

A young girl with long dark hair, wearing a bright green jacket and a pink hair tie, is shown in profile, reaching out with her hands towards a large, iridescent bubble. The background is a soft-focus green field with trees. The overall mood is joyful and curious.

# Psychology 172

## Developmental Psychology

**Life Span Development**  
**By Lumen Learning**  
Edited for College of the Canyons

*Photo Taken by [Leo Rivas-Micoud](#)*



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# **Attributions**

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# Chapter Five: Early Childhood

**Objectives: At the end of this lesson, you will be able to**

1. Summarize overall physical growth during early childhood.
2. Describe growth of structures in the brain during early childhood.
3. Identify examples of gross and fine motor skill development in early childhood.
4. Identify nutritional concerns for children in early childhood.
5. Examine nutritional content in popular foods consumed by children in early childhood.
6. Describe sexual development in early childhood.
7. Define preoperational intelligence.
8. Illustrate animism, egocentrism, and centration using children's games or media.
9. Describe language development in early childhood.
10. Illustrate scaffolding.
11. Explain private speech.
12. Explain theory of mind.
13. Explain Erikson's stages of psychosocial development for toddlers and children in early childhood.
14. Contrast models of parenting styles.
15. Examine concerns about child care.
16. Explain theories of self from Cooley and Mead.
17. Summarize theories of gender role development.
18. Examine concerns about childhood stress and development.

The objectives are associated with the reading sections below.

## *Physical Development during Early Childhood*

### **Growth in early childhood (Ob1)**

Children between the ages of two and six years tend to grow about three inches in height each year and gain about four to five pounds in weight each year. The average six year old weighs about forty six pounds and is about forty six inches in height. The three year old is very similar to a toddler with a large head, large stomach, short arms and legs. But by the time the child reaches age six, the torso has lengthened and body proportions have become more like those of adults.

This growth rate is slower than that of infancy and is accompanied by a reduced appetite between the ages of two and six. This change can sometimes be surprising to parents and lead to the development of poor eating habits.

## Nutritional concerns (Ob4)

Caregivers who have established a feeding routine with their child can find this reduction in appetite a bit frustrating and become concerned that the child is going to starve. However, by providing adequate, sound nutrition, and limiting sugary snacks and drinks, the caregiver can be assured that 1) the child will not starve; and 2) the child will receive adequate nutrition. Preschoolers can experience iron deficiencies if not given well-balanced nutrition and if given too much milk. Calcium interferes with the absorption of iron in the diet as well.

Caregivers need to keep in mind that they are setting up taste preferences at this age. Young children who grow accustomed to high fat, very sweet and salty flavors may have trouble eating foods that have more subtle flavors such as fruits and vegetables. Consider the following advice about establishing eating patterns for years to come (Rice, F.P., 1997). Notice that keeping mealtime pleasant, providing sound nutrition and not engaging in power struggles over food are the main goals:

### Tips for Establishing Healthy Eating Patterns

1. **Don't try to force your child to eat or fight over food.** Of course, it is impossible to force someone to eat. But the real advice here is to avoid turning food into some kind of ammunition during a fight. Do not teach your child to eat to or refuse to eat in order to gain favor or express anger toward someone else.
2. **Recognize that appetite varies.** Children may eat well at one meal and have no appetite at another. Rather than seeing this as a problem, it may help to realize that appetites do vary. Continue to provide good nutrition, but do not worry excessively if the child does not eat.
3. **Keep it pleasant.** This tip is designed to help caregivers create a positive atmosphere during mealtime. Mealtimes should not be the time for arguments or expressing tensions. You do not want the child to have painful memories of mealtimes together or have nervous stomachs and problems eating and digesting food due to stress.
4. **No short order chefs.** While it is fine to prepare foods that children enjoy, preparing a different meal for each child or family member sets up an unrealistic expectation from others. Children probably do best when they are hungry and a meal is ready. Limiting snacks rather than allowing children to "graze" continuously can help create an appetite for whatever is being served.
5. **Limit choices.** If you give your preschool aged child choices, make sure that you give them one or two specific choices rather than asking "What would you like for lunch?" If given an open choice, children may change their minds or choose whatever their sibling does not choose!
6. **Serve balanced meals.** This tip encourages caregivers to serve balanced meals. A box of macaroni and cheese is not a balanced meal. Meals prepared at home tend to have better nutritional value than fast food or frozen dinners. Prepared foods tend to be higher in fat and sugar content as these ingredients enhance taste and profit margin

