Most preschool children of working mothers are cared for in their own homes, and most of the others spend their time either in the homes of relatives or paid baby-sitters



(© Gale Zucker/Stock, Boston)

Children of working parents who let themselves into their own homes after school are sometimes called "latch-key" children. Some people see this photo as a portrait of neglect, others as a symbol of developing responsibility. What do you see?

or in day care centers (Hofferth, 1979). While we do need more information on the effects of such care (see Chapter 9), *high-quality* day care generally seems to have positive effects.

Infants and preschoolers whose mothers work are likely to be as securely attached as those whose mothers are at home, and the differences that exist between 3- to 6-year-olds favor the children of working mothers. Preschool children of working mothers tend to do slightly better on cognitive measures, to have less traditional ideas about sex roles, and to see their mothers as just as supportive as the children of nonworking mothers do. A study of the infants, toddlers, and preschool children of 200 working mothers found no evidence of negative effects on the children's social, emotional, and cognitive development that could be traced to their mothers' employment outside the home (Zimmerman & Bernstein, 1983). The only clearly negative finding about the children of working mothers has come out in one study, which found lower IQ scores among 4-year-old sons of working parents (Gold & Andres, 1978b; Gold, Andres, & Glorieux, 1979). This seems to be still one more example of the greater vulnerability of boys in many areas.

One-on-one contact is important for babies and toddlers, but this doesn't have to come from the mother—it can also come from other caregivers. Furthermore, one study of middle-class preschoolers found that the children of working mothers had just as much one-on-one contact with their mothers as the children of mothers who were at home (Goldberg, 1977).

Child development is so complex that we can rarely say that one single element is good or bad for a child. We need to know more than the simple fact that a mother is working. What, for example, is the mother like when she is home? If she were at home full time, would she be resentful about not being able to work and take it out on the child? What kind of care is the child getting while the mother is away—is it stimulating, affectionate, and stable—or is it inattentive, uncaring, and erratic? Only when we have answers to questions like these can we evaluate a child's situation (L. Hoffman, 1979).

School-Age Children The school-age children of working mothers seem to benefit from two conditions of family life: they tend to live in more structured homes, with clear-cut rules, and they are usually encouraged to be more independent than the children of mothers who are at home. (The only exception to this encouragement of independence appears to occur when the mother feels guilty about working.)

The daughters of working mothers achieve more than the daughters of full-time homemakers and score higher on tests of self-esteem and other measures of adjustment. This may be due to a combination of factors that may include the encouragement of competence and independence in females by both parents, a closer relationship with their fathers, and the role model that their mothers provide for them.

The findings concerning boys are less clear-cut, less uniformly positive, and more varied by social class. The sons of working mothers do have less stereotyped views of men and women, seeing women as more competent and men as warmer, than the sons of women who remain at home. This is less pronounced among boys in lower-class families. These boys are also more likely to have strained relations with their fathers, possibly because both fath-

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ers and sons may view the mother's working as an indication that the father is not able to fulfill his role as provider. This tension between father and son does not show up in middle-class families, but some middle-class boys score lower on intelligence tests than their counterparts whose mothers do not go off to work. It seems that there are still unanswered questions regarding mothers' influence on their sons' academic achievements and how much this influence is affected by employment. If these effects are due to males' seeing a woman's working as evidence of a man's inadequacy, it's likely that now, when the *typical* mother is a working mother, such feelings won't prevail and that sons will not be adversely affected by their mothers' employment.

Adolescents During this period of development, the needs of the child and the needs of the parent both seem to be met by a mother's employment outside the home. In one recent study, 7 out of 10 teenagers said that their mothers' working at this time in the children's lives had either positive or no effects on them (General Mills, Inc., 1981). Teenagers want to be independent—able to make their own decisions without being told what to do. They like being on their own. They don't want to feel like "mama's boys" or "mama's girls." They resent having to answer for the way they spend every minute. Mothers who are at home are more likely to continue to direct their adolescents' activities, and when their well-meaning advice or questions are rejected, they often feel personally rebuffed.

Away much of the day, the employed mother avoids some of this conflict. In addition, she is obtaining a sense of self-esteem and competence in connection with her job as opposed to her mothering abilities, which are needed less at this stage of her children's lives. This is probably why working mothers of adolescents seem to feel better about themselves—their competence, their attractiveness, and their degree of self-fulfillment.

Their adolescent children are better adjusted socially, feel better about themselves, have more of a sense of belonging, and get along better with their families and with their friends at school (Gold & Andres, 1978a). Adolescent daughters of working women make a particularly strong showing. They "are more outgoing, independent, active, highly motivated, score higher on a variety of indices of academic achievement, and appear better adjusted on social and personality measures" (L. Hoffman, 1979, p. 864).

Sibling Relationships in Middle Childhood

Every morning Vicky walks to school with her younger sister, Jessica. When it's just the two of them, their 10-minute walk is usually filled with talk and laughter, but on the days Vicky's best friend, Martha, joins them, Vicky tends to get bossy, and an argument usually erupts between the sisters, ending with Jessica in tears. "She's such a baby," Vicky sighs to Martha.

Yet Vicky waits for Jessica every morning, and if for some reason Vicky has to go to school by herself, she feels that the day has started off wrong. The tie between these sisters, just 2 years apart, is close, intense, and—ultimately—loving, despite their frequent squabbles.

The special relationship between brothers and sisters is fully apparent by middle childhood. Children can see that the relation is more enduring and

The special relationship between siblings is fully apparent by middle childhood. Older sisters are often particularly effective teachers, and younger siblings enjoy learning from and imitating the older ones in the family.



that it runs deeper than ordinary friendships. A fight with a friend can seem to threaten the friendship, but a fight with a brother or sister does not endanger that relationship.

The birth of a sibling begins an ambivalent love-hate relation that often continues throughout life. Younger siblings are apt to resent the power and control held by the eldest sibling, and yet they also imitate the eldest sibling and look to him or her for guidance and approval. The eldest sibling, meanwhile, may resent the affection that the parents give the younger siblings but may enjoy the respect and attention of his or her brothers and sisters. The closest and most ambivalent sibling relations appear to be between those closest in age (Bryant, 1982).

Siblings' influences are either *direct*, affecting the siblings involved, or *indirect*, through their impact on each other's relationship with their parents. Let's see how they work.

Direct Influences of Siblings In middle childhood, siblings are especially important in helping children learn how to deal with dependency needs, as they experience their sibs' dependence on them and their own dependence on their siblings. Sibling relations also provide an important arena for learning how to resolve conflicts. While brothers and sisters often quarrel, the ties of blood and physical closeness impel them to make up, since they can't avoid seeing each other every day. Thus they learn that the expression of anger doesn't mean the end of a relationship. Since siblings' quarrels often stem from uneven power bases, younger siblings in particular often become quite skillful in sensing other people's needs, negotiating for what they want, and compromising.

While siblings in our society do less active caretaking of their younger

brothers and sisters than is common in many other countries, a good deal of it still takes place. Working parents often delegate an older child to mind the younger ones until the parents come home, and older sibs often help younger ones with their homework problems (which they can often deal with better than the parents, who've long since forgotten the topics and techniques of schoolwork in the elementary grades).

