Chapter 14
Social Development

Attachment
Attachment in Infancy
Individual Differences in Attachment Patterns

From Brain to Behavior: Temperament, Experience, and Their Interaction in the Development of Attachment Styles

Implications of Attachment for Later Development

Socialization
The Role of Parents
The Role of Culture

A Global Vista: Parental Acceptance and Rejection in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Socialization of Gender

Peer Relationships
Friendships
Sibling Relationships

Development of Social Cognition
The Evolving Self-Concept
Concepts of Others
Perspective-Taking and Theory of Mind
Children’s Understanding of Gender

Moral Development
The Role of Cognition
The Role of Emotion

Commentary: Making Sense of Moral Development

Social Development across the Life Span
Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development
Development from Adolescence through Old Age
Infancy and early childhood were a series of seeming mishaps for Ben. Ben’s birth mother was an alcoholic and a drug addict, chemicals to which he was born addicted. Although Ben’s mother wanted to raise Ben herself, she was unable to provide the care that he needed. Frequently, she neglected Ben and failed to feed him when he cried; she ultimately put Ben up for adoption when he was 13 months old. A difficult baby, Ben was moved from one foster home to another. By the time he was 3, he had lived with six different foster families.

During his early years of life, Ben’s behavior became increasingly erratic. He seemed mistrustful and unable to form any kind of bond or attachment with others. Foster families in which other children were present were unable to keep Ben for long because he was aggressive and frequently acted out toward the other children. Finally, at the age of 3, Ben was diagnosed as suffering from reactive attachment disorder, also known simply as attachment disorder (Sheperis et al., 2003; Wilson, 2001). Even at this young age, Ben showed little evidence of a conscience, seldom displaying concern for the thoughts and feelings of others.

Ben could be a poster child for reactive attachment disorder. His prenatal exposure to drugs, neglect by his mother, and multiple foster care situations set the stage for the development of a child with little trust in or feelings for others. The critical period for the development of reactive attachment disorder is believed to be the first two years of life. Although separations from parents or parental neglect can be harmful to children at any age, children react to separations very differently at different ages. At age 2, separation can be devastating for a child; by age 6, a few weeks away may only result in occasional homesickness. The difference reflects social development, changes in interpersonal thought, feeling, and behavior throughout the life span.

We begin by discussing the earliest relationships—between an infant and her caregivers—and consider how, and how much, these relationships lay the groundwork for later relationships. Next, we examine how children learn the ways of their culture. For example, how and when do children take on the attributes expected of their gender? Then we explore children’s relationships with friends and siblings, their changing conceptions of themselves and others, and their developing capacity for moral judgment and action. We conclude by expanding the focus to the entire life span. Although the range of topics may seem enormous, what unites them is a focus on the types of relationships people form throughout life, from intimate attachments in infancy through adulthood to sibling and peer relationships; the devel-
opment of beliefs and feelings about themselves and others; and the way these beliefs and feelings are expressed in different social contexts.

Throughout, we will address two issues. The first, raised in Chapter 13, has provided a consistent thread across psychological research for over a century: the question of nature and nurture. What are the relative contributions of innate characteristics, culture, and experience to social development? How do evolutionary, biological, and social pressures converge to create a social person? The second issue is, what is the relation between social development and cognitive development? To what extent does the development of children’s experience of friendship, morality, or gender depend on their cognitive development?

**Attachment**

In the middle of the twentieth century, psychoanalysts observed that children reared in large institutional homes, with minimal stimulation and no consistent contact with a loving caretaker, often became emotionally unstable, lacking in conscience, or mentally retarded. Now, many of these children would be classified as suffering from reactive attachment disorder much like Ben. These observations led to recognition of the importance of attachment, the enduring affectional ties that children form with their primary caregivers (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1969). Attachment includes a desire for proximity to an attachment figure, a sense of security derived from the person’s presence, and feelings of distress when the person is absent. Attachment is not unilateral; rather, it involves an interaction between two people who react to each other’s signals.

**Attachment in Infancy**

For many years, psychoanalysts and behaviorists were in rare agreement on the origins of attachment behavior, both linking it to feeding. Psychoanalysts assumed that the gratification of oral needs led infants to become attached to people who satisfy those needs. According to behaviorists, mothers became secondary reinforcers through their association with food, which is a primary (innate) reinforcer (Chapter 5). Unfortunately, the two theories were similar in one other respect: They were both wrong. Definitive evidence came from a series of classic experiments performed by Harry Harlow (Harlow & Zimmerman, 1959).

Harlow reared infant rhesus monkeys in isolation from their mothers for several months and then placed them in a cage with two inanimate surrogate “mothers” (Chapter 2). One, a wire monkey that provided no warmth or softness, held a bottle from which the infant could nurse. The other was covered with terrycloth to provide softness, but it had no bottle, so it could not provide food. Baby monkeys spent much of their time clinging to the softer mother. They would also run to the softer surrogate when they were frightened, but they virtually ignored the wire surrogate except when hungry. Harlow’s findings established that perceived security, not food, is the crucial element in forming attachment relationships in primates; he referred to the ties that bind an infant to its caregivers as contact comfort. As shown in Figure 14.1, some infants and children are raised with little or no human contact. These children, called feral children, basically raise themselves in the wild, and show predictable deficits in physical, social, and language development.

**Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment** John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1982), who developed attachment theory, linked Harlow’s findings to the psychodynamic literature on...
children reared in institutional settings. Bowlby was both a psychoanalyst and an ethologist (a scientist interested in comparative animal behavior), and he proposed an evolutionary theory of attachment. He argued that attachment behavior is prewired in humans, as is similar behavior in other animal species, to keep immature animals close to their parents.

Bowlby noted the relation between human attachment behavior and a phenomenon studied by the ethologist Konrad Lorenz (1935) called imprinting. Imprinting is the tendency of young animals of certain species to follow an adult member of their species. At times, however, Mother Nature may lead her children astray. Here, geese follow Konrad Lorenz, on whom they imprinted when young.

**FIGURE 14.2.** Imprinting. Normally, imprinting leads young animals to follow an adult member of their species. At times, however, Mother Nature may lead her children astray. Here, geese follow Konrad Lorenz, on whom they imprinted when young.

The Origins of Attachment Attachment behavior emerges gradually over the first several months of life, peaking some time during the second year and then diminishing in intensity as children become more confident in their independence (Ainsworth, 1967). Among the first precursors of attachment is a general preference for social stimuli (such as faces) over other objects in the environment (Carver et al., 2003). Visual recognition of the mother (the primary caregiver studied in most research) occurs at about three months (Olson, 1981); by five or six months, infants recognize and greet their mothers and other attachment figures from across the room.
At six to seven months, infants begin to show separation anxiety, distress at separation from their attachment figures. Separation anxiety emerges about the same time in children of different cultures (Figure 14.3), despite widely different child-rearing practices (Kagan, 1976). Similarly, blind children show a comparable pattern (although the onset is a few months later), becoming anxious when they no longer hear the familiar sounds of their mother’s voice or movements (Fraiberg, 1975). These data suggest a maturational basis for separation anxiety. In fact, separation anxiety emerges about the same time infants begin to crawl, which makes sense from an evolutionary perspective.

INTERIM SUMMARY

Social development involves changes in interpersonal thought, feeling, and behavior throughout the life span. Attachment refers to the enduring ties children form with their primary caregivers; it includes a desire for proximity to an attachment figure, a sense of security derived from the person’s presence, and feelings of distress when the person is absent. John Bowlby, who developed attachment theory, argued that attachment, like imprinting (the tendency of young animals to follow another animal to which they were exposed during a sensitive period), evolved as a mechanism for keeping infants close to their parents while they are immature and vulnerable.

Individual Differences in Attachment Patterns

Bowlby observed that young children typically exhibit a sequence of behaviors in response to separations from their attachment figures. They initially protest by crying or throwing tantrums. However, like Ben, they may ultimately become detached and indifferent to the attachment figure if she is gone too long.