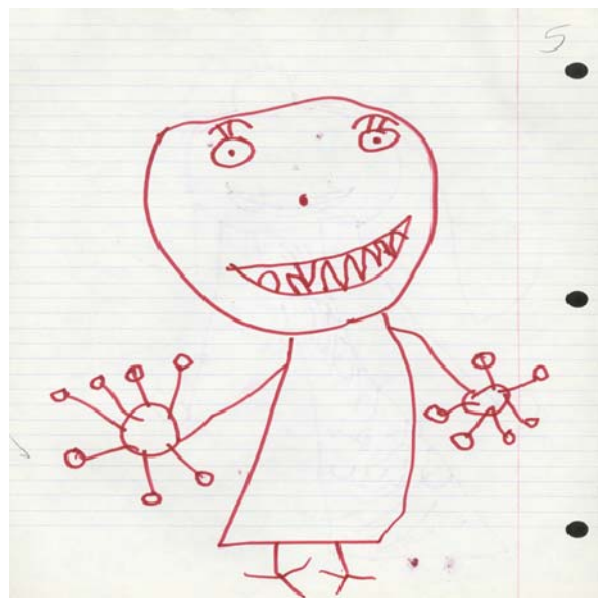
because fresh food is often more costly and less profitable. However, preparing fresh food at home is not costly. It does, however, require more activity. Preparing meals and including the children in kitchen chores can provide a fun and memorable experience.

- 7. Don't bribe.** Bribing a child to eat vegetables by promising dessert is not a good idea. For one reason, the child will likely find a way to get the dessert without eating the vegetables (by whining or fidgeting, perhaps, until the caregiver gives in), and also because it teaches the child that some foods are better than others. Children tend to naturally enjoy a variety of foods until they are taught that some are considered less desirable than others. A child, for example, may learn that the broccoli they have enjoyed is seen as yucky by others unless it's smothered in cheese sauce!

**To what extent do these tips address cultural practices? How might these tips vary by culture?**

### Brain Maturation (Ob2)

**Brain weight:** If you recall, the brain is about seventy five percent of its adult weight by two years of age. By age six, it is at ninety five percent of its adult weight. Myelination and the development of dendrites continues to occur in the cortex and as it does, we see a corresponding change in what the child is capable of doing. Greater development in the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain behind the forehead that helps us to think, strategize, and controls emotion, makes it increasingly possible to control emotional outbursts and to understand how to play games. Consider four or five year old children and how they might approach a game of soccer. Chances are every move would be a response to the commands of a coach standing nearby calling out, "Run this way! Now, stop. Look at the ball. Kick the ball!" And when the child is not being told what to do, he or she is likely to be looking at the clover on the ground or a dog on the other side of the fence! Understanding the game, thinking ahead, and coordinating movement improve with practice and myelination. Not being too upset over a loss, hopefully, does as well.



*Children's Drawing #1*

### Visual Pathways

Have you ever examined the drawings of young children? If you look closely, you can almost see the development of visual pathways reflected in the way these images change as pathways become more mature. Early scribbles and dots illustrate the use of simple

motor skills. No real connection is made between an image being visualized and what is created on paper.

At age three, the child begins to draw wispy creatures with heads and not much other detail. Gradually pictures begin to have more detail and incorporate more parts of the body. Arm buds become arms and faces take on noses, lips and eventually eyelashes. Look for drawings that you or your child has created to see this fascinating trend. Here are some examples of pictures drawn by my daughters from ages two to seven years.



Children's Drawing #2



Children's Drawing #3

**Growth in the hemispheres and corpus callosum:** Between ages three and six, both the left and right hemispheres of the brain grow dramatically. The left side of the brain or hemisphere is typically involved in language skills. The right hemisphere continues to grow throughout early childhood and is involved in tasks that require spatial skills such as recognizing shapes and patterns. The corpus callosum which connects the two hemispheres of the brain undergoes a growth spurt between ages three and six as well and results in improved coordination between right and left hemisphere tasks. (I once saw a five year old hopping on one foot, rubbing his stomach and patting his head all at the same time. I asked him what he was doing and he replied, "My teacher said this would help my corpus callosum!" Apparently, his kindergarten teacher had explained the process!)

### **Motor Skill Development (Ob3)**

Early childhood is a time when children are especially attracted to motion and song. Days are filled with moving, jumping, running, swinging and clapping and every place becomes a playground. Even the booth at a restaurant affords the opportunity to slide around in the



Children's Drawing #4

seat or disappear underneath and imagine being a sea creature in a cave! Of course, this can be frustrating to a caregiver, but it's the business of early childhood. Children continue to improve their **gross motor skills** as they run and jump. They frequently ask their caregivers to "look at me" while they hop or roll down a hill. Children's songs are often accompanied by arm and leg movements or cues to turn around or move from left to right. **Fine motor skills** are also being refined in activities such as pouring water into a container, drawing, coloring, and using scissors. Some children's songs promote fine motor skills as well (have you ever heard of the song "itsy, bitsy, spider"?). Mastering the fine art of cutting one's own fingernails or tying shoes will take a lot of practice and maturation. Motor skills continue to develop in middle childhood-but for preschoolers, play that deliberately involves these skills is emphasized. Go ahead. Sing along and practice your fine motor skills.