Older sisters have been found to be particularly effective teachers. Girls are better teachers of their own younger siblings than of unrelated children, while for boys the reverse is true. Both boys and girls are better teachers of same-sex siblings than of those of the other sex.

Girls talk more to their younger siblings than boys do: they give more explanations and feedback, and they are more likely to use the *deductive* method (explaining, describing, demonstrating, and illustrating), while boys more often use the *inductive* approach (giving examples and letting the learner abstract the concept) (Cicirelli, 1976a). When girls want their younger sibs to do something, they're more apt to reason with them or make them feel obligated, while boys tend to attack (Cicirelli, 1976b).

Some of this difference in styles may be due to simple sex typing, the fact that different kinds of behavior are encouraged more for one sex than for the other. It may also have roots in the tendency of girls to identify more with their mothers. And it may relate more to males' increased emotional vulnerability, which makes them react more to being displaced by a younger sibling, causes them to be more jealous, and makes them act in more hostile ways toward the usurper.

There are also differences in styles and effectiveness depending on age, position in the family, and age-spacing. Eldest children are bossier. They're more likely to attack, interfere with, ignore, or bribe their siblings, while second-born children are more likely to plead or reason with their siblings or to attack the property of a sibling. Children are also more apt to be offensive with same-sex siblings and to be conciliatory with siblings of the other sex. Two brothers quarrel more than any other sibling combination (Cicirelli, 1976a). Younger siblings are more likely to accept help and direction from older sisters or from siblings of either sex who are 4 years older than themselves. Children are more likely to work on their own when they are with older brothers or siblings of either sex who are only 2 years older than themselves. The most influence is exerted by a sister who is at least 4 years older. Siblings both teach and learn differently when interacting with each other from the way they teach and learn when interacting with a nonsibling.

Indirect Influences of Siblings Parents with more than one child have to divide their time, sometimes attending to one, sometimes to another. Sensitive parents can usually handle these demands quite well, but what if one of the children is disabled and requires an unusual amount of care? Do the siblings suffer from inadequate attention?

Apparently, they do not. A study of nonhandicapped children, aged 6 to 18, from 239 families with disabled children found that these nonhandicapped siblings were no more likely to have psychological problems than the children randomly selected for a comparison group (Breslau, Weitzman, & Messenger, 1981). It seems that the parents of handicapped children remain sensitive and attentive to the needs of their healthier children.

The way parents assign chores to children is an important indirect influence of siblings. For example, mothers talk more, explain more, and give more feedback to children with older brothers than to children with older sisters (Cicirelli, 1976a). What has that discovery got to do with chores? Apparently, mothers call on older daughters more than on older sons to take over part of the parental role in helping younger siblings.

Children of Divorce

— compare to death?

Children hurt all over when their parents' marriages break up. They feel as much pain and confusion as the separating couples do—and maybe more. For many this family disruption is the central event of their childhood, with ramifications that follow them into adulthood. While the divorce rate declined in 1983 for the second year in a row, there are still more than 1 million children a year undergoing this trauma, and estimates are that between one-third and one-half of all children born in the 1970s will live through their parents' divorce (Wallerstein, 1980; Wegman, 1983; National Center for Health Statistics, 1983; USDHHS, 1984).

Divorce is traumatic for everyone. The dissolution of a marriage stirs up powerful emotions—anger, hate, bitter disappointment, failure, and self-doubt—in husband, wife, and children. Children react to the breakup of their parents' marriage even more severely than they would react to the death of a parent (Rutter, 1979). No matter how unhappy a marriage has been, its breakup still usually comes as a shock to the children. During the process of adjustment, the children of divorcing parents often feel afraid of the future, guilty about their own (usually imaginary) role in causing the divorce, hurt at the rejection they feel from the parent who moves out, and angry at both parents. They may become depressed, hostile, disruptive, irritable, lonely, sad, accident-prone, or even suicidal; they may suffer from fatigue, insomnia, skin disorders, loss of appetite, or inability to concentrate; and they may lose interest in schoolwork and in social life.

Age Differences and Reactions to Divorce Although no two children react in exactly the same way, certain patterns emerge for children of different ages, largely as a result of their levels of cognitive and emotional development (Neal, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Preschoolers (2½ to 6 years) show signs of great stress. Those from 2½ to 3½ whine, cry, cling, have sleep problems, and wet the bed. Four-year-olds whine and cry, hit other children, and blame themselves. Five- and six-year-olds are more anxious and more aggressive; they crave physical contact.

Preschoolers are likely to have two kinds of fantasies: terrifying ones in which they're abandoned and soothing ones in which their parents reunite. In one study, all the preschoolers who played house put the mother and father dolls in bed together, hugging each other (Wallerstein, 1983). Their cognitive egocentrism makes their problems worse: because they have difficulty understanding another's point of view, they may feel that something they did caused the divorce. They tend to think that the parent who left did so because they themselves did something bad.

Children of elementary school age (6 to 12 years) also may be very frightened and may, when they first hear the news, run to a neighbor in a state of

panic or be overcome by severe vomiting spells. They often become bitter toward, and angry with, one or both parents, especially the one they blame for causing the divorce. They may act out their anger by stealing or lying, or they may take it out on themselves with headaches and stomachaches.

They're often aware of conflicts between their parents, but younger schoolchildren still feel responsible for having caused the divorce (maybe by having done something that caused a fight between their parents), and they also feel responsible for making their parents feel better. Older schoolchildren have a better understanding of their parents' inner feelings and of the conflicts that arise when two people's attitudes and expectations don't match. They often believe that their parents are separating because they have changed or because their relationship has changed, but they believe that such changes can be reversed if the parents try hard enough.

Young adolescents (13 to 15 years) also feel anger, depression, guilt, and despair. They may worry about money or become very active sexually. They may begin to compete with the parent of the same sex or buckle under the strain of being the "man" or "woman" of the household. These young people believe that their parents divorced because of a bad relationship that was due to personality problems or irreconcilable differences or to self-contradictions between what the parents' real personalities are and the way they act. They don't understand that two people with good intentions can still affect each other negatively.

Parents and counselors who want to help a child adjust to divorce need to be aware of what the child believes and is capable of grasping.

Adjustment to Divorce The children of divorcing parents face a special set of challenges and burdens in addition to the usual tasks of emotional development during the growing-up years. In a longitudinal study of 60 divorcing families in California whose children ranged in age from 3 to 18 at the time of the separation, six special tasks emerged as crucial to such children's emotional development (Wallerstein, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980):

- 1 *Acknowledging the reality of the marital rupture.* Small children often don't understand what has happened, and many children of various ages initially deny the separation. Others either are overwhelmed by fantasies of total abandonment or retreat into fantasies of reconciliation. Most children, however, do face the facts of the divorce by the end of the first year of separation.
- 2 *Disengaging from parental conflict and distress and resuming customary pursuits.* At first, children are often so preoccupied with worry that they can't concentrate in school, can't play with other children, and can't take part in other usual activities. They need to get some distance between themselves and their distraught parents, and they need to go back to living their own lives. Fortunately, most children are able to do this by the end of the first 1 to 1½ years after the separation.
- 3 *Resolving loss.* Absorbing the multiple losses caused by divorce may be the single most difficult task for children. They need to adjust to the loss of the parent they're not living with, the security of feeling loved and cared for by both parents, their familiar daily routines and family traditions, and often a whole way of life. Some children take years to deal with these

losses, and some never do, carrying their sense of being rejected, unworthy, and unlovable into adulthood.