Attachment Patterns  Bowlby’s colleague Mary Ainsworth recognized that children vary in their responses to separation: While some seem secure in their relationship with their attachment figure, others seem perpetually stuck in protest or detachment. Ainsworth demonstrated these differences among infants using an experimental procedure called the Strange Situation. In the Strange Situation, the mother leaves her young child (aged 12 to 18 months) alone in a room of toys. Next, the child is joined for a brief time by a friendly stranger. The mother then returns and greets the child (Ainsworth, 1973, 1979, 1991).

Ainsworth found that children tend to respond to their mothers’ absence and return in one of three ways, one of which she called secure, and the others, insecure. Infants who welcome the mother’s return and seek closeness to her have a secure attachment style. Infants who ignore the mother when she returns display an avoidant attachment style, whereas infants who are angry and rejecting while simultaneously indicating a clear desire to be close to the mother have an ambivalent attachment style (also sometimes called anxious-ambivalent or resistant). Avoidant children often seem relatively unfazed by their mother’s departure, whereas ambivalent children become very upset.

More recent research with infants in high-risk samples, such as those who have been maltreated, has uncovered another variant of insecure attachment, called disorganized, or disorganized-disoriented (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1997; Main & Solomon, 1986). Children with a disorganized attachment style behave in contradictory ways, indicating helpless efforts to elicit soothing responses from the attachment figure. Disorganized infants often approach the mother while simultaneously gazing away, or appear disoriented, as manifested in stereotyped rocking and dazed facial expressions. Whereas the other attachment patterns seem organized and predictable, the disorganized child’s behavior is difficult to understand and typically comes in the context of parenting that is itself unpredictable, and hence difficult to understand from the infant’s point of view (see Carlson, 1998).
Secure attachment is the most commonly observed attachment pattern around the world (see Main, 1990; van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988). Nevertheless, the frequency of different styles of attachment differs substantially across cultures. For example, infants reared on Israeli kibbutzim (collective living arrangements) are much more likely to have ambivalent attachments to their mothers than infants in the West. Further, unlike European and North American children, the quality of an infant’s attachment to its daytime mother surrogate on the kibbutz, not to its parents, predicts later social adjustment in childhood (Sagi, 1990; Sagi et al., 1994).

Internal Working Models of Relationships Attachment does not just refer to a pattern of behavior. Bowlby proposed that infants develop internal working models, or mental representations of attachment relationships that form the basis for expectations in close relationships (Bowlby, 1969, 1982; Bretherton, 1990; Main, 1995; Stevenson-Hinde & Verschueren, 2002). For example, a child whose early attachment to her mother is marked by extreme anxiety resulting from inconsistent or abusive caretaking may form a working model of herself as unlovable or unworthy. She may also see significant others as hostile or unpredictable. Her behavior will appear disorganized or disoriented because she cannot form a coherent working model or representation of her relationship with her mother that both makes sense and provides a feeling of security.

The concept of internal working models may help explain why infants and toddlers who are secure with one caretaker may not be secure with another (Howes & Hamilton, 1992; Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999). A child’s experience with one person, such as the mother, may feel secure, while another relationship (such as with a father or preschool teacher) may feel less comfortable or predictable because the child has different internal working models of the relationships. The concept of internal working models may also help explain why attachment classification in infancy predicts not only social but cognitive variables years later, such as the ability to sustain attention: Infants who feel safe and secure will have more freedom to explore their environment than insecure infants, whose time and attention are more likely to be consumed by attachment-related thoughts, feelings, and motivations.

Basic attachment mechanisms appear very similar in human and other primates, such as the rhesus macaque.
Why do infants differ in their patterns of attachment? Some researchers emphasize temperament; others emphasize the way caregivers respond to the infant. Both appear to influence attachment security, along with an important interaction between the two: the fit between the child and parent (Belsky & Isabella, 1988; Rosen & Rothbaum, 1993; Seifer et al., 1996).

Like all psychological processes, attachment can be understood in part at a psychobiological level. Attachment-related behavior such as protest at separation probably does not occur in the first six months of life because myelination of neurons has not sufficiently progressed in limbic structures that regulate emotional distress, particularly fear and anxiety (Konner, 1991). Protest, distress, and despair at separation after that time appear to be mediated by several neurotransmitter systems, notably dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin, which are involved in arousal, anxiety, and depression (Kraemer, 1992). For example, monkeys separated from their mothers show elevated norepinephrine levels, which are consistent with behavioral responses indicating distress. (Attachment is a two-way affair: Rhesus monkey mothers separated from their newborn infants similarly show elevated stress hormones for days; Champoux & Suomi, 1994.)

These normal neurotransmitter responses to separation can be altered in monkeys either pharmacologically, using chemicals that disrupt neural transmission, or through abnormal rearing, in which the infant is removed from the mother at birth and reared in isolation or with peers. Abnormal rearing conditions alter neuronal development in the cortex, cerebellum, and limbic system in monkeys, a suggestion that environmental events can produce lasting biological changes in the systems that mediate attachment behavior. These monkeys are particularly vulnerable to despair responses upon later separations (see Suomi, 1999).

The relation between attachment style and temperament is a matter of controversy. In humans, researchers have identified three infant temperaments—easy, difficult, and slow to warm up—which correspond in certain respects to secure, ambivalent, and avoidant attachment styles (Chess & Thomas, 1986). Some researchers have argued that attachment security largely reflects temperament (see Kagan, 1984; Mangelsdorf et al., 1990). An inborn tendency to be timid or fearful, for example, could produce anxious behavior in the Strange Situation (Goldsmith & Alansky, 1987). The temperamental variable most highly predictive of attachment status across several studies is negative affect (Chapter 10)—that is, the tendency to experience emotions such as anxiety and depression. The correlation, however, is only .30 (Vaughn et al., 1992), which suggests that temperament is only one determinant of attachment style.

Temperament does not, however, operate in a vacuum. An environmental variable that appears to have a tremendous impact on security of attachment is the mother’s sensitivity to her baby’s signals (Ainsworth, 1979; Sroufe & Waters, 1977). Mothers who are sensitive to their infants enjoy interacting with them, behave in ways that express warmth and encouragement, and stimulate their curiosity (De Wolff & van IJzendoorn, 1997). These interactions tend to be mutually rewarding and to produce secure babies. In contrast, infants whose mothers do not respond to their needs form less secure attachment bonds and display more anger, fear, and avoidance (De Wolff & van IJzendoorn, 1997; Pederson et al., 1990; Waters et al., 2000a). The role of the father in attachment is an area of continued debate (see van IJzendoorn & De Wolff, 1997), although paternal sensitivity is an important predictor of the parent–child relationship as well.

Both biology and experience thus affect individual differences in attachment. However, the interaction of the two—such as the match between children and their...
Caregivers—may be just as important. For example, infants who are temperamentally prone to distress may be more likely to become insecurely attached if their caretakers are rigid and emotionally controlled (Mangelsdorf et al., 1990). Similarly, infants with an easy temperament may be more likely to become securely attached despite an unresponsive caregiver than would infants with a more difficult temperament.

**Implications of Attachment for Later Development**

Attachment patterns that begin in infancy can persist and find expression in a wide range of social behaviors throughout the life span (Waters et al., 2000a, 2000b). Children rated avoidant in infancy tend to be described by their teachers as insecure and detached in nursery school and to have difficulty discussing feelings about separation at age 6. In contrast, preschoolers who were securely attached as infants tend to have higher self-esteem, are more socially competent, show greater sensitivity to the needs of their peers, and are more popular (see DeMulder et al., 2000; LaFreniere & Sroufe, 1985; Waters et al., 1979).

Security of attachment in infancy predicts a range of behaviors as children grow older, from self-control and peer acceptance to competent behavior in the classroom (Bretherton, 1990; Howes et al., 1998). Children with a disorganized style in infancy tend to be rated by their teachers in early elementary school as impulsive, disruptive, and aggressive, particularly if they are also below average intellectually (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1997).