### Sexual Development in Early Childhood (Ob6)

Historically, children have been thought of as innocent or incapable of sexual arousal (Aries, 1962). Yet, the physical dimension of sexual arousal is present from birth. But to associate the elements of seduction, power, love, or lust that is part of the adult meanings of sexuality would be inappropriate. Sexuality begins in childhood as a response to physical states and sensations, and cannot be interpreted as similar to that of adults in any way (Carroll, 2007).

**Infancy:** Boys and girls are capable of erections and vaginal lubrication even before birth (Martinson, 1981). Arousal can signal overall physical contentment and stimulation that accompanies feeding or warmth. And infants begin to explore their bodies and touch their genitals as soon as they have the sufficient motor skills. This stimulation is for comfort or to relieve tension rather than to reach orgasm (Carroll, 2007).

**Early Childhood:** Self-stimulation is common in early childhood for both boys and girls. Curiosity about the body and about others' bodies is a natural part of early childhood as well. Consider this example. A mother is asked by her young daughter: "So it's okay to see a boy's privates as long as it's the boy's mother or a doctor that is looking?" The mother hesitates a bit and then responds, "Yes. I think that's alright." "Hmmm," the girl begins, "When I grow up, I want to be a doctor!" Hopefully, this subject is approached in a way that teaches children to be safe and know what is appropriate without frightening them or causing shame.

As children grow, they are more likely to show their genitals to siblings or peers, and to take off their clothes and touch each other (Okami et al., 1997). Masturbation is common for both boys and girls. Boys are often shown by other boys how to masturbate, but girls tend to find out accidentally. And boys masturbate more often and touch themselves more openly than do girls (Schwartz, 1999).

Hopefully, parents respond to this without undue alarm and without making the child feel guilty about their bodies. Instead, messages about what is going on and the appropriate time and place for such activities help the child learn what is appropriate.

### **Cognitive Development**

Early childhood is a time of pretending, blending fact and fiction, and learning to think of the world using language. As young children move away from needing to touch, feel, and hear about the world toward learning some basic principles about how the world works, they hold some pretty interesting initial ideas. For example, how many of you are afraid that you are going to go down the bathtub drain? Hopefully, none of you do! But a child of three might really worry about this as they sit at the front of the bathtub. A child might protest if told that something will happen “tomorrow” but be willing to accept an explanation that an event will occur “today after we sleep.” Or the young child may ask, “How long are we staying? From here to here?” while pointing to two points on a table. Concepts such as tomorrow, time, size and distance are not easy to grasp at this young age. Understanding size, time, distance, fact and fiction are all tasks that are part of cognitive development in the preschool years.

### **Preoperational Intelligence (Ob7, Ob8)**

Piaget’s stage that coincides with early childhood is the preoperational stage. The word operational means logical, so these children were thought to be illogical. However, they were learning to use language or to think of the world symbolically. Let’s examine some Piaget’s assertions about children’s cognitive abilities at this age.

**Pretend Play:** Pretending is a favorite activity at this time. A toy has qualities beyond the way it was designed to function and can now be used to stand for a character or object unlike anything originally intended. A teddy bear, for example, can be a baby or the queen of a far away land!

Piaget believed that children’s pretend play helped children solidify new schemas they were developing cognitively. This play, then, reflected changes in their conceptions or thoughts. However, children also learn as they pretend and experiment. Their play does not simply represent what they have learned (Berk, 2007).

**Egocentrism:** Egocentrism in early childhood refers to the tendency of young children to think that everyone sees things in the same way as the child. Piaget’s classic experiment on egocentrism involved showing children a three dimensional model of a mountain and asking them to describe what a doll that is looking at the mountain from a different angle might see. Children tend to choose a picture that represents their own, rather than the doll’s view. However, when children are speaking to others, they tend to use different sentence structures and vocabulary when addressing a younger child or an older adult. This indicates some awareness of the views of others.



**Syncretism:** Syncretism refers to a tendency to think that if two events occur simultaneously, one caused the other. I remember my daughter asking that if she put on her bathing suit if it would turn to summer!

**Animism:** Animism refers to attributing life-like qualities to objects. The cup is alive, the chair that falls down and hits the child's ankle is mean, and the toys need to stay home because they are tired. Cartoons frequently show objects that appear alive and take on lifelike qualities. Young children do seem to think that objects that move may be alive but after age three, they seldom refer to objects as being alive (Berk, 2007).

**Classification Errors:** Preoperational children have difficulty understanding that an object can be classified in more than one way. For example, if shown three white buttons and four black buttons and asked whether there are more black buttons or buttons, the child is likely to respond that there are more black buttons. As the child's vocabulary improves and more schemes are developed, the ability to classify objects improves.