- 4 *Resolving anger and self-blame.* "Children and adolescents do not believe in no-fault divorce. They may blame one or both parents or they may blame themselves" (Wallerstein, 1983, p. 239). Children realize that divorce, unlike death, is voluntary, and they often remain angry for years at the parent (or parents) who could do such a terrible thing to them. When and if they do reach the stage of forgiving both their parents and themselves, they feel more powerful and more in control of their lives.
- 5 *Accepting the permanence of the divorce.* Many children hold on for years to the fantasy that their parents will be reunited, even through the remarriages of both. They often accept the situation only when they achieve psychological separation from their parents in adolescence or early adulthood.
- 6 *Achieving realistic hope regarding relationships.* Many youngsters who have adjusted well in other ways come through a divorce feeling afraid to take a chance on intimate relationships themselves, for fear that they'll fail as their parents did. They may become cynical, depressed, or simply uncertain about the possibility of finding lasting love.

Many children do, of course, resolve all these tasks, more or less, and are able to come through the painful experience of divorce with their egos basically intact. Their ability to do this seems to be related partly to their own resilience (see the discussion of children's resilience later in this chapter) and partly to the way their parents handle issues related to the separation (see "The Everyday World").

The One-Parent Family

An important consequence of a high divorce rate is that many children are raised by single parents. Single-parent families may be created when one parent dies or when the mother never marries, but they are most commonly the result of the breakup of the family after divorce, separation, or desertion. Twenty percent of American children live in a home with only one parent, and in 90 percent of those homes the father is the absent partner. Still, the number of single fathers increased 180 percent between 1970 and 1984, when almost 600,000 divorced and separated men had custody of their children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985). Children who do live with their fathers tend to be of school age or older (Espenshade, 1979). The number of single-parent families doubled between 1970 and 1982, but the rate of increase has slowed.

Children growing up in one-parent homes have special stresses and problems with adjustment. They don't have two adults to share the responsibilities for child rearing, to provide a higher income, to more closely approximate the cultural expectations of the "ideal family," and to serve as sex-role models and demonstrate the interplay of personalities. A long-standing controversy about single-parent homes, especially when the single parent is the mother, concerns social deviance. Do children with only one parent get into more trouble than those with two? One study, using an unusually detailed survey of 7514 noninstitutionalized young people, concludes that young people in mother-only homes are indeed more likely than those in two-parent homes

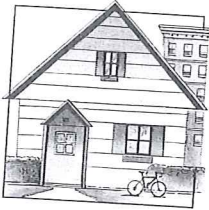


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Source: Adapted from

A CHILD'S WORLD . . . THE EVERYDAY WORLD



How can parents help children adjust to divorce? The following guidelines are based on the advice of numerous experts on family relations:

- *All the children should be told at the same time about the divorce, in language suited to their age.* Some 80 percent of preschoolers are given no explanation because their parents think that they're too young to understand (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Even very young children do understand, however, that a change is taking place, and they need to be told, often in different words, what's happening. Both parents should be present so that the children can see that both parents are still deeply involved with their lives and will continue to be available to them.
- *Children should be told only as much as they need to know.* It may be tempting for parents to discuss openly what they see as the cause of the divorce—an affair, alcoholism, compulsive gambling, or sexual incompatibility, for example. Yet this may confuse and wound children far more than it helps them. It puts a heavy burden on them to judge the parent who is "in the wrong." At a time when they need as much emotional support as possible, they may lose faith in one parent, and maybe both.
- *Children need to know that they did not cause the divorce.* Young children tend to see the whole world as revolving around themselves and often assume that something they did or thought drove their parents to divorce. The ensuing guilt can torture a child.
- *Parents must emphasize the finality of their decision.* The fantasy of the parents' reunion is almost universal. As long as children dream of this, they can't make progress in accepting reality. Once they give up believing that they have the power to reunite their parents, they can pay attention to lessening the pain of the rupture.
- *Arrangements for the children's care should be carefully explained.* Although children may not express their fear of abandonment, they need reassurance that they will continue to be cared for. Parents need to explain custody arrangements in detail.
- *Children should be reassured of both parents' continuing love.* They need to know that there is no such thing as divorce between parent and child and that even the parent who does not have custody will continue to love and care for them.
- *Children should be encouraged to express feelings of fear, sadness, and anger.* When they can express these emotions openly, they can begin to understand and deal with them. Parents can help by admitting their own sadness, anger, and confusion. They can also seek out a discussion group for children of divorced parents.
- *Limits should be set on children's behavior.* The single parent should maintain firm, friendly, discipline. Children need to know that someone stronger loves them enough to stop them from losing control.
- *Parents should enlist the help of other adults—teachers, scout leaders, or relatives and friends.* A person outside the immediate family can often demonstrate a caring concern that helps a child through this crisis.
- *Battling parents should declare a truce around the children.* Divorced parents don't have to be friends, but it's a great help to their children if they can cooperate on child-rearing issues.
- *Children should not be used as weapons.* Children suffer when they're forced to transmit angry messages or relay information, when they're asked to choose sides, or when family visits turn into battles. Parents who use children this way are sacrificing their children's welfare for their own immediate satisfactions.
- *Parents must recognize that there is a real conflict between their needs and their children's needs.* Parents need to be out with other adults, but children need their parents' company. Adults have to be sensitive to this problem and work out solutions that will meet the needs of both generations.
- *Children's lives should be changed as little as possible.* Any change is stressful, and so the fewer adjustments children have to make, the more energy they have to cope with the major one. If possible, the parent who has custody should postpone taking a job for the first time or moving to a new house. If changes must be made, parents need to realize that children need extra understanding.
- *Parents should use whatever resources they can find for themselves and their children.* This includes helpful books, discussion groups, and community programs.

Source: Adapted from Olds, 1980.

to be arrested or have repeated encounters with police officers. The tendency to get into trouble declines when another adult lives in the home. These findings are based on old data (from a survey done between 1966 and 1970), and the authors acknowledge that new data might lead to somewhat different conclusions (Dornbusch et al., 1985).

Still, these findings support the commonsense view that the richer the family relationships, the more the children benefit. They also support the common idea that as children grow older and more independent, single parents need more help in guiding them. Yet the one-parent home is not necessarily pathological, and the two-parent family is not always healthy. Other research has concluded that the attitudes of a single parent are more important in determining the sexual attitudes of children than the fact of single parenthood itself; that children of unwed mothers are no more likely to be emotionally disturbed than children of married parents (Klein, 1973); that, in general, children grow up better adjusted when they have a good relationship with one parent than when they grow up in a two-parent home characterized by discord and discontent (Rutter, 1983); and that an inaccessible, rejecting, or hostile parent is more damaging than an absent one (Hetherington, 1980).