Individual differences in attachment style are also related to different patterns of response in everyday social interactions. Using a diary methodology by which people describe their social interactions each day for a period of weeks, researchers found that securely attached individuals reported more satisfying daily interactions with others and felt that others were more responsive to them than insecurely attached individuals (Kafetsios & Nezlek, 2002). Based on the results of this study, attachment styles affect not only long-term patterns of relating, but also daily satisfaction with those social interactions.

The theory of internal working models helps make sense of why attachment security with parents predicts the quality of peer relationships years later, particularly close peers, as well as with later attachment figures, notably mates (Cassidy et al., 1996; Lieberman et al., 1999). Children who are secure with their parents have more positive expectations about what they can expect from relationships. This security leads them to be more trusting and engaging with peers and lovers, who are then more likely to respond to them positively. As a result, they then form more positive representations of peer and love relationships—creating a self-reinforcing cycle, in which positive initial working models foster good relationships, which maintain those models.

**INTERIM SUMMARY**

Researchers have discovered four patterns of infant attachment: secure, avoidant, ambivalent, and disorganized. Whereas secure infants are readily comforted by their attachment figures, insecure infants tend to shut off their needs for attachment (avoidant), have difficulty being soothed (ambivalent), or behave in contradictory ways that reflect their difficulty predicting or understanding the way their attachment figures will behave (disorganized). Infant attachment patterns reflect a combination of temperament, parental responsiveness, and the interaction of the two. Attachment security in infancy predicts social competence as well as school grades from preschool through adolescence.

**Adult Attachment** Some of the infants first assessed in longitudinal studies using the Strange Situation are just reaching adulthood, and evidence suggests that early attachment patterns remain influential in adult life (Waters et al., 2000b). Adult
attachment refers to ways of experiencing attachment relationships in adulthood. Researchers study adult attachment by interviewing subjects and coding the way they describe and recall their relationships with their parents (Main, 1995; Main et al., 1985) or by measuring the ways they describe their experiences with attachment figures such as spouses on self-report questionnaires (Brennan et al., 1998).

Patterns of Adult Attachment Adults with secure adult attachment styles speak freely and openly about their relationships with their parents. People with ambivalent styles appear preoccupied with and ambivalent about their parents. Avoidant adults dismiss the importance of attachment relationships or offer idealized generalizations about their parents but are unable to back them up with specific examples. When asked about times when they felt rejected or mistreated or were separated from their parents in childhood, adults with an avoidant style tend to deny having such experiences—all the while spiking on measures of physiological reactivity indicating emotional distress (Dozier & Kobak, 1992).

Individuals with an attachment style characterized as unresolved (similar to the disorganized style seen in infancy) have difficulty speaking coherently about attachment figures from their past and have generally been unable to cope with losses or other traumatic experiences from their past. As a result, their narratives are often confused and confusing, and they send conflicting signals to their own children, particularly when their own unmet attachment needs get activated under stress.

How common are these attachment patterns? Data from multiple sources find similar rates of each type of attachment pattern in adults as in infants. A large stratified random sample of over 8000 individuals in the United States, using a self-report measure of the first three adult attachment patterns, found that roughly 60 percent of people reported a secure attachment pattern, whereas 25 percent were classified as avoidant and about 10 percent anxiously attached (Mickelson et al., 1997). Interview studies across several cultures similarly classify roughly 60 percent of people as securely attached in relation to their own parents, with varying numbers in the other three categories (van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1996).

Predicting Behavior from Adult Attachment Patterns Attachment patterns in adults predict a range of phenomena, from whether people want to have children (Rholes et al., 1997), to how they balance the needs of those children with the needs of work (Vasquez et al., 2002), to how they cope with stressful life events (Mikulincer & Florian, 1997; Myers & Vetere, 2002), to how upset they get at airports when separating from their romantic partner (Fraley & Shaver, 1998), and to how troublesome they find the increasing independence of their adolescent children to be (Hock et al., 2001). Perhaps most importantly, adults’ attachment patterns in relation to their own parents, as assessed by interview, predict their own children’s attachment styles with remarkable accuracy (Main, 1995; Steele et al., 1996; van Ijzendoorn, 1995). For example, mothers who are uncomfortable or avoidant in describing their own attachment to their mothers tend to have avoidant infants and children (Fonagy et al., 1991; Main et al., 1985).

Considerable evidence suggests that mothers whose early attachment experiences were disrupted—through death of a parent, divorce, abuse or neglect, or long-term separation from their parents—are more likely to have difficulty forming close attachment relationships with their own infants and to have infants with a disorganized attachment pattern (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1997; Ricks, 1985; Rutter et al., 1983; Zeanah & Zeanah, 1989). Mothers who have insecure attachment relationships with their own mothers are less responsive and have more difficulty maintaining physical proximity to their infants and young children (Crowell & Feldman, 1991).

Stability of Early Attachment Patterns Is history destiny? Can a person ever overcome a bad start in childhood or infancy? Problematic early attachments substantially increase vulnerability to subsequent difficulties. Disturbances in childhood at-
Attachment relationships predict later difficulties in childhood and adolescence (Bowlby, 1969; Ricks, 1985; Spitz, 1945). Disrupted attachments are associated with severe personality disturbances (Ludolph et al., 1990; Zanarini et al., 1989), depression (Brown et al., 1986), antisocial behavior and adjustment problems (Tizard & Hodges, 1978), and difficulty behaving appropriately as a parent (Ricks, 1985). Childhood experiences such as parental neglect or mistreatment or even parental divorce make people more vulnerable to insecure attachment in adulthood (Mickelson et al., 1997).

All generalizations such as these, however, are probabilistic statements—that is, statements about probabilities, or increased risk. Early attachment experiences are not the only determinant of later functioning. Some children are remarkably resilient in the face of neglectful or abusive life experiences (Anthony & Cohler, 1987; Luthar et al., 2000). Furthermore, as circumstances change, so do patterns of attachment (Lewis et al., 2000). Indeed, some of Harlow’s monkeys who had been raised in isolation and were extremely socially maladapted showed marked improvement in social interactions after developing a close relationship with a normal monkey who served as a simian “therapist” (Chamove, 1978; Novak & Harlow, 1975). Internal working models, like the schemas described in previous chapters, are inherently conservative, but they are not immutable (Lamb, 1987). Longitudinal research suggests that childhood risk factors such as parental loss or divorce, life-threatening illness of parent or child, and child abuse can turn securely attached infants into insecurely attached adults (Waters et al., 2000b; Weinfield et al., 2000).

One study provides dramatic evidence of the possibilities for altering problematic patterns of attachment in the opposite direction. The investigators provided a group of high-risk infants and mothers with a weekly home visitor. The mothers were poor, often depressed, and exhibited enough signs of inadequate caretaking to warrant referrals from health, educational, or social service professionals (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1990). The home visitor offered support and advice, modeled positive and active interactions with the infant, and provided a trusting relationship for the mother. The results were compelling: Compared to an untreated control group, infants in the intervention group scored 10 points higher on an infant IQ measure and were twice as likely (roughly 60 versus 30 percent) to be classified as securely attached at 18 months.

**INTERIM SUMMARY**

Researchers studying adult attachment find that roughly 60 percent of people appear to have a secure attachment style. Parents tend to produce children with an attachment style similar to their own. Attachment patterns have considerable stability because internal working models tend to change slowly, but as life circumstances change, so can attachment styles.

**Socialization**

Attachment relationships provide the child’s first social experiences and serve as a model for many future relationships, but they are only one avenue for initiating the child into the social world. To function as adults, children must learn the rules, beliefs, values, skills, attitudes, and behavior patterns of their society, a process called socialization. Children learn from a variety of socialization agents, individuals and groups that transmit social knowledge and values to the child.

Before we consider research on socialization, several caveats are in order. First, socialization is not a one-way process in which adults fill children’s minds with values and beliefs. Rather, it is a two-way street, or transactional. Children are active partici-
pants in their own socialization, who must construct an understanding of social rules and gradually come to experience cultural beliefs and values as their own (Bell, 1968; Kochanska, 1997a; Maccoby, 1992; Sapir, 1949). Although we tend to think of socialization as a process through which parents and other adults “leave their mark” on children, from an evolutionary perspective, children are also biologically prepared to be socialized (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998). Children come prepared to experience emotions such as shame and guilt that render them readily shaped by parents into the kinds of people who will one day be accepted in their society.