Conservation of Liquid. Does pouring liquid in a tall, narrow container make it have more?

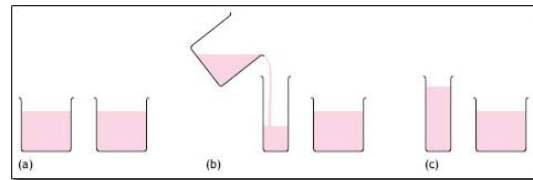


Diagram of pouring liquids

**Conservation Errors:** Conservation refers to the ability to recognize that moving or rearranging matter does not change the quantity. Imagine a two year old and a four year old eating lunch. The four year old has a whole peanut butter and jelly sandwich. He notices, however, that his younger sister's sandwich is cut in half and protests, "She has more!"

### Theory of Mind (Ob13)

Imagine showing a child of three a Bandaid box and asking the child what is in the box. Chances are, the child will reply, "Band-aids." Now imagine that you open the box and pour out crayons. If you ask the child what they thought was in the box before it was opened, they may respond, "crayons". If you ask what a friend would have thought was in the box, the response would still be "crayons". Why? Before about four years of age, a child does not recognize that the mind can hold ideas that are not accurate. So this three year old changes his or her response once shown that the box contains crayons. The **theory of mind** is the understanding that the mind can be tricked or that the mind is not always accurate. At around age four, the child would reply, "crayons" and understand that thoughts and realities do not always match.

This awareness of the existence of mind is part of social intelligence or the ability to recognize that others can think differently about situations. It helps us to be self-conscious or aware that others can think of us in different ways and it helps us to be able to be understanding or empathic toward others. This mind reading ability helps us

to anticipate and predict the actions of others (even though these predictions are sometimes inaccurate).

The awareness of the mental states of others is important for communication and social skills. A child who demonstrates this skill is able to anticipate the needs of others.

### Language Development (Ob9, Ob10, Ob11)

**Vocabulary growth:** A child's vocabulary expands between the ages of two to six from about two hundred words to over ten thousand words through a process called **fast-mapping**. Words are easily learned by making connections between new words and concepts already known. The parts of speech that are learned depend on the language and what is emphasized. Children speaking verb-friendly languages such as Chinese and Japanese as well as those speaking English tend to learn nouns more readily. But those learning less verb-friendly languages such as English seem to need assistance in grammar to master the use of verbs (Imai, et al, 2008). Children are also very creative in developing their own words to use as labels such as a "take-care-of" when referring to John, the character on the cartoon Garfield, who takes care of the cat.

**Literal meanings:** Children can repeat words and phrases after having heard them only once or twice. But they do not always understand the meaning of the words or phrases. This is especially true of expressions or figures of speech which are taken literally. For example, two preschool aged girls began to laugh loudly while listening to a tape-recording of Disney's "Sleeping Beauty" when the narrator reports, "Prince Phillip lost his head!" They image his head popping off and rolling down the hill as he runs and searches for it. Or a classroom full of preschoolers hears the teacher say, "Wow! That was a piece of cake!" The children began asking "Cake? Where is my cake? I want cake!"

**Overregularization:** Children learn rules of grammar as they learn language but may apply these rules inappropriately at first. For instance, a child learns to add "ed" to the end of a word to indicate past tense. Then form a sentence such as "I goed there. I doed that." This is typical at ages two and three. They will soon learn new words such as "went" and "did" to be used in those situations.

**The Impact of Training:** Remember Vygotsky and the Zone of Proximal Development? Children can be assisted in learning language by others who listen attentively, model more accurate pronunciations and encourage elaboration. The child exclaims, "I'm goed there!" and the adult responds, "You went there? Say, 'I went there.' Where did you go?" Children may be ripe for language as Chomsky suggests, but active participation in helping them learn is important for language development as well. The process of **scaffolding** is one in which the guide provides needed assistance to the child as a new skill is learned.

**Private Speech:** Do you ever talk to yourself? Why? Chances are, this occurs when you are struggling with a problem, trying to remember something, or feel very emotional about a situation. Children talk to themselves too. Piaget interpreted this as **egocentric speech** or a practice engaged in because of a child's inability to seeing things from others' points of views. Vygotsky, however, believed that children talk to themselves in order to solve problems or clarify thoughts. As children learn to think in words, they do so aloud before eventually closing their lips and engaging in **private speech** or inner speech. Thinking out loud eventually becomes thought accompanied by internal speech and talking to oneself becomes a practice only engaged in when we are trying to learn something or remember something, etc. This inner speech is not as elaborate as the speech we use when communicating with others (Vygotsky, 1962).

