Middle Childhood: Psychosocial Development

- The Nature of the Child
- Families and Children
- The Peer Group
- Children’s Moral Codes
The Nature of the Child

• Industry versus inferiority
  – Erikson’s fourth developmental crisis
  – master many skills,
  – sense of themselves as either:
    • industrious or inferior
    • competent or incompetent
Self-Concept

• nature of school-age children:
  – social comparison
  – effortful control
  – loyalty
  – appreciation of peers and parents

• from ages 6 to 12:
  – self-criticism and self-consciousness rises
  – self-esteem dips for stressed children
Resilience and Stress

• resilience:
  – capacity to develop optimally by adapting positively to significant adversity
    • dynamic, stable trait
    • positive adaptation to stress
    • adversity must be significant
• Social Support and Religious Faith
  – strong bond with loving, firm parent can help with difficulties
  – social world allows new possibilities for social support
• Faith can be psychologically protective.

• Parents can provide religious guidance.

• Religious beliefs useful as school-age children cope with problems.
Families and Children

• Genes affect temperament as well as ability.
• Peers are vital.
• Schools and cultures influence:
  – what, and how much, children learn.
Shared and Nonshared Environments

• shared environment
  – household influences same for two people
    • children reared together

• nonshared environment
  – siblings with different friends and different teachers
Family Function and Structure

• **Structure**
  – legal and genetic relationship among relatives in the same home
    • nuclear, extended, step

• **Function**
  – how family works to meet needs of its members
• Children need family to:
  – provide basic material necessities.
  – encourage learning.
  – develop self-respect.
  – nurture peer relationships.
  – ensure harmony and stability.
• Blended family
  – family that consists of two adults and children of the prior relationships of one or both parents and/or the new partnership
• **Family Trouble**
  – low income and high conflict
  – financial stress and family fighting often feed on each other

• **Family Income**
  – correlates with function and structure
  – crucial question to ask about any risk factor is how does:
    • low income
    • divorce
    • unemployment

  …increase the stress on families?
• Ideally parents should form an alliance.
  – learn to cooperate and protect the children
  – Child’s well-being can decline if:
    • family members fight.
    • physically or verbally abusive.

  – No structure inevitably either harms children or guarantees good family function.
The Peer Group

• getting along with peers crucial
• difficulties can cause serious problems
• developmental progression in peer relationships
• social comparison
  – tendency to assess one’s:
    • abilities
    • achievements
    • social status
      … by measuring them against those of other people
• **culture of children:**
  – Particular habits, styles, and values that reflect the set of rules and rituals that characterize children as distinct from adult society.

• **deviancy training:**
  – Children taught by their peers to avoid restrictions imposed by adults.
• Friendship
  – Friendship leads to psychosocial growth.
  – Peer acceptance (popularity) and close friendship (mutual loyalty) both affect social interaction and emotional health.
  – Becomes more intense and intimate as children grow older.
• Social Acceptance
  – aggressive-rejected
    • rejected by peers because of antagonistic, confrontational behavior
  – withdrawn-rejected
    • rejected by peers because of timid, withdrawn, anxious behavior
• Social Awareness
  – social cognition
    • ability to understand social interaction
  – effortful control
    • ability to regulate one’s emotions and actions through effort, not simply through natural inclination
Bullies and Victims

• bullying
  – Repeated, systematic efforts to inflict harm through physical, verbal, or social attack on weaker person.

• bully-victim
  – Someone who attacks others, and who is attacked as well.
    • also called provocative victims
• Can bulling be stopped?
  – most children find ways to halt ongoing victimization by:
    • ignoring
    • retaliating
    • defusing
    • avoiding
Children’s Moral Codes

• Moral Questioning in Middle Childhood
  – School-age children are more likely to behave prosocially than are younger children.

  – social efficacy
    • People come to believe that they can affect their circumstances.
    • Leads to action that changes the social context.
• **Stages of Moral Reasoning**
  – Kohlberg’s described three levels of moral reasoning:
    • **preconventional moral reasoning**
      – rewards and punishments
    • **conventional moral reasoning**
      – social rules
    • **postconventional moral reasoning**
      – moral principles
What Children Value

• Moral specifics vary.
  – between and within nations
  – within one ethnic group in one region

• Children seek respect from each other.

• Children’s moral precepts are not necessarily the ones that adults endorse.