Children also have innate temperaments that influence attempts to shape them. Inherited tendencies tend to increase in their expression throughout adolescence. Thus, the quality of parent–child relationships continues to be shaped not just by infant temperament but by genetic predispositions that may become most apparent many years afterward (Elkins et al., 1997). Indeed, the way children behave shapes the way their parents respond. Children who are impulsive and poorly controlled elicit ineffective parenting, just as ineffective parents can create troubled children (Stice & Barrera, 1995).

A second point to remember in thinking about socialization is that socialization is a lifelong process. Individuals learn throughout their lives to play different roles, such as student, parent, friend, wage-earner, or retiree, and roles change from one phase of life to the next.

Finally, socialization always occurs within a broader social and economic context (Bronfenbrenner, 1998; McLoyd, 1989; Parke & Buriel, 1998). The way parents behave with their children depends on cultural values and practices (Harkness & Super, 1996; Harwood et al., 1996). Although deliberate teaching is important, much of socialization is implicit, as when children learn about the importance of being on time by the regular sounding of school bells between classes (see Strauss & Quinn, 1998). Economic stresses and marital satisfaction also affect the way parents parent and the extent to which their children function well socially and academically (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997; Conger et al., 1993; Fincham, 1998).

The Role of Parents

The question of how important parents are to development is now hotly debated (Collins et al., 2000; Harris, 1998, 2000). For years psychologists assumed that parenting is the most important determinant of personality and social development. In the last decade, this point of view has been challenged by a steady stream of behavioral genetic studies. These studies suggest that the family environment shared by siblings has little impact on personality, social, or cognitive traits, particularly when compared with genetic influences and environmental influences not shared by siblings, such as experiences with peers (Chapters 8 and 12). Recently, Judy Harris (1998) created a storm of controversy when she published a book challenging the idea that parents matter much at all. The available data suggest, she argued, that genetic and peer influences primarily determine who we are.

Can it be true that our parents, who socialize us from the beginning and whose homes we inhabit and whose rules and attitudes govern our behavior for the first 18 years of our lives (and in many cultures, long after), have little influence on our subsequent development? The data clearly do not support the old view that parenting is the central determinant of individual differences in personality and social development, but neither do they support the swing of the pendulum in the other direction.

The problems with the “parenting doesn’t matter” hypothesis are complex, but many hinge on the way researchers interpret data on heritability (see Collins et al., 2000). As we have seen (Chapters 1 and 8), the size of heritability coefficients is highly dependent on the samples researchers use in their studies. A sample that consists primarily of white middle-class people in the United States has already eliminated many of the most important parenting effects—such as the differences between parental behavior in Uganda and Dallas, which are likely to be far greater than any differences
among white middle-class parents in Dallas. The tendency of human children to use language is clearly rooted in our genes, but no one would similarly argue that parents have little influence on the language their children speak. Further, two children in the same family will elicit different patterns of parenting. Although these are often interpreted as genetic effects, they actually reflect transactions between the child’s genes and the ways parents respond.

What about the argument that peers are more important than parents? As we will see, peers play a substantial role in development, and their influence can be seen in problems such as delinquency or substance abuse in adolescence. However, adolescents choose their peers, and both the peers they choose and their susceptibility to “bad company” depend heavily on the social skills, expectations, and capacities for intimacy they developed at home in their attachment relationships (Collins et al., 2000; Ladd, 1999). Children with histories of maltreatment by their parents, for example, tend to have poor peer relationships (Bolger et al., 1998).

Perhaps most importantly, when researchers carefully measure parenting, they typically find substantial effects on personality and social development (Bates et al., 2003; Kremen & Block, 1998; Westen, 1998). These effects are most apparent when parents behave in unusual or damaging ways, such as abusing their children, but they also appear with more subtle differences in parenting styles.

Over 30 years ago, Diana Baumrind (1967, 1971, 1991) discovered three styles of parenting, distinguished by the extent to which parents control their children’s actions and respond to their feelings. Authoritarian parents place high value on obedience and respect for authority. They do not encourage discussion of why particular behaviors are important or listen to the child’s point of view. Rather, they impose a set of standards to which they expect their children to adhere, and they are likely to punish their children frequently and physically. In contrast, permissive parents impose virtually no controls on their children, allowing them to make their own decisions whenever possible. Permissive parents tend to accept their children’s impulsive behaviors, including angry or aggressive ones, and rarely dole out punishments. Authoritative parents set standards for their children and firmly enforce them, but they also encourage give and take and explain their views while showing respect for their children’s opinions.

A fourth style of parenting that has been proposed more recently is uninvolved parents who consistently place their own needs above the needs of their child. (See Figure 14.4 for a comparison of how the four parenting styles differ along the dimensions of nurturing and control.) Although children’s genetic endowments clearly influence parenting styles, the data also suggest that different parenting styles tend to produce different kinds of children. The self-controlled, independent, curious, academically competent, and sociable children tend to have authoritative parents (Baumrind, 1987; Steinberg et al., 1994; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996). Authoritarian parenting has been linked, however, to low independence, vulnerability to stress, low self-esteem, and an external locus of control (a sense that one has little control over what happens in life) (Buri et al., 1988; Loeb et al., 1980; Steinberg et al., 1994). Children with permissive parents tend to be low in self-reliance and impulse control (Martin et al., 1981; Olweus, 1980) and to have more trouble with substance abuse in adolescence (Baumrind, 1991). Children of uninvolved parents typically display low self-esteem and aggressive behavior (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004; Hatfield et al., 1967; Loeb et al., 1980). The match between a child’s temperament and parenting styles is also important: Difficult, hard-to-manage children tend to have fewer behavior problems later on if their parents are firm with rules (Bates et al., 1998).

**FIGURE 14.4** Variations in nurturing and control as a function of parenting style. As this figure illustrates, each style of parenting represents its own unique combination of nurturance and control. Not surprisingly, these different combinations are expected to influence the kind of children that subsequently develop. Reprinted from Bukatko & Daehler (2004).

**INTERIM SUMMARY**

Socialization is the process by which children learn the rules, beliefs, values, skills, attitudes, and behavior patterns of their society. Socialization is a transactional and lifelong process. Socialization also always occurs in a broader social context. Authoritarian par-
Permissive parents impose minimal controls on their children. Authoritative parents enforce standards but explain their views and encourage verbal give-and-take. Uninvolved parents consistently place their own needs above the needs of their child.

The Role of Culture

Although authoritative parenting tends to produce outcomes most people in the West would consider “better,” two qualifications are worth noting. First, good parenting is flexible parenting and changes as children mature. For example, preschoolers and their siblings tend to get along much better if their parents intervene before their squabbles turn into brawls. In contrast, school-age children tend to develop better sibling relationships if their parents let them resolve their own disputes (Kramer et al., 1999).

Second, an authoritative parenting style is rare or nonexistent in many cultures and is probably not the most adaptive pattern everywhere (Whiting & Edwards, 1988; Whiting & Whiting, 1973, 1975). Agricultural societies usually value obedience far more than autonomy or independence. Among the Mayan Zinacanteco Indians of Mexico, for example, an entire family shares a single-room 200-square-foot hut, and every member contributes to the family’s survival by farming (Brazelton, 1972). In this culture, where people have no real choice in the roles they will fill, socialization for independence and free choice would often prove frustrating or counterproductive.

Training for independence versus embeddedness in kin or clan begins in the first days of life, through implicit forms of learning that predict adult personality and social characteristics (Harwood et al., 1999; Whiting, 1964). For example, infants in most cultures sleep in the same beds, or at least the same rooms, as their mothers. In contrast, North American pediatricians often discourage parents from bringing the child into their bed, and most middle-class parents give infants their own rooms by three to six months. Thus, North American children learn early that they are, and can be, on their own.