### *Psychosocial Development in Early Childhood: A Look at Self-Concept, Gender Identity, and Family Life*

#### **Self-Concept (Ob16)**

Early childhood is a time of forming an initial sense of self. A self-concept or idea of who we are, what we are capable of doing, and how we think and feel is a social process that involves taking into consideration how others view us. It might be said, then, that in order to develop a sense of self, you must have interactions with others. **Interactionist** theorists, Cooley and Mead offer two interesting explanations of how a sense of self develops.

#### **Interactionism and Views of Self**

**Cooley:** Charles Horton Cooley (1964) suggests that our self concept comes from looking at how others respond to us. This process, known as the **looking-glass self** involves looking at how others seem to view us and interpreting this as we make judgments about whether we are good or bad, strong or weak, beautiful or ugly, and so on. Of course, we do not always interpret their responses accurately so our self-concept is not simply a mirror reflection of the views of others. After forming an initial self-concept, we may use it as a mental filter, screening out those responses that do not seem to fit our ideas of who we are. So compliments may be negated, for example. Think of times in your life when you feel self-conscious. The process of the looking-glass self is pronounced when we are preschoolers, or perhaps when we are in a new school or job or are taking on a new role in our personal lives and are trying to gauge our own performances. When we feel more sure of who we are we focus less on how we appear to others.

**Mead:** Herbert Mead (1967) offers an explanation of how we develop a social sense of self by being able to see ourselves through the eyes of others. There are two parts of the self: the "I" which is the part of the self that is spontaneous, creative, innate, and is

not concerned with how others view us, and the “me” or the social definition of who we are.

When we are born, we are all “I” and act without concern about how others view us. But the socialized self begins when we are able to consider how one important person views us. This initial stage is called “taking the role of the significant other”. For example, a child may pull a cat’s tail and be told by his mother, “No! Don’t do that, that’s bad” while receiving a slight slap on the hand. Later, the child may mimic the same behavior toward the self and say aloud, “No, that’s bad” while patting his own hand. What has happened? The child is able to see himself through the eyes of the mother. As the child grows and is exposed to many situations and rules of culture, he begins to view the self in the eyes of many others through these cultural norms or rules. This is referred to as “taking the role of the generalized other” and results in a sense of self with many dimensions. The child comes to have a sense of self as student, as friend, as son, and so on.

### **Exaggerated Sense of Self**

One of the ways to gain a clearer sense of self is to exaggerate those qualities that are to be incorporated into the self. Preschoolers often like to exaggerate their own qualities or to seek validation as the biggest or smartest or child who can jump the highest. I wonder if messages given in children’s books or television shows that everyone is special are really meaningful to children who want to separate themselves from others on such qualities. This exaggeration tends to be replaced by a more realistic sense of self in middle childhood.

### **Erikson: Initiative vs. Guilt (Ob13)**

The trust and autonomy of previous stages develop into a desire to take initiative or to think of ideas and initiative action. Children may want to build a fort with the cushions from the living room couch or open a lemonade stand in the driveway or make a zoo with their stuffed animals and issue tickets to those who want to come. Or they may just want to get themselves ready for bed without any assistance. To reinforce taking initiative, caregivers should offer praise for the child’s efforts and avoid being critical of messes or mistakes. Soggy washrags and toothpaste left in the sink pales in comparison to the smiling face of a five year old that emerges from the bathroom with clean teeth and pajamas!

### **Gender Identity, Gender Constancy and Gender Roles (Ob17)**

Another important dimension of the self is the sense of self as male or female. Preschool aged children become increasingly interested in finding out the differences between boys and girls both physically and in terms of what activities are acceptable for each. While two year olds can identify some differences and learn whether they are boys or girls, preschoolers become more interested in what it means to be male or female. This self-identification or **gender identity** is followed sometime later with **gender constancy** or the knowledge that gender does not change. **Gender**

**roles** or the rights, expectations and behaviors that are associated with being male or female are learned throughout childhood and into adulthood.

**Freud and the phallic stage:** Freud believed that masculinity and femininity were learned during the phallic stage of psychosexual development. During the phallic stage, the child develops an attraction to the opposite sexed parent but after recognizing that that parent is unavailable, learns to model their own behavior after the same sexed parent. The child develops his or her own sense of masculinity or femininity from this resolution. And, according to Freud, a person who does not exhibit gender appropriate behavior, such as a woman who competes with men for jobs or a man who lacks self-assurance and dominance, has not successfully completed this stage of development. Consequently, such a person continues to struggle with his or her own gender identity.

**Chodorow and mothering:** Chodorow, a Neo-Freudian, believed that mothering promotes gender stereotypic behavior. Mothers push their sons away too soon and direct their attention toward problem-solving and independence. As a result, sons grow up confident in their own abilities but uncomfortable with intimacy. Girls are kept dependent too long and are given unnecessary and even unwelcome assistance from their mothers. Girls learn to underestimate their abilities and lack assertiveness, but feel comfortable with intimacy.