Many adoption agencies accept the idea that a one-parent home can be healthy and will place some children in single-parent homes. The agencies believe that happy couples make the best parents but that a loving, capable single adult can provide a child with a healthy home. Almost no American agency will let a single person adopt a normal white American baby, however; eager couples are too easy to find (Bolles, 1984).

Emotional Disturbances in Childhood

Unfortunately, emotional disturbances in childhood are not uncommon. Between 5 and 15 percent of American children are estimated to have mental health problems, which take a variety of forms (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1980c). Sometimes they show up in uncharacteristic behavior, and sometimes they respond favorably to relatively brief treatment. At other times difficulties are harder to resolve.

The most common way for children's emotional difficulties to surface is in their behavior. Children show by what they do that they need help. They fight, they lie, they steal, they destroy property, and they break rules laid down by parents, teachers, and other people in authority. Extreme forms of this behavior, which get youngsters in trouble with the law, will be discussed in the section on juvenile delinquency in Chapter 16.

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

Acting-Out Behavior

Lying and stealing are among the most common forms of *acting-out behavior* in childhood. Almost all children make up fanciful stories as a form of make-believe or lie occasionally to avoid punishment. But when children past the age of 6 or 7 continue to tell tall tales, they are often signaling a sense of

Acting-out behavior (for example, fighting or stealing) that is caused by emotional difficulties.

insecurity. They need to make up glamorous stories about themselves to secure the attention and esteem of others; or, when lying becomes habitual or transparently obvious, they may be showing hostility toward their parents (Chapman, 1974).

Similarly, occasional minor stealing is common among children. While it needs to be dealt with, it is not necessarily a sign that anything is seriously wrong. But when children repeatedly steal from their parents or steal so blatantly from others that they are easily caught, they are again often showing their hostility toward their parents and their parents' standards. In some cases, the stolen items appear to be "symbolic tokens of parental love, power, or authority" (Chapman, 1974, p. 158). This seems to be the case with a lonely boy, for example, who feels inadequate and seems to bolster himself by holding on to the money and objects he steals from his father. Any chronic type of antisocial behavior needs to be looked into and examined as a possible symptom of deep-seated emotional upset.

Hyperactivity

The story is all too familiar to many parents and teachers. Johnny can't sit still, can't finish a simple task, can't keep a friend, and is always in trouble. His teacher says, "I can't do a thing with him." The family doctor says, "Don't worry; he'll grow out of it." And the next-door neighbor says, "He's a spoiled brat." A 1984 conference of the National Institutes of Health concluded that a combination of genetic, neurological, biochemical, and environmental factors causes this kind of behavior.

In fact, there are so many possible causes of hyperactivity, and their symptoms are so similar, that it is difficult to diagnose what has caused any particular case. Without a proper diagnosis, it is hard to be certain of the proper treatment. Some cases are associated with premature birth, trauma to the head, and infections. These causes can lead to other symptoms of brain damage, like retardation. Lead poisoning is another possible cause. Family stress is yet a third (Hadley, 1984).

Formally known as *attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity* (American Psychiatric Association, 1980), this syndrome has three major symptoms—inattention, impulsivity, and a great deal of activity at inappropriate times and in inappropriate places, like classrooms. These traits appear to some degree in all children. In about 3 percent of school-age children (10 times more boys than girls), they are so pervasive that they interfere with the child's functioning in school and other aspects of daily life. These children are considered hyperactive (American Psychiatric Association, 1980).

Parents and teachers can often help hyperactive children do better at home and in school through a variety of special techniques. First, they have to understand and accept the child's basic temperament. Then they can teach the child how to break up his or her work into small, manageable, segments; they can incorporate physical activity into the daily classroom schedule; and they can offer alternative ways of demonstrating what the child has learned (such as individual conferences or tape-recorded reports, which take the place of written reports) (M. A. Stewart & Olds, 1973).

Sometimes one of a family of stimulant drugs is prescribed for a hyperactive child. These drugs often help children to focus their attention on the



(© 1982 Robert Houser/Photo Researchers, Inc.)

Stealing in a clothing store is one common example of acting-out behavior. It is often motivated by anger at parents and other authorities.

Attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity A syndrome characterized by inattention, impulsivity, and considerable activity at inappropriate times and in inappropriate places.

task at hand and thus to concentrate better (Charles, Schain, Zelniker, & Guthrie, 1979). The drugs do not help all hyperactive children do better in school, though. And even when they do appear to bring about an improvement in performance in school, it is important to consider the long-range effects of giving drugs to solve a nonmedical problem. If, as many observers believe, these are basically normal children, what will be the ultimate effects of masking their true personalities? Because we don't yet know the answer to this question and other, equally important ones about the administration of stimulant drugs to children, it is best to consider these drugs only as a last resort, after more conservative ways of handling the problem have been tried.

In recent years, much attention has been given to the possibility of helping these children by putting them on a diet free of artificial food colorings and flavorings. However, the benefit of an additive-free diet has not held up under research. The conference of the National Institutes of Health concluded that special diets help only a small number of hyperactive children and should not be recommended in all cases (Hadley, 1984).

At present there is no cure for hyperactivity, but the absence of a cure does not imply lifelong detriments. Some hyperactive children function normally as young adults. Only a few have significant psychiatric or antisocial problems when they reach adulthood. The majority, however, continue to have problems with concentration and impulsive behavior that lead to difficulties at work, strain personal relationships, and threaten self-esteem (Hechtman & Weiss, 1983).

Disorders with Physical Symptoms

Some troubling behaviors may be caused by delays or abnormalities of development related to biological maturation. Children often outgrow these conditions but may suffer undesirable side effects in the meantime. For example, a little boy who wets his bed is handicapped in his social life because he can't sleep over at a friend's house or go away to summer camp. A little girl who develops a facial tic is humiliated when other children make fun of her. So the appearance of any of the following conditions calls for attention.

Bed-Wetting Most children stay dry, day and night, by the age of 3 to 5 years, but bed-wetting (**enuresis**) is the most common chronic condition seen by the typical pediatrician (Starfield, 1978). At age 5, about 7 percent of boys wet the bed, and 3 percent of girls do so; and at age 10, it's 3 percent of boys and 2 percent of girls (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). Most outgrow the habit without any special help, and so by age 18 only 1 percent of males still wet the bed and virtually no females do. Fewer than 1 percent of bed wetters have any physical disorder, and researchers are still trying to find out why the other 99 percent can't stay dry at night. There is a wide range of theories, including emotional disturbance (children who wet the bed periodically often do so after some emotionally charged episode, although most enuretic children have no other symptoms of psychological disturbance); genetic factors (adults who wet the bed in childhood are more likely to have enuretic children, and identical twins are more likely than fraternal twins to be concordant for bed-wetting); physiological factors (enuretic children have functionally small bladders and some disturbance of sleep cycles); a lack of proper training; and

Enuresis Bed-wetting.

delayed maturation of the nervous system (Bakwin, 1971c; Barker, 1979; Starfield, 1978; M. A. Stewart & Olds, 1973). In most cases it is impossible to pinpoint the precise cause.