In a study comparing the sleeping patterns of Mayan and North American infants, Mayan infants tended simply to fall asleep when they were tired, whereas American families had elaborate bedtime rituals that might begin with a bath and toothbrushing and include reading bedtime stories, singing lullabies, and providing the baby with a special object (Morelli et al., 1992). One North American mother jokingly reported, “When my friends hear that it is time for my son to go to bed, they teasingly say, ‘See you in an hour.’”

Mayan parents were generally aghast to hear that parents could separate infants from their mothers at night and seemed to consider it tantamount to child neglect. One horrified Mayan mother asked, “But there’s someone else with them there, isn’t there?” The Mayan children typically slept with their mothers until another child was born, at which time they joined their fathers or siblings.

Parental Acceptance and Rejection in Cross-Cultural Perspective

One of the most important ways parents vary across and within cultures is the extent to which they are accepting or rejecting of their children (Rohner, 1975a, 1986; Veneziano & Rohner, 1998). Parents can express acceptance verbally through praise, compliments, and support, or nonverbally through hugging, approving glances, and smiling. Like acceptance, parents can express rejection verbally (bullying or harsh criticism) or nonverbally (hitting, beating, shaking, or simply neglecting).

Parental acceptance and rejection were once considered polar opposites of a single dimension, and they are clearly related. However, like positive and negative affect
(Chapter 10), they can be measured independently and have somewhat independent effects. A parent who is often loving can also sometimes be harsh or even abusive (Pettit, 1997).

Whether a specific behavior is accepting or rejecting depends in part on shared cultural meanings. For example, in European-American samples, the more parents use harsh physical discipline, the more their children (particularly boys) are likely to be impulsive, aggressive, and poorly controlled. The same correlation does not hold for African-American children: Up to a point, the more discipline, the fewer behavior problems children tend to have (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996). Severe parenting that is clearly abusive, however, appears to have the same meaning regardless of cultural circumstances and predicts poorer outcomes in children cross-culturally (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Rohner & Britner, 2002).

In general, findings both within the West and across cultures show that parental acceptance is quite consistently associated with high self-esteem, independence, and emotional stability, whereas the opposite is true of parental rejection (MacKinnon-Lewis et al., 1997; Rohner & Britner, 2002). One longitudinal study with a Western sample found that individuals who had a warm or affectionate parent are more likely, 35 years later, to have a long and happy marriage, children, and close friendships in middle age (Franz et al., 1991).

A converging body of data suggests that parents (particularly mothers) who interact with their infants and preschoolers in ways that show mutual responsiveness and “connectedness” tend to have children with better peer relationships, greater empathy for others, and accelerated moral development (Clark & Ladd, 2000; Kochanska et al., 2000). Conversely, multiple studies find that abused children and adults with childhood histories of abuse are more likely than their nonabused peers to view the world as a dangerous place, have poor self-esteem, and have difficulty maintaining close relationships (see Bolger et al., 1998; Finkelhor, 1994; Gelinas, 1983).

A large cross-cultural study correlating parental acceptance–rejection with personality traits in children and adults demonstrated that these patterns are indeed universal (Rohner, 1975a). Cultures in which parents were more rejecting (as rated from anthropological reports) produced children who were more hostile and dependent and adults who were less emotionally stable than cultures with more benign parenting practices (Table 14.1).

The Alorese, who inhabit a Pacific island off Java, exemplify a culture with highly rejecting parenting practices (see DuBois, 1944; Rohner, 1975b). Alorese women return to the fields within two weeks of childbirth—if they have not had an abortion, which is common because they tend to find children burdensome. After a brief initial period of benign and playful caretaking, Alorese infants receive very inconsistent care, such as sporadic feeding. Alorese children are constantly teased, ridiculed, and frightened for sport by older children and adults. Mothers may tease young children they are weaning by nursing the neighbor’s baby. Parents threaten children with abandonment and send them to live with relatives if they are too difficult. As young children, the Alorese are left for the day without food unless they can get some by begging or screaming at their elders.

Generalizations about an entire people are, of course, always overgeneralizations, because individual differences exist in all cultures. Nevertheless, anthropologists describe Alorese adults as hostile, aggressive, and distrustful, characteristics that make sense in the context of Alorese child rearing. The Alorese are intensely sensitive to insults and humiliation, and adult relationships are fraught with discord. Males strive to amass as much wealth as they can, always expecting others to cheat and deceive them. Marital affairs are common in both sexes, divorce is rampant, and men often

### Table 14.1 Correlations between Parental Acceptance and Personality Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Characteristic</th>
<th>Degree of Parental Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>-.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence</td>
<td>-.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stability</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturance</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Rohner, 1975a, p. 260.

Note: Dashes indicate missing data.

Alorese children are fed at their parents’ convenience and frequently have temper tantrums when they are frustrated.
beat their wives in jealousy or anger. Direct aggression between males is strongly discouraged, although women at times may openly brawl. Even the supernatural world of the Alorese is hostile and unstable, with the Good Beings under constant attack in their myths. In Alor, as elsewhere, patterns of child rearing reflect cultural beliefs and values, and parents tend to harvest what they sow.

Socialization of Gender
Among the most powerful roles into which people are socialized are gender roles, which specify the range of behaviors considered appropriate for males and females (see Martin, Ruble & Szrybalo, 2002). The distinction between sex and gender is not always clear, but in general, sex refers to a biological categorization based on genetic and anatomical differences. Gender, in contrast, refers to the psychological meaning of being male or female, which is influenced by learning.

When a new baby is born, people greet its arrival with one of two announcements: “It’s a girl!” or “It’s a boy!” This response rests on a relatively small anatomical feature, but it has important consequences for the way the person will come to think, feel, and behave (Archer & Lloyd, 1985). The process by which children acquire personality traits, emotional responses, skills, behaviors, and preferences that are culturally considered appropriate to their sex is called sex typing (Perry & Bussey, 1979).

Differential treatment of boys and girls begins at the very beginning. In one study, first-time mothers of young infants were asked to play with a six-month-old baby (not their own) for 10 minutes (Smith & Lloyd, 1978). Several toys were available. Some, like a squeaky hammer and a stuffed rabbit wearing a bow tie and trousers, were typical masculine toys; others, like a doll and a squeaky Bambi, were more feminine. The mothers did not know the babies were cross-dressed—that the six-month-old in the little boy’s outfit was actually a little girl and the baby in the pink dress was a boy. The mothers tended to offer the infants “gender-appropriate” toys and to encourage more physical activity in the “boys.” Similar results emerge from experimental studies with older children: Adults tend to compliment and encourage girls more, particularly in nurturance play, such as taking care of dolls. They hold higher expectations for boys and provide them with more reinforcements for meeting goals (Day, cited in Block, 1978).

Naturalistic investigations of parents’ behavior with their children indicate that, throughout childhood, parents (especially fathers) tend to encourage traditional sex-typed behavior, discouraging play with toys that are typical of the opposite gender (Langlois & Downs, 1980). The extent to which fathers are more traditional in their attitudes toward gender plays a particularly important role in shaping children’s sex-typed attitudes and behaviors (McHale et al., 1999). Boys in Europe and North America receive more encouragement to compete, more punishment, and more pressure not to cry or express feelings from both parents. Girls receive more warmth, affection, and trust, although they are kept under closer surveillance than boys (Block, 1978). Mothers tend to talk more and speak in more supportive ways with their daughters than their sons (Leaper et al., 1998).

Gender-role socialization is not limited to parents, however. Teachers also contribute to the socialization of males and females to engage in gender-appropriate behaviors. Although the tide is turning, traditionally males have been encouraged to pursue careers (and course work) in science, math, and engineering. Girls, on the other hand, are socialized to pursue careers (if they pursue them at all) in disciplines such as the humanities. Educators, even unwittingly, create a “chilly classroom climate” for girls, whereby they are given less verbal feedback, praise, and encouragement than their male peers (Whitt et al., 1999), with subsequent effects on the self-esteem, cognitive outcomes, and career strivings of male and female students.
Children are also socialized toward stereotypical gender roles by their peers, beginning as early as preschool. Boys and girls are rewarded and punished, respectively, by their peers for engaging in gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behavior. Thus, boys who play with dolls or girls who play with trucks are likely to be teased and ridiculed by members of their peer group for playing with toys “of the other sex” (Fagot & Patterson, 1969; Lamb & Roopnarine, 1979; Lamb et al., 1980).