Both of these models assume that early childhood experiences result in lifelong gender self-concepts. However, gender socialization is a process that continues throughout life. Children, teens, and adults refine and modify their sense of self based on gender.

**Learning through reinforcement and modeling:** Learning theorists suggest that gender role socialization is a result of the ways in which parents, teachers, friends, schools, religious institutions, media and others send messages about what is acceptable or desirable behavior as males or females. This socialization begins early-in fact, it may even begin the moment a parent learns that a child is on the way. Knowing the sex of the child can conjure up images of the child's behavior, appearance, and potential on the part of a parent. And this stereotyping continues to guide perception through life. Consider parents of newborns, shown a seven pound, twenty inch baby, wrapped in blue (a color designating males) describe the child as tough, strong, and angry when crying. Shown the same infant in pink (a color used in the United States for baby girls), these parents are likely to describe the baby as pretty, delicate, and frustrated when crying. (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1987). Female infants are held more, talked to more frequently and given direct eye contact, while male infants play is often mediated through a toy or activity.

Sons are given tasks that take them outside the house and that have to be performed only on occasion while girls are more likely to be given chores inside the home such as cleaning or cooking that are performed daily. Sons are encouraged to think for

themselves when they encounter problems and daughters are more likely to be given assistance even when they are working on an answer. This impatience is reflected in teachers waiting less time when asking a female student for an answer than when asking for a reply from a male student (Sadker and Sadker, 1994). Girls are given the message from teachers that they must try harder and endure in order to succeed while boys' successes are attributed to their intelligence. Of course, the stereotypes of advisors can also influence which kinds of courses or vocational choices girls and boys are encouraged to make.

Friends discuss what is acceptable for boys and girls and popularity may be based on modeling what is considered ideal behavior or looks for the sexes. Girls tend to tell one another secrets to validate others as best friends while boys compete for position by emphasizing their knowledge, strength or accomplishments. This focus on accomplishments can even give rise to exaggerating accomplishments in boys, while girls are discouraged from showing off and may learn to minimize their accomplishments as a result.

Gender messages abound in our environment. But does this mean that each of us receives and interprets these messages in the same way? Probably not. In addition to being recipients of these cultural expectations, we are individuals who also modify these roles (Kimmel, 2008).

**How much does gender matter?** In the United States, gender differences are found in school experiences (even into college and professional school, girls are less vocal in the classroom and much more at risk for sexual harassment from teachers, coaches, classmates, and professors), in social interactions and in media messages. The stereotypes that boys should be strong, forceful, active, dominant, and rational and that girls should be pretty, subordinate, unintelligent, emotional, and gabby are portrayed in children's toys, books, commercials, video games, movies, television shows and music. In adulthood, these differences are reflected in income gaps between men and women where women working full-time earn about seventy four percent the income of men, in higher rates of women suffering rape and domestic violence, higher rates of eating disorders for females, and in higher rates of violent death for men in young adulthood. Each of these differences will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

**The impact in India:** Gender differences in India can be a matter of life and death as preferences for male children have been strong historically and are still held, especially in rural areas. (WHO, 2010). Male children are given preference for receiving food, breast milk, medical care and other resources. It is no longer legal to give parents information on the sex of their developing child for fear that they will abort a female fetus. Clearly, gender socialization and discrimination still impact development in a variety of ways across the globe.

## Family Life

### Parenting Styles (Ob14)

Relationships between parents and children continue to play a significant role in children's development during early childhood. We will explore two models of parenting styles. Keep in mind that these most parents do not follow any model completely. Real people tend to fall somewhere in between these styles. And sometimes parenting styles change from one child to the next or in times when the parent has more or less time and energy for parenting. Parenting styles can also be affected by concerns the parent has in other areas of his or her life. For example, parenting styles tend to become more authoritarian when parents are tired and perhaps more authoritative when they are more energetic. Sometimes parents seem to change their parenting approach when others are around, maybe because they become more self-conscious as parents or are concerned with giving others the impression that they are a "tough" parent or an "easy-going" parent. And of course, parenting styles may reflect the type of parenting someone saw modeled while growing up.