Part of the treatment includes reassuring children and parents that the problem is common, that in itself it is not serious, and that the child should not be blamed or punished. One guideline is for parents not to do anything unless children themselves see their bed-wetting as a problem. Some of the most effective measures for treating enuresis include rewarding the child for staying dry; using electric devices that ring bells or buzzers when the child begins to urinate; administering various drugs; and teaching the child to practice controlling the sphincter muscles that control bladder function (Chapman, 1974).

Soiling Soiling the underpants with fecal matter (*encopresis*) is a problem that sometimes begins simply because a child becomes so absorbed in play that he or she neglects to go to the bathroom. It may also arise from constipation that makes defecation painful, from short-term emotional stress caused by such experiences as the birth of a sibling or the illness or death of a parent, or from more deeply entrenched emotional problems.

About 1 percent of 5-year-olds—mostly boys—have encopresis, and 25 percent of these children also wet the bed. The problem usually disappears without treatment, although it may last for 2 or 3 years. With treatment, it often improves in a few weeks or months. In any case, it is rarely seen after puberty. Yet it should be dealt with, since it can have severe emotional effects while it lasts, stemming from the fact that the encopretic child emits such a foul odor that he or she is subject to ostracism, ridicule, and scorn.

Treatments include structuring a definite time of day for defecating, with a reward for achievement; administering a laxative or stool softener; and counseling the parents to help them resolve situational stresses such as conflicts over toilet training, their obsession with the child's bowel functioning, or sibling rivalry (Chapman, 1974; M. A. Barker, 1979; Stewart & Olds, 1973).

Tics Children often develop *tics*—repetitive, involuntary muscular movements, known as *stereotyped movement disorders*. They blink their eyes, hunch their shoulders, twist their necks, bob their heads, lick their lips, grimace, grunt, snort, and utter guttural or nasal sounds. About 12 to 24 percent of schoolchildren—more boys than girls—have a history of tics, which usually appear first between the ages of 4 and 10 and generally go away before adolescence, sometimes to reappear at times of stress (American Psychiatric Association, 1980).

Emotionally caused tics may arise from stresses in the child's past or current relationships. Some psychiatrists feel that children release emotional turmoil in this way. One 8-year-old boy, for example, exhibited several different tics. He was very passive and inhibited, substituting his tics for the aggressive things he wanted to say and do. After a year of weekly psychotherapy sessions, he became more assertive and gradually lost about 95 percent of his tics (Chapman, 1974).

Not all tics are emotionally caused, however. Some seem to have a neurological basis, such as those exhibited by people who suffer from **Tourette's syndrome**, a disorder characterized by a variety of muscular and vocal tics

Encopresis Soiling with fecal matter.

Tic An involuntary, repetitive muscular movement; also known as a stereotyped movement disorder.

Tourette's syndrome A severe and rare neurological disorder characterized by muscular and vocal tics.

(Shapiro, Shapiro, & Wayne, 1973). This malady is rare, with an incidence of 1 in 10,000; usually begins when the child is between the ages of 2 and 15; and is 3 times more common in boys than in girls (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). It appears to be physiological in origin, possibly the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain. The administration of a drug that is known to block the effects of one of the chemicals in the brain often provides dramatic relief. Children who suffer from Tourette's syndrome often lose one tic, only to replace it with another, unlike youngsters who suffer from transient tics of childhood, which tend to disappear without being replaced.

Stuttering *Stammering; repetitive speech.*

Stuttering At least 4 times as common in boys as in girls, *stuttering*, which runs in families, generally begins before age 12. The peak times of occurrence are between the ages of 2 to 3½ and 5 to 7. Most children stop stuttering spontaneously, about 1 percent continue to stutter in adolescence, and some 2 million American adults continue to stutter (American Psychiatric Association, 1980; Pines, 1977).

Theories about the causes of stuttering include physical explanations such as faulty training in articulation and breathing, factors related to brain functioning, and a defect in the system that provides feedback about one's own speech. Theories linking it to emotional causes point to parental pressures concerning proper speech and deep-seated emotional conflicts (Barker, 1979; Pines, 1977). Treatment is varied also; it includes psychotherapy and counseling, speech therapy, the administration of certain drugs, and various other special techniques.

Most of the techniques concentrate on training stutterers to unlearn the patterns of learned motor responses that they have developed over the years. They are taught to speak slowly and deliberately; to breathe slowly and deeply, using the abdominal muscles rather than those of the upper chest; and to start up their voices gently, as opposed to the abrupt and forceful way in which many stutterers begin to speak. Computers to monitor the voice, videotape machines, and metronomes worn like hearing aids are among the battery of technological aids that help stutterers. One program, which uses many of these aids and also has stutterers practice using the telephone, asking strangers for directions, and participating in other high-stress speaking situations, has found good success rates on follow-up but maintains that the ultimate success of any stutterer depends on how much he or she continues to practice the skills learned in the course (Pines, 1977).

Infantile autism *A psychological disorder that begins in the first few months of life and is characterized by a lack of responsiveness to other people and a complete or nearly complete absence of normal speech; also known as "Kanner's syndrome."*

Infantile Autism *Infantile autism*, or *Kanner's syndrome*, is a disorder characterized by a lack of responsiveness to other people. It differs from depression in the severity of the language impairment and in the ability of its sufferers to show strong interest in some stimuli. At one time it was thought that extremely cold parenting caused the disorder, but current research supports the belief that autism arises from a physical disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). In Chapter 2 we saw the strong evidence that autism is largely hereditary—identical twins have a 95.7 percent concordance rate, while fraternal twins have a 23.5 percent concordance rate. Drugs can sometimes help these children, if given along with intensive education and behavior ther-

apy (Geller, Ritvo, Freeman, & Yuwiler, 1982). Boys are 3 times more likely than girls to be affected.

In the eyes of most parents the most striking symptom is the absence of normal attachment behavior. At first this symptom can seem like a blessing, as people say, "My, what a good baby," because the child makes so few demands of the parents. Soon, however, the parents realize that something is dreadfully wrong. (Autism appears by the age of 2½ years and may develop in infants as young as 4 months.) Autistic children do not cuddle, do not make eye contact with caregivers, and either treat all adults as interchangeable or cling mechanically to one person. Most never learn to speak, although some can sing a large repertoire of songs.

Autistic children's stereotyped behavior often takes bizarre, repetitive forms. They may show a fascination with machines that move, staring at an electric fan for hours; they may develop endlessly repeated behavior, such as clapping their hands all day long. Typical childish behavior can take an odd twist: instead of carrying a cuddly object like a pillow, an autistic child may insist on carrying a favorite rubber band.

Such strange behavior can terrify onlookers, and parents often think that these children are brain-damaged, deaf, or mentally retarded. Most, in fact, are retarded; only 30 percent have IQs of 70 or more. Yet many of them can do manipulative or visual and spatial tasks well, and occasionally an autistic child shows an unusual artistic or mechanical talent. For example, an autistic man (Christopher Knowles) wrote the lyrics to Phillip Glass's avant-garde opera *Einstein on the Beach*.