**INTERIM SUMMARY**

Cultural practices affect virtually every aspect of socialization, such as the relative importance placed on independence and autonomy. Parental acceptance and rejection also differ substantially across cultures. Rejection and abuse have negative effects on children everywhere. Among the most powerful roles into which people are socialized are gender roles, which specify the range of behaviors considered appropriate for males and females.

**Peer Relationships**

We have focused thus far primarily on children’s relationships with their parents and other adults. Equally important, however, are peer relationships. The need for peer relationships appears so strong that children who do not have natural peers—first-born and only children—are more likely to invent “imaginary companions” to accompany them (Gleason, 2002; Gleason et al., 2000). The presence of friends can protect children from some of the negative effects of child abuse (Schwartz et al., 2000), just as social support can steel adults against the effects of major stressors such as loss (Chapter 11). Here we focus on two important kinds of peers: friends and siblings.

**Friendships**

Children’s friendships are almost exclusively same-sex friendships. Children simply like same-sex peers better (Bukowski et al., 1994). Cross-sex relationships account for only about 5 percent of friends in childhood (Hartup, 1989). In fact, in one large study, only 0.3 percent of children had a best friend of the opposite sex (Kovacs et al., 1996). Part of the preference for peers of the same sex results from the gender segregation of activities in childhood. Boys are encouraged to play with boys and engage in “boy” activities, and girls are encouraged to play with girls and engage in “girl” activities. In this way, appropriate gender-role socialization can more easily be assured.

A qualifier is in order, however. Although children do show a preference for friends of the same sex, this stated preference depends on the context in which the friends will play together. In one study, preadolescent and adolescent boys and girls were asked whether they would prefer a same-sex or an other-sex partner for a project at school and whether or not they would prefer a same-sex or an other-sex friend to play with at home. Preadolescent children showed the strongest preferences, although not always for the same sex. These children indicated that they would prefer to work on the project with a same-sex friend at school, but would prefer other-sex friends when playing at home (Strough & Marie-Covatto, 2002).

**The Development of Friendship**

Friendships marked by commitment and reciprocity (sharing and give and take) begin to emerge around age 3 (see Hartup, 1989). Even these preschool friendships have remarkable stability, with friendships typically enduring unless one member of the pair moves away (see Collins & Gunnar, 1990). (One of my closest friends to this day, present at the hospital even for the birth...
of my children, I met when I was two and a half years old. Although we have both experienced multiple moves over the years, the friendship has endured.)

The meaning of friendship, however, changes throughout childhood (Damon, 1977; Selman, 1980). Young children describe friends as people who give them things or let them play with their toys. By middle childhood, children recognize some of the longer term payoffs of specific friendships. When asked why one girl was her friend, an eight-year-old responded, “Because…she cheers me up when I’m sad, and she shares…. I share so she’ll share” (Damon, 1977, pp. 159–160). Adolescents express more concern with intimacy in friendships (mutual self-disclosure and empathy) (Buhrmester, 1990). Girls tend to self-disclose more than boys, and when boys self-disclose, they generally do so with girls (Youniss & Haynie, 1992).

The role of friends, siblings, and parents changes over the course of social development. Between the fifth and twelfth grades (roughly ages 10 to 18), the amount of time North American children spend with their families drops by more than half, from 35 to 14 percent (Larson et al., 1996). The experience of relationships as sources of conflict and support also changes during this period (Blos, 1967; Sullivan, 1953). One large cross-sectional study asked children, adolescents, and college students to rate the degree of support and conflict they experienced in several relationships (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Mothers and fathers are the primary sources of support for fourth graders, but this wanes during the adolescent years, when conflict with parents is at a peak. Friends loom much larger as sources of support in seventh grade but are gradually replaced by romantic partners by college age. Romantic relationships, like relationships with parents, are emotionally intense. They are experienced as most supportive at the same time as they are most conflictual.

These patterns are not, however, the same everywhere (see Arnett, 1999; Ladd, 1999). In much of the West, where individualism is strong, parents socialize their children for independence, and they often get more than they asked for in adolescence. In more collectivist cultures, where autonomy from parents is not such a strong value, the shift from parents to friends and lovers is much less apparent (DeRosier & Kupersmidt, 1991). In Japan, for example, children are socialized from birth to accommodate to others, not to separate from them (F. Rothbaum et al., 2000). Japanese mothers tend to spend more time with their infants than do U.S. mothers, and when they talk to their infants, they spend less time pointing to objects (things in the outside world) than in making sweet vocalizations that keep the baby’s focus on their relationship. Japanese parents also spend more time in skin-to-skin contact with their infants, often bathing with them, and they are more likely to have their infants and young children sleep in their bed. By adolescence, Japanese children have learned that closeness to parents is an important value and do not show the same kind of “radical separatism” seen in many Western societies.

**Peer Status** Most primates are hierarchical animals, and humans are no exception. From preschool onward, children assume positions in status hierarchies. Most readers can probably remember and pinpoint their peers’ relative positions in status hierarchies in high school with remarkable accuracy. In fact, researchers rely on peer reports of “who is in” and “who is out” to study peer status in children.

Children differ substantially in the way they form relationships and the way other children respond to them (Ladd, 1999; Rubin et al., 1998). **Children who are disliked by their peers** are called rejected children. Some rejected children are teased and ostracized by their peers; others are bullies. Still other children, called neglected children, are ignored by their peers. Researchers study peer acceptance using peer nomination methods: They ask students in a class, for example, to write down the names of children they really like and dislike. Rejected children are those whose names frequently show up on the “disliked” list; neglected children receive no mention at all.

Children develop reputations among their peers by the time they are in preschool, and these reputations affect the way other children behave toward them (Denham &
Holt, 1993). Personality characteristics and peer responses can produce a vicious cycle, in which children who are unhappy, aggressive, or socially unskilled elicit peer rejection, which in turn intensifies their low self-esteem and awkward social behavior, leading to further rejection (Hodges & Perry, 1999). Not all children who develop early negative reputations maintain this status throughout the rest of their school careers. But children who are actively disliked by peers (rejected) tend to have low self-esteem and other difficulties later in life, such as higher incidence of school dropout and delinquency in adolescence and more troubles at work and in relationships in adulthood (Dunn & McGuire, 1992; Parker & Asher, 1987; Richards et al., 1998). Neglected children, however, often perform better academically than more popular peers, as they immerse themselves into their school work. Rejected children tend to do poorly in school, but only if they are also aggressive (Wentzel & Asher, 1995).

Quality of Friendship  Children’s friendships differ not only in the quantity—in how many friends a child has and how readily other children “take” to him—but also in their quality (Hartup, 1996). Whereas having friends is typically a good thing, research supports the commonsense notion that having the wrong kinds of friends—alienated, angry, and delinquent—can be detrimental to development, particularly for children who are already at risk (Vitaro et al., 1997).

Beyond the company they keep, another important dimension of children’s friendship is the way they interact with one another (Bukowski et al., 1993; Hartup, 1996). Some children tend to have relatively negative, hostile, angry interactions with their friends. Others have more mutually pleasurable, supportive interactions. As in the study of emotion, these aspects of children’s friendships are surprisingly independent: As in adult relationships, people can have passionate friendships that are high on both positive and negative affect.

Sibling Relationships

Until the 1980s, relationships with siblings received almost no attention from researchers. This is surprising, given that children often spend as much time with siblings as with parents.

Sibling relationships involve rivalry and conflict as well as warmth and companionship (Collins & Gunnar, 1990). From an evolutionary perspective, we would expect both conflict and love between siblings. On the one hand, siblings are genetically related by half, so the welfare of each influences the inclusive fitness of the other (Chapter 10). Thus, natural selection should have selected mechanisms encouraging humans and other animals to care for their siblings.