**Baumrind** (1971) offers a model of parenting that includes three styles. The first, **authoritarian**, is the traditional model of parenting in which parents make the rules and children are expected to be obedient. Baumrind suggests that authoritarian parents tend to place maturity demands on their children that are unreasonably high and tend to be aloof and distant. Consequently, children reared in this way may fear rather than respect their parents and, because their parents do not allow discussion, may take out their frustrations on safer targets—perhaps as bullies toward peers. **Permissive** parenting involves holding expectations of children that are below what could be reasonably expected from them. Children are allowed to make their own rules and determine their own activities. Parents are warm and communicative, but provide little structure for their children. Children fail to learn self-discipline and may feel somewhat insecure because they do not know the limits. **Authoritative** parenting involves being appropriately strict, reasonable, and affectionate. Parents allow negotiation where appropriate and discipline matches the severity of the offense. A popular parenting program that is offered in many school districts is called "Love and Logic" and reflects the authoritative or democratic style of parenting just described. **Uninvolved** parents are disengaged from their children. They do not make demands on their children and are non-responsive. These children can suffer in school and in their relationships with their peers (Gecas & Self, 1991).

**Lemasters and Defrain** (1989) offer another model of parenting. This model is interesting because it looks more closely at the motivations of the parent and suggests that parenting styles are often designed to meet the psychological needs of the parent rather than the developmental needs of the child. The **martyr** is a parent who will do anything for the child; even tasks that the child should do for himself or herself. All of the good deeds performed for the child, in the name of being a "good parent", may be

used later should the parent want to gain compliance from the child. If a child goes against the parent's wishes, the parent can remind the child of all of the times the parent helped the child and evoke a feeling of guilt so that the child will do what the parent wants. The child learns to be dependent and manipulative as a result. (Beware! A parent busy whipping up cookies may really be thinking "control"!)

The **pal** is like the permissive parent described in Baumrind's model above. The pal wants to be the child's friend. Perhaps the parent is lonely or perhaps the parent is trying to win a popularity contest against an ex-spouse. Pals let children do what they want and focus most on being entertaining and fun and set few limitations. Consequently, the child may have little self-discipline and may try to test limits with others.

The **police officer/drill sergeant** style of parenting is similar to the authoritarian parent described above. The parent focuses primarily making sure that the child is obedient and that the parent has full control of the child. Sometimes this can be taken to extreme by giving the child tasks that are really designed to check on their level of obedience. For example, the parent may require that the child fold the clothes and place items back in the drawer in a particular way. If not, the child might be scolded or punished for not doing things "right". This type of parent has a very difficult time allowing the child to grow and learn to make decisions independently. And the child may have a lot of resentment toward the parent that is displaced on others.

The **teacher-counselor** parent is one who pays a lot of attention to expert advice on parenting and who believes that as long as all of the steps are followed, the parent can rear a perfect child. "What's wrong with that?" you might ask. There are two major problems with this approach. First, the parent is taking all of the responsibility for the child's behavior—at least indirectly. If the child has difficulty, the parent feels responsible and thinks that the solution lies in reading more advice and trying more diligently to follow that advice. Parents can certainly influence children, but thinking that the parent is fully responsible for the child's outcome is faulty. A parent can only do so much and can never have full control over the child. Another problem with this approach is that the child may get an unrealistic sense of the world and what can be expected from others. For example, if a teacher-counselor parent decides to help the child build self-esteem and has read that telling the child how special he or she is or how important it is to compliment the child on a job well done, the parent may convey the message that everything the child does is exceptional or extraordinary. A child may come to expect that all of his efforts warrant praise and in the real world, this is not something one can expect. Perhaps children get more of a sense of pride from assessing their own performance than from having others praise their efforts.

So what is left? Lemasters and Defrain (1989) suggest that the **athletic coach** style of parenting is best. Before you draw conclusions here, set aside any negative experiences you may have had with coaches in the past. The principles of coaching are what are important to Lemasters and Defrain. A coach helps players form strategies, supports



their efforts, gives feedback on what went right and what went wrong, and stands at the sideline while the players perform. Coaches and referees make sure that the rules of the game are followed and that all players adhere to those rules. Similarly, the athletic coach as parent helps the child understand what needs to happen in certain situations whether in friendships, school, or home life, and encourages and advises the child about how to manage these situations. The parent does not intervene or do things for the child. Rather, the parent's role is to provide guidance while the child learns first hand how to handle these situations. And the rules for behavior are consistent and objective and presented in that way. So, a child who is late for dinner might hear the parent respond in this way, "Dinner was at six o'clock." Rather than, "You know good and well that we always eat at six. If you expect me to get up and make something for you now, you have got another thing coming! Just who do you think you are showing up late and looking for food? You're grounded until further notice!"

The most important thing to remember about parenting is that you can be a better, more objective parent when you are directing your actions toward the child's needs and while considering what they can reasonably be expected to do at their stage of development. Parenting is more difficult when you are tired and have psychological needs that interfere with the relationship. Some of the best advice for parents is to try not to take the child's actions personally and be as objective as possible.