The long-term prospects for these children are not promising, but some do improve. One autistic child in six makes an adequate adjustment and can do some form of work as an adult; another one in six makes a fair adjustment. But four of six remain severely incapacitated for life. Fortunately, the disorder is rare—2 to 4 cases per 10,000 people. For unknown reasons, autism is most common among children from the upper socioeconomic classes.

TREATMENT TECHNIQUES

The choice of a specific mode of treatment for any particular problem depends on many factors: the nature of the problem, the child's personality, the willingness of the family to participate, the availability of treatment in the community, the financial resources of the family, and, very often, the orientation of the professional first consulted.

Psychotherapy

Individual *psychotherapy* itself takes several forms. *Preventive therapy* may be offered to a child at a time of great stress, such as when a parent dies, even before the child exhibits any symptoms of disturbance. Occasional *supportive therapy* offers the child the chance to talk about his or her worries with a friendly and sympathetic person, who can help the youngster cope more easily with the stresses in his or her life. In *play therapy*, the therapist gets clues about what is bothering the child from the way he or she plays with a doll

Psychotherapy A treatment technique in which a therapist generally helps patients gain insights into their personalities and relationships with others and in which the therapist helps them interpret their feelings and behaviors.

(Sybil Shelton/Peter Arnold, Inc.)



Therapists who work with troubled children often encourage them to express themselves through play, which helps bring out emotions.

Family therapy A treatment technique in which the whole family is seen together and is viewed as the patient.

Behavior therapy A treatment approach using principles of learning theory to alter behavior; also known as "behavior modification."

family or other toys. In rare cases, the lengthy, intensive techniques of *child psychoanalysis*, which aim to restructure a child's personality, may be used. In most cases, however, children are not introspective enough to look that deeply into their personalities, nor are they enough in control to make extensive changes.

Most psychotherapy tries to give the child insight into his or her personality traits and into his or her relationships with others, both in the past and in the present (Barker, 1979). To accomplish these aims, the therapist accepts the child's feelings and helps the youngster understand and cope with them. The therapist does this by interpreting what the child says and does, both in the therapy sessions and in everyday life, as reported in the sessions.

Child psychotherapy is usually much more effective when combined with some form of counseling for the parents. Often a different professional helps the parents deal with their sense of inadequacy, resulting from their having had to bring their child for treatment, and with their guilty feeling that they have caused the problem. The professional also focuses on ways to cope most effectively with the present situation.

Family Therapy

In **family therapy** the entire family is the patient. The therapist sees the whole family together, observes the way family members act with one another, and points out to them their patterns in functioning—both the growth-producing patterns and the inhibiting or destructive ones.

Sometimes the child whose problem brings the family into therapy is, ironically, the healthiest member, responding in a relatively wholesome way to a sick situation. This was true in the case of a 10-year-old girl who had threatened her parents with a kitchen knife after they told her that her dog had died, when in fact they had taken him to the ASPCA. Therapy brought out an atmosphere of hostility and dishonesty permeating all the family relationships, an attempt by all members to avoid coming to grips with their problems, and, ultimately, a basic conflict between husband and wife that had set the stage for the girl's problems and those of her 16-year-old brother, who was getting into trouble at school. Through therapy the parents were able to confront their own differences and begin to resolve them, thus taking the first step toward solving the children's problems as well.

Behavior Therapy

Behavior therapy, also called *behavior modification*, uses principles of learning theory to alter behavior—to eliminate undesirable behaviors like bed-wetting and temper tantrums or to develop desirable ones like being on time and doing household chores. A behavior therapist does not look for underlying reasons for a child's behavior and does not try to offer the child insight into his or her situation, but aims simply to change the behavior itself.

The approach is especially effective in dealing with specific fears and with specific problems such as bed-wetting. In operant conditioning, the child gets a reward like candy or praise or a token that can be exchanged for toys whenever he or she exhibits the behavior being encouraged (like putting dirty clothes in the hamper).

Parents and teachers who use this approach find it useful for dealing with many specific behaviors. When a child's problems are more deep-seated, though, behavior therapy needs to be supplemented by psychotherapy for the child, the parents, or both.

Drug Therapy

Over the past three decades the number of available prescription drugs has mushroomed: 90 percent of all the drugs available today were unknown 40 years ago (M. A. Stewart & Olds, 1973). With the proliferation of new drugs has come the use of *drug therapy* to treat emotional disorders in both adults and children. Today, tranquilizers are commonly prescribed for preschool insomniacs, antidepressants for bed wetters, stimulants for hyperactive children, and a range of other medications for children with a variety of behavioral, neurotic, or psychotic problems.

Drug therapy A treatment technique that includes the administration of drugs.

Giving pills to children in order to change their behavior is a radical step, especially since so many medicines have undesirable side effects. In some cases, the drugs themselves relieve only the behavioral symptoms and do not get at the underlying causes. Drugs do have their place in the treatment of some emotional disturbances of childhood, but their use should not eliminate psychotherapy for troubled children.

Stress and Resilience

Throughout this book we emphasize the resilience of children. They often bounce back unaided from terrible strains and stresses; at other times they respond well to help from parents or professionals. Stressful events are part of every childhood. Illness, the birth of a new baby or the anger of older siblings, frustration, and temporary absence of the parents are part of the common coin of childhood experience. Yet children survive, and usually thrive, under such circumstances. Other stresses are not routine, but are all too likely to occur in a child's world. The divorce of the parents, hospitalization, physical or sexual abuse, natural disasters, and wars affect the lives of many children. While recovering from these stresses is harder, loving and attentive adults can help most children overcome these adversities as well. Sometimes, however, the burdens are harder to overcome.

Some stresses persist day in and day out. A life of persistent poverty or social prejudice, for example, is a steady corrosive of the spirit. (One peculiarly modern long-term burden is the fear of nuclear war; see "Around the World.") It is much harder for children to recover from this kind of stress because they have no speedy escape. Another terrible stress is the kind of brutality that reveals to children their parents' inability to protect them completely. The twentieth century has seen children sent to work in concentration camps, children forced to execute other children, children whose parents were murdered by terrorists, and children who were kidnapped and physically harmed. The crimes are so terrible that just naming them is distressing. Many children recover either slowly or not at all after such experiences, and yet a few children do overcome even these great burdens.

A CHILD'S WORLD . . . AROUND THE WORLD



Most children need to learn how to handle dangers that are local and specific. Children in the Amazon basin have to watch out for pythons. Children in New York City must look both ways before crossing a street. Nomadic children need to camp away from places where flash flooding is possible. But a nuclear war can affect children all over the world.

A regular pattern of development occurs for most fears: first, the subject of the fear is vague and terrifying; then children gain some firsthand experience with the subject, and it loses some of the power of mystery; and last, children discover ways to gain some control over the danger. But this pattern does not hold in the case of a nuclear war. Experience is unlikely, and other people have control over whether there will be a nuclear war today or not.

Studies of children in different countries repeatedly find that they know about and fear nuclear war. After a survey of 900 American children found that they worried intensely about nuclear war, three American psychiatrists surveyed 300 Soviet children (aged 10 to 15) about their attitudes. The study found several differences between their opinions and those of the American children. Although children in both countries are pessimistic about surviving a nuclear war, Soviet children are even more pessimistic than American children. Only 3 percent of Soviet children think that they or their families will survive a nuclear war, while 16 percent of American children expect to survive.