On the other hand, particularly in childhood, siblings compete for precious parental resources, which can mean the difference between life and death when conditions are scarce (see Trivers, 1972). As they mature, they may compete for familial resources that attract mates. Squabbling over an estate is, in fact, a major source of conflict among adult siblings cross-culturally. For example, among the Gabbara of Kenya, a nomadic people, the number of camels in a household predicts reproductive success for males but not females (Mace, 1996). Not surprisingly, sibling competition for resources is much higher in Gabbara society among males, for whom resources are a central component of status.

The birth of a sibling can be a difficult event for children. Parents report a wide range of responses, such as increased dependency, anxiety, bed-wetting, toilet “accidents,” and aggressiveness (Dunn & McGuire, 1992). The younger the child’s age at the birth, the more difficulty the child has with being displaced (Kramer & Gottman, 1992). Not knowing whether to express hostility or nurturance, young children often alternate between the two. Consider, for example, this description of a toddler coping with the birth of his little sister (from an e-mail from a friend): “My son is heroic in his efforts to be the ‘big man’ and big brother, who offered to buy his new sister a birthday truck, though on a few occasions, he has broken down and uttered the most heart-
rending sobs imaginable, pleading that we put her back in my belly, take her back to the hospital, or at least put her away somewhere. Mostly, he pats her gently, though sometimes gets a good jab in.”

INTERIM SUMMARY

Friendship patterns develop substantially in childhood and adolescence, from largely same-sex experiences involving mutual play to more intimate interactions in adolescence. Rejected children are teased, ostracized, or disliked by their peers. Neglected children are ignored. Children develop reputations among their peers by preschool. Children also differ in both the company they keep and the extent to which their friendships are characterized by positive and negative interactions. Sibling relationships involve rivalry and conflict as well as warmth, both of which make sense from an evolutionary standpoint.

Development of Social Cognition

The changing nature of children’s friendships results in part from children’s emotional and motivational development, such as an increasing concern with intimacy and an expanding capacity to commit to relationships despite momentary ups and downs. Children’s friendships also change as their understanding of themselves, others, and relationships—that is, their social cognition—develops.

The Evolving Self-Concept

One of the initial tasks of social-cognitive development is acquiring a sense of self as a distinct entity with its own physical qualities and psychological processes (Stern, 1985). As adults, we tend to assume that we have always had a self-concept, an organized view of ourselves or way of representing information about the self. However, children are not born knowing that other people have thoughts and feelings or that their own experience is not the center of the universe. How do we evolve from fetuses—who are capable of sensation and learning but have no idea that their “world” is in someone else’s body or that the voice they can recognize in the womb belongs to someone else, their mother—to beings who understand that their own thoughts and feelings are theirs?

Apply & Discuss

Love, hate, care, and rivalry are all part of the sibling experience.
- From the point of view of a first born, is there an “optimal” age for a second child to come along? What about from the point of view of later borns and parents?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of spacing children close together (e.g., two years) versus farther apart?
Self-Concept in Infants and Young Children  Because infants cannot talk about themselves, researchers have had to devise indirect methods to learn how the self-concept develops in the first few years. One of the most reliable methods, first developed to assess the self-concept of chimpanzees (Gallup, 1972), is to put rouge on the child’s nose and observe the way the child responds to its image in a mirror (Amsterdam, 1972; Asendorpf & Baudonniere, 1993; Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979). Infants of different ages respond very differently to the image they see. Children younger than 15 months rarely touch their noses, unlike the vast majority of two-year-olds, who recognize a discrepancy between the way they look and the way they should look. Thus, infants appear to develop a visual self-concept between 15 and 24 months.

Development of the visual self-concept is, however, not complete by two years. When investigators secretly place a sticker on the forehead of three-year-olds and then show them a videotape of themselves from a week or a few minutes earlier, they do not touch their foreheads. Four- and five-year-olds, in contrast, only touch their foreheads after watching the tape of themselves from a few minutes earlier, a suggestion that they know what they generally do and do not look like (Povinelli & Simon, 1998).

During the toddler years, children begin to categorize themselves on various dimensions, especially age and gender (Damon & Hart, 1988). Throughout early childhood, the categories they use are largely concrete. When asked to describe themselves, they refer to their membership in groups (“I live with my mommy and my daddy”), material possessions (“I have a pretty room”), things they can do (“I can tie my shoes”), and appearance.

These global categories do not imply, however, that the self-concept of young children is entirely devoid of subtlety. Even preschoolers can sometimes observe consistencies in their own behaviors that resemble adult categories of personality, such as extraversion (“I usually play with my friends” versus “I usually play by myself”). However, they have difficulty making generalizations about their enduring feelings, such as “I don’t usually get mad” or “I don’t like myself” (Eder, 1990; Harter, 1998, 1999).

Self-Concept in Childhood and Adolescence  Around age 8, children begin to define themselves based on internal, psychological attributes as much as on the obviously perceptible qualities or appearances that dominate all cognition in early childhood (Broughton, 1978; Damon & Hart, 1988; Harter, 1999). In other words, they start to think about their abilities, their likes and dislikes, and the ways they tend to feel and think—namely, their personality. Conceiving the self at this point often involves comparisons with other children (“I’m good at math” or “I’m the best skateboarder in my school”). Children at this age also begin to describe themselves more relationally, saying things such as “I’m smarter than anyone else in my class,” or “I’m more helpful around the house than my brother” (Harter, 1999).

In adolescence, representations of the self become much more subtle (Figure 14.5) (Harter, 1998; Harter & Monsour, 1992). For example, a 17-year-old interviewed for a research project on the development of children’s representations of self and others described herself as follows, “I seem really shy on the outside, but inside I’m really involved when I’m with people, thinking a lot about what they are saying and doing. And with people I’m comfortable with, I probably don’t seem shy at all” (Westen et al., 1991).

Although we have focused here on developmental trends that apply to most children, an important influence on individual differences in self-concept (and self-esteem) that increases as children age is genetics (McGuire et al., 1999). As with other attributes such as intelligence (Chapter 8), heritability coefficients for self-concept and self-esteem tend to increase during adolescence, as genetic influences that were less apparent in childhood express themselves in behavior.

In addition, gender plays a role not only in the attributes that children and adolescents use to describe themselves, but also in the evaluations that they assign to
these attributes. As shown in Figure 14.6, females evaluate themselves as weaker on appearance and athletics than males (Harter, 1999). And, this gender difference has been observed across a range of different cultures.

**Concepts of Others**

Coming to understand other people, like coming to understand the self, is a lengthy developmental process (Flavell & Miller, 1998). In infancy, a central accomplishment is the recognition that social interactions are reciprocal—that other people's actions depend on one's own. By the third or fourth month, infants learn that smiling brings playful responses from caregivers, whereas crying usually means being picked up and held.

Infants also learn to read emotions in people's faces. As early as 12 months, an infant “consults” the mother by looking to her for reassurance when introduced to a new toy. If the mother's face shows concern, the infant approaches the mother rather than the toy (Klinnert et al., 1983; Saarni, 1998). If the infant receives a smile from one parent but a fearful look from the other, the child becomes confused and distressed (Hirshberg, 1990).

From early childhood until about age 8, children tend to focus on relatively simple, concrete attributes of other people, such as the way they look or the roles they perform (Shantz, 1983). For instance, a typical seven-year-old described a neighbor she liked as follows: “She is very nice because she gives my friends and me toffee. She lives by the main road” (Livesley & Bromley, 1973, p. 214). Around age 8, however, children's representations of others begin to change, and they become more complex through adolescence.

**Perspective-Taking and Theory of Mind**

An important social–cognitive ability that develops throughout childhood and adolescence, and probably beyond, is **perspective-taking**, the ability to understand other people's viewpoints or perspectives (Chapter 13). Taking other people's perspectives—from visualizing what they see, as in Piaget's three-mountains task, to understanding in the midst of an argument why the other person is angry—involves moving out of egocentrism and representing the other person's mind in one's own.