**The impact of class and culture** cannot be ignored when examining parenting styles. The two models of parenting described above assume that authoritative and athletic coaching styles are best because they are designed to help the parent raise a child who is independent, self-reliant and responsible. These are qualities favored in "**individualistic**" cultures such as the United States, particularly by the middle class. African-American, Hispanic and Asian parents tend to be more authoritarian than non-Hispanic whites. However, in "**collectivistic**" cultures such as China or Korea, being obedient and compliant are favored behaviors. Authoritarian parenting has been used historically and reflects a cultural need for children to do as they are told. In societies where family members' cooperation is necessary for survival, as in the case of raising crops, rearing children who are independent and who strive to be on their own makes no sense. But in an economy based on being mobile in order to find jobs and where one's earnings are based on education, raising a child to be independent is very important.

Working class parents are more likely than middle class parents to focus on obedience and honesty when raising their children. In a classic study on social class and parenting styles called *Class and Conformity*, Kohn (1977) explains that parents tend to emphasize qualities that are needed for their own survival when parenting their children. Working class parents are rewarded for being obedient, reliable, and honest in their jobs. They are not paid to be independent or to question the management; rather, they move up and are considered good employees if they show up on time, do their work as they are told, and can be counted on by their employers. Consequently, these parents reward

honesty and obedience in their children. Middle class parents who work as professionals are rewarded for taking initiative, being self-directed, and assertive in their jobs. They are required to get the job done without being told exactly what to do. They are asked to be innovative and to work independently. These parents encourage their children to have those qualities as well by rewarding independence and self-reliance. Parenting styles can reflect many elements of culture.

### **Child Care Concerns (Ob15)**

About 77.3 percent of mothers of school-aged and 64.2 percent of mothers of preschool aged children in the United States work outside the home (Cohen and Bianchi, 1999; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Since more women have been entering the workplace, there has been a concern that families do not spend as much time with their children. This, however, is not true. Between 1981 and 1997, the amount of time that parents spent with children has increased overall (Sandberg and Hofferth, 2001).

Seventy-five percent of children under age five are in scheduled child care programs. Others are cared for by family members, friends, or are in Head Start Programs. Older children are often in after school programs, before school programs, or stay at home alone after school once they are older. Quality childcare programs can enhance a child's social skills and can provide rich learning experiences. But long hours in poor quality care can have negative consequences for young children in particular. What determines the quality of child care? One consideration is the teacher/child ratio. States specify the maximum number of children that can be supervised by one teacher. In general, the younger the children, the more teachers required for a given number of children. The higher the teacher to child ratio, the more time the teacher has for involvement with the children and the less stressed the teacher may be so that the interactions can be more relaxed, stimulating and positive. The more children there are in a program, the less desirable the program is as well. This is because the center may be more rigid in rules and structure to accommodate the large number of children in the facility. The physical environment should be colorful, stimulating, clean, and safe. The philosophy of the organization and the curriculum available should be child-centered, positive, and stimulating. Providers should be trained in early childhood education as well. A majority of states do not require training for their child care providers. And while formal education is not required for a person to provide a warm, loving relationship to a child, knowledge of a child's development is useful for addressing their social, emotional, and cognitive needs in an effective way. By working toward improving the quality of childcare and increasing family-friendly workplace policies such as more flexible scheduling and perhaps childcare facilities at places of employment, we can accommodate families with smaller children and relieve parents of the stress sometimes associated with managing work and family life.

### **Global Concerns: The Market Women of Liberia**

Work and mothering go hand in hand in many parts of the world. Consider the market women of Liberia. These are women who work as street vendors and are primary providers for their families. They come together in marketplaces along with their children to sell their goods while keeping a watchful eye on their children. Recently, they have been supported by President Sirleaf whose grandmother was a market woman. President Sirleaf has worked to raise funds to improve the marketplaces and conditions for mothers and children. The hope has been to make these marketplaces safer, to provide childcare, and provide social services to improve the lives of mothers and children (Nance-Nash, 2009).

### **Childhood Stress and Development**

What is the impact of stress on child development? Children experience different types of stressors. Normal, everyday stress can provide an opportunity for young children to build coping skills and poses little risk to development. Even more long-lasting stressful events such as changing schools or losing a loved one can be managed fairly well. But children who experience **toxic stress** or who live in extremely stressful situations of abuse over long periods of time can suffer long-lasting effects. The structures in the midbrain or limbic system such as the hippocampus and amygdala can be vulnerable to prolonged stress during early childhood (Middlebrooks and Audage, 2008). High levels of the stress hormone cortisol can reduce the size of the hippocampus and affect the child's memory abilities. Stress hormones can also reduce immunity to disease. The brain exposed to long periods of severe stress can develop a low threshold making the child hypersensitive to stress in the future. However, the effects of stress can be minimized if the child has the support of caring adults.

In the next lesson, we continue to look at childhood as we examine the period between starting school and entering adolescence known as middle childhood.

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