Soviet children are more optimistic about avoiding a nuclear war, however. Only 12 percent of Soviet children think that a nuclear war will occur during their lifetimes (38 percent of American children expect to see a nuclear war), and 95 percent of Soviet children think that a nuclear war is avoidable (only 65 percent of American children agree) (Stark, 1984).

Children in the countries directly threatened by a

nuclear attack are not the only ones who worry about it. A survey of 5000 students in Finland found that the most common fear was of a nuclear war. Finland is a neutral country north of the Soviet Union and is not directly threatened by a nuclear attack from either NATO or Warsaw Pact countries. The depth of the children's fear was surprising. A quarter of those surveyed said that during the previous month they had felt strong anxiety about the possibility of a nuclear war, and 10 percent said that they had had nightmares about it (Solantaus, Rimpela, & Taipale, 1984).

What can be done to ease children's fears? Children under the age of 7 need to be reassured and need to be told not to worry, since so many of the issues are beyond their grasp. By the time children are 9 years old, parents should find out what they believe and should clarify any misunderstandings and answer any questions.

One way to allay children's fears might be to tell them stories about the various times when a nuclear war seemed possible and was avoided—for example, at the end of the Korean war, during the Cuban missile crisis, and during especially tense moments of the Vietnam war. These events all show that when the possibility of a nuclear war seems strong, leaders work long hours to avoid it.

Perhaps Soviet children are more optimistic than American children about avoiding a nuclear war because the actions they take to avoid it give them a sense of control. One of the psychiatrists who surveyed them said, "They sign petitions to send to NATO, they belong to International Friendship Clubs. The message they get is that this is helpful, and this gives them a sense of hope. American kids aren't as involved and there is more despair" (Stark, 1984, p. 20).

Since a nuclear war would cost at least millions of lives, destroy the great cities and works of civilization, and abolish the world political and economic order, fear is reasonable. Despair, however, is destructive and should be combated.

The way a child reacts to a particular stressful event depends on many different factors. First is the event itself; different stressors affect children differently, as we pointed out earlier in the discussion of the different reactions children have to a parent's death, compared with their reactions to their parents' divorce. Age is also a consideration, as it is in children's reactions to their parents' divorce. Sex is a factor too: by and large, boys are more vulnerable. A child's academic proficiency seems to be associated with a good response to stress, but it's not clear why. Maybe the high self-esteem of children

who do well in school helps them cope better; maybe these children are better at solving problems in everyday life as well as in their schoolwork; or maybe an inherited factor makes them perform well in school and also handle stress well (Rutter, 1984). Other areas that seem significant, but on which little research has been done, are *inherited differences* in the ability to handle stress; the effect of *differences in temperament*, which seem at least partially genetically determined; and *intelligence* (Rutter, 1983).

Known variously as *invulnerable children* and as *superkids*, **resilient children** are youngsters who bounce back, who rise above the most unfortunate circumstances, the kind that would blight the emotional development of most children. These are the children of schizophrenic parents who don't develop an emotional illness themselves. These are the children of the ghetto who go on to distinguish themselves in the professions. These are the neglected and abused children who go on to form close, intimate relationships and to lead fulfilling lives. In spite of the bad cards they have been dealt by life, these children are achievers and are creative, resourceful, independent, and enjoyable to be with. How do they do it?

Several research studies have identified a number of "protective factors" that operate to reduce the effects of stressors (Anthony & Koupernik, 1974; Garnezy, 1983; Rutter, 1984). They include:

✓ **Resilient children** Children who bounce back from unfortunate circumstances; also called "invulnerable children."

- *The individual child's personality.* Resilient children tend to be adaptable enough to cope with changing circumstances and to be positive thinkers, friendly, sensitive to other people, and independent. They have high levels of self-esteem. The mystery still, of course, is whether they were born with the predisposition to such personalities or whether they developed them in response to factors such as the ones listed below.
- *The child's family.* These children are likely to have a good relationship with parents who support each other or, failing that, to have a close relationship with at least one parent. If they don't have this, they're likely to be close to at least one relative or other adult who expresses interest in them and obviously cares for them, and whom they trust.
- *Learning experiences.* These children are apt to have had experience solving social problems. They have observed positive models—parents, older siblings, or others—dealing with frustration and making the best of a bad situation. They have faced challenges themselves, have worked out solutions, and have learned that they can affect outcomes and exert a measure of control over their lives.
- *Limited risk factors.* Children who have been exposed to only one of a number of factors strongly related to psychiatric disorder (such as discord between the parents, low social status, overcrowding at home, a disturbed mother, a criminal father, and experience in foster care or institutions) are often able to overcome the stress, but when two or more of these factors are present, their risk of developing an emotional disturbance goes up fourfold or more (Rutter, quoted in Pines, 1979). When children aren't besieged on all sides, they can often cope with adverse circumstances.
- *Miscellaneous positive experiences.* Successful experiences in sports, in music, or with other children can help make up for a child's dismal home-life, and in adulthood a good marriage can compensate for poor relationships earlier in life.

A CHILD'S WORLD . . .
PROFESSIONAL VOICES



Michael Rutter is a British psychiatrist whose current field of interest is the "invulnerable child," who can bounce back from even the harshest blows that life can offer. Besides conducting research, he has a clinical practice. Most of his patients are children.

QUESTION: What are the most important things parents can do to make their children resilient?

RUTTER: Good gracious! There's no simple, straightforward answer to that. I think that the sort of qualities we want a child to have are, first, a sense of self-esteem and efficacy—a feeling of your own worth, as well as a feeling that you can deal with things, that you can control what happens to you. One of the striking features of problem families is that they feel at the mercy of fate, which is always doing them an ill turn. So one important quality is a feeling that you are in fact master of your own destiny. Second, you need good relationships and security in those relationships. It's clear that throughout life, from infancy to old age, the support of these relationships is very important. Third, children need to become adaptable, to learn to cope with changing circumstances. To give a concrete example, one study I know of looked at how the stress of hospital admission affected young children and found that the ones who had previously had happy separation experiences—who had stayed overnight with friends, had been looked after by their grannies, or had had good baby-sitters—did better. Fourth, children need some experience with what is now talked about as social problem solving. It's a trendy thing at the moment, but it has a reality.

Source: Pines, 1984; *photo:* Chris Steele-Perkins/Magnum.

Q: I hadn't heard much about that. What is it?

RUTTER: Well, there are a number of programs in the United States, particularly, which help parents teach their children how to deal with social problems. This often means getting the child to think of alternative solutions. Suppose another child takes your toy—what do you do? Hit him? Go crying to your mother? See if you can share it? The idea is to get children to think of a range of solutions and show them the implications of each. But there is a danger that this may become just an intellectual exercise, and one of the real needs is to make it useful in real life.

Q: Are parents the best people to do this?

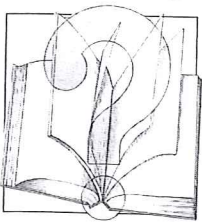
RUTTER: Yes. Not the only people, though. Schools play a very important role too. Children learn problem solving mostly from seeing how their parents deal with things. I mean, what do their parents do when they're frustrated, when they've had a bad day at work, or when somebody is unpleasant to them on their way home? Do they shout and swear and take it out on those around them, or do they find a way to make the situation more positive? It's more important for parents to show children what to do in everyday life than to tell them. . . .

Q: But what if parents give a bad example? Is it possible to teach, "Do as I say, not as I do"?

RUTTER: I think that's an uphill struggle. But it is important to recognize that children have multiple models. There's not just one parent, there are two—or nowadays, three, four, or six. There are older brothers and sisters. There are friends of the family, and there is school. School is thought of as a setting for pedagogy, but it is also a social organization and provides an opportunity for social learning. Teachers experience plenty of stress, and how they deal with it gives important messages to children.

All this research does not, of course, mean that what happens in a child's life doesn't matter. In general, children from unfavorable backgrounds have more problems with adjustment than those from favorable ones. The heartening promise of these findings, however, lies in the recognition that what happens in childhood does not necessarily determine the outcome of a person's life (Kagan, 1984); that many people do have the strength to rise above the most difficult circumstances; and that we are constantly rewriting the stories of our lives for as long as we live.

A CHILD'S WORLD . . .
AND YOU



- Since children's peers are so influential, should parents restrict their friendships to children the parents approve of? Give reasons for your answer.
- Should schools actively seek to reduce racial prejudice?
- Do you think that parents who want a divorce should stay married until all their children have grown up?
- Should a mother whose finances permit a choice stay home and take care of the children instead of going to work?
- When was the first time you remember being treated in a special way, either positive or negative, because of your race, religion, or ethnic background?

Summary

KEY CONCEPTS

- X ■ In Freud's theory, middle childhood is a period of sexual latency or calm between the relatively turbulent periods of early childhood and adolescence. Modern researchers doubt that the period is so calm.
- X ■ In Erikson's theory, middle childhood is the time when children face the fourth crisis of development, industry versus inferiority. Children learn skills needed in their culture, and they risk developing a sense of inferiority if they are much less successful than their peers.
- + ■ Children have a society of their own in which peers and friends preserve an ancient lore of games and jokes that may have been forgotten by their parents and have not yet been learned by their younger siblings.
 - As egocentrism declines, children's capacity for a richer friendship increases. Selman defines five stages of friendship formation: momentary playmateship; one-way assistance; two-way fair-weather cooperation; intimate, mutually shared relationships; and autonomous interdependence.
- X ■ The concept of the self depends on self-definition (making a distinction between the real self and the ideal self) and self-esteem. Coopersmith isolates four factors that affect the development of the self-concept: significance, competence, virtue, and power.
- X ■ Sibling relations can be direct, affecting the siblings involved, or indirect, affecting each other's relations with the parents.

diff. sense of humor?

learns responsibility through siblings?

KEY FINDINGS

- Elementary school children engage in sex play, masturbate, and ask questions about sex.
- X ■ By the end of middle childhood, children typically spend more time with their peers and friends than with their parents.
 - The peer group provides a way for children to compare themselves with others, helps them form attitudes and values, and offers them emotional security.
- X ■ Popular children tend to be healthy and vigorous, well poised, and capable of initiative. They think moderately well of themselves, rather than showing extremely high or low levels of self-esteem.
- Some children are unpopular because they are neglected by their peers, while others are unpopular because they are actively rejected by their peers.

how much time? what %

- Racial integration of elementary schools can contribute to children's acceptance of one another.
- Today's children have fewer stereotyped ideas about sex roles than children of previous generations, and the number of stereotyped ideas they do have declines as they grow older.
- X ■ School-age children of working mothers tend to live in more structured homes, with clear-cut rules, and they are usually encouraged to be more independent than the children of mothers who are at home.
- Children in homes with only one adult are more likely to have trouble with the law than those in two-adult homes; however, an inaccessible, rejecting, or hostile parent does more harm to a child than an absent one.
- Emotional disturbances that occur during childhood include acting-out behaviors, hyperactivity, bed-wetting, soiling, tics, stuttering, childhood depression, and infantile autism.
- Some children overcome even the most terrible disadvantages to lead fruitful, productive lives.

KEY APPLICATIONS

- We can often help children who are unpopular through passive neglect—by moving them to another class, for example. We can help children who have been actively rejected by their peers by teaching them how to get along with peers.
- Children do best under the leadership of a respected adult who in turn respects them. Least effective are repressive adult leaders.
- Intervention starting in the early school years may be needed to replace a passive acceptance of racial stereotypes with the active promotion of positive racial relations. Four useful intervention techniques are (1) increased positive interracial contact, (2) vicarious interracial contact, (3) reinforcement of the color black, and (4) perceptual differentiation.
- The jigsaw technique, in which children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds work together on a project, is also effective.
- A child's adjustment to the parents' divorce requires acknowledging the reality of the divorce, disengaging from the parents' conflict, resuming customary pursuits, resolving the loss of the absent parent, resolving anger and self-blame, accepting the permanence of the divorce, and achieving realistic hope about relationships.
- Psychotherapy for children is usually more effective when combined with some form of counseling for the parents. Other forms of treatment include family therapy, behavior therapy, and drug therapy.

compared to death → X

Suggested Readings

- Bronfenbrenner, V. (1970). *Two worlds of childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R.* New York: Russell Sage. A comparative study of child-rearing methods in the United States and the Soviet Union.
- Coopersmith, S. (1967). *The antecedents of self-esteem.* San Francisco: Freeman. A thorough and thought-provoking report of an in-depth study of 85 boys, 10 to 12 years old, which correlated the boys' levels of self-esteem with their parents' attitudes and child-rearing practices, as well as with other aspects of the boys' functioning.

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- Olds, S. W. (1986). *The working parents survival guide*. New York: Bantam. An in-depth manual for contemporary mothers and fathers which draws on up-to-date research to examine the concerns of working parents and their children. It offers practical solutions for a variety of problems, including finding and evaluating good child care, recognizing the appearance of emotional troubles, and helping children adjust to their parents' separation.
- Pogrebin, L. C. (1983). *Family politics*. New York: McGraw-Hill. A lively profamily book by a feminist who compares traditional and contemporary families, identifies the strengths and weaknesses of various kinds of families, and urges changes in light of the needs and interests of modern parents and children.
- Stewart, M. A., & Olds, S. W. (1973). *Raising a hyperactive child*. New York: Harper & Row. A book for the lay reader that defines the characteristics of hyperactivity, explores possible causes, and offers practical suggestions to parents and teachers concerning day-to-day living with hyperactive children.
- Wideman, J. E. (1984). *Brothers and keepers*. New York: Holt. A true story by a noted novelist that tries to answer the major question of his life: Why did he grow up to be a successful writer and professor, while his younger brother grew up to be a thief, drug dealer, and accessory to murder? Both had the same parents and grew up in the same black ghetto, and yet their lives turned out completely differently. In his search for answers, the author draws on his own memories and on his brother's letters and commentaries on life in prison.