---

**FIGURE 14.5** Self-concept in childhood and adolescence. School-age children most frequently mention activities, significant others, and attitudes when describing themselves, as in this excerpt from an interview with a nine-year-old boy. With age, the self-concept becomes more abstract and complex, as in the response by a 17-year-old girl. Source: Montemayor & Eisen, 1977, pp. 317–318.

**FIGURE 14.6** Gender and the self. Contributing to individual differences in the self-concept is gender. Males and females do not always evaluate themselves equally along different dimensions. As shown in this figure, females rate themselves lower on the categories of appearance and athletics than males. Ratings for each dimension were made along a 4-point scale. Source: Reprinted from Bukatko & Daehler (2004).
A prerequisite to perspective-taking is the development of a **theory of mind**—an implicit set of ideas about the existence of mental states, such as beliefs and feelings, in oneself and others (Flavell, 1999; Gopnik, 1993). Researchers have argued about precisely when children develop a coherent theory of mind, but it appears to arise somewhere in the toddler years, between ages 2 and 4. Before that time, children have trouble understanding that people can hold false beliefs, because they have trouble recognizing that thought and reality can differ.

Precursors to a theory of mind can be seen, however, in infancy. For example, as early as the middle to end of the first year, infants appear to understand that people’s actions reflect their goals, such as grabbing a particular object (Woodward & Sommerville, 2000). Infants also engage in joint visual attention, when their parents look at something and point to it—recognizing that they should look at the object and not the parent (Deak et al., 2000; Flavell, 1999). By the middle of the second year, children can infer from the face an experimenter makes after eating a food that the experimenter does not want it—even if the child likes that food (Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997).

Theory of mind and perspective-taking also develop considerably beyond the preschool years. Early school-age children, for example, do not clearly understand that certain activities, such as listening, pretending, or deliberately performing mental or physical actions, require consciousness and cannot occur while people are asleep (Flavell et al., 1999). One ingenious technique researchers have devised for assessing perspective-taking involves observing the way children play games of strategy (Flavell et al., 1968; Selman, 1980). In a game called “Decoy and Defender” (Selman, 1980), which is played on a checkerboard, each player has two “flag carriers” as well as several less valuable tokens. The object is to move one’s flag carriers to the opponent’s side of the board. Because, from the opposite side of the table, all the pieces look alike, players must figure out which pieces to block by observing their opponents’ moves.

---

**Apply & Discuss**

These are excerpts from interviews with a ninth and a twelfth grader who were asked to describe their relationship with their mothers (Source: Westen et al., 1991).

- In what ways do the two accounts differ?
- Consider the complexity of each girl’s representation of herself and her mother, as well as the coherence of the narrative—that is, the extent to which it makes sense and people’s actions are well explained. What differs between the two vignettes?
- How do the two girls differ in their capacity for taking the perspective of their mother?

**Ninth grader:** In the fifth grade I was getting really bad grades and my mom yelled at me all the time and we got in big fights all the time, and before that we were real close... The whole year and summer my mom and I were always fighting, and then in the sixth grade my mother—well, I made the honor roll and we became close again—and I was on the Student Council. And then in the eighth grade I got Ds and Cs and we were fighting a lot but after graduation from middle school we were close again, and this year I was on the honor roll first quarter, and then last quarter I got 3 Cs and 3 Bs and she’s yelling at me again, and we’re not as close as before.

**Twelfth grader:** As I’m getting older we argue more, disagree on more—disagree on a lot more things. But I think we’re getting closer now, more on the same level than when I was a little girl. Like, one time I was getting ready for a competition—we had a lot of misunderstanding, beforehand—I didn’t feel she understood. She’d been in so many of these competitions and won, and I didn’t feel she really cared about this one I was in. She hadn’t felt I was serious about it. I didn’t think she cared, and she didn’t think I was serious. So finally we talked about it—realized it was a misunderstanding. I think we’re closer now—I realized we do have to talk about things when we have misunderstandings.
The strategies used by children of different ages illustrate the stagelike development of perspective-taking ability. Children aged 3 to 6 have an egocentric perspective, totally failing to take their opponent’s perspective into account. Typical of this age is the “rush for glory” strategy: The child simply moves her flag carrier as quickly as possible across the board. By ages 6 to 8, children become craftier but in a transparent fashion: They often announce, “I’m moving my flag carrier now” while moving an unimportant token. (They may even clear their throat first for effect.) They are beginning to recognize that to win they must influence the beliefs of their opponents. Other research similarly indicates that by age 5 children start to recognize the value of trying to influence other people’s mental states in order to alter their behavior (Peskin, 1992).

By ages 8 to 10, children show more sophistication. For example, in the “double-take” strategy, they might advance their flag carrier with considerable fanfare, expecting that the other player would not think they would be so stupid. Behind this strategy is a more complex perspective-taking process: “He’s thinking that I’m thinking….” The subtlety and complexity of this kind of back-and-forth thinking expand throughout adolescence.

**INTERIM SUMMARY**

Children develop in their social cognition, their understanding of themselves, others, and relationships. Researchers studying children’s self-concept have found that children are not born with self-knowledge; even learning to represent their physical appearance is an achievement of the toddler years. Throughout early childhood, children tend to think of themselves and others in relatively concrete ways, such as their age, gender, group membership, and possessions. Around age 8, they begin to think more about enduring personality attributes. By adolescence, social cognition, like all cognition, is much more subtle and abstract. Perspective-taking also increases steadily throughout childhood and adolescence, beginning with children’s development of a theory of mind—an implicit set of ideas about the existence of mental states in the self and others.

**Children’s Understanding of Gender**

Children’s social cognition thus develops in complexity and abstractness, much as cognition does in nonsocial domains (Chapter 13). The same is true of children’s understanding of what gender is and how it applies to them, which changes dramatically over the first several years of life and continues to evolve throughout the life span.

One cognitive–developmental theory proposes that children progress through three stages in understanding gender (Kohlberg, 1966). In the first stage, usually attained by age 2, children acquire gender identity, the ability to categorize themselves (and others) as either male or female (Slaby & Frey, 1976). Precursors to gender knowledge of this sort can be seen as early as six to nine months of age, when habituation studies show that infants can discriminate males and females (see Martin & Ruble, 1997).

The second stage, gender stability, occurs when children understand that their gender remains constant over time. Girls learn that they will never grow up to be Batman, Superman, or even a garden-variety father, and boys learn that they will not become Wonder Woman, Madonna, or a mommy. Even after they recognize that they will never change their sex, however, children are not absolutely certain that this is also true of other people. Before age 6 or 7, some children believe that boys who wear dresses may eventually become girls and girls may metamorphose into boys if they do enough boyish things (Marcus & Overton, 1978; McConaghy, 1979). For example,
when a four-year-old saw his father dressed as a woman for Halloween, he exclaimed, “Two mommies!” In general, children know things about their own gender earlier than they can generalize this knowledge to others.

The third stage, gender constancy, occurs when children learn that a person’s gender cannot be altered by changes in appearance or activities (except, of course, in exceptional circumstances). Gender constancy may seem a simple achievement to us, but it does not necessarily come easily. One psychologist tells the story of a four-year-old boy who wore a barrette to nursery school. When another little boy called him a girl, the first child pulled down his pants to demonstrate that he was indeed still a boy. The other child, however, found this unconvincing. In a “you can’t fool me” tone of voice, he responded, “Everyone has a penis; only girls wear barrettes” (Bem, 1983, p. 607).

Gender Schemas While some researchers have focused on the structure (e.g., the level of complexity) of children’s thinking about gender, others have turned their attention to the content of children’s knowledge. Cross-culturally, children begin to show an awareness of their culture’s beliefs about gender by the age of 5; by middle childhood they share many of the stereotypes common in their society (Best et al., 1977; Huston, 1983). They encode and organize information about their culture’s definitions of maleness and femaleness in gender schemas, mental representations that associate psychological characteristics with each sex (Bem, 1985).

Gender schemas can be quite persistent across the life span. Consider the following scenario, familiar to any female doctor, reported by a colleague, a psychologist:

“Is Dr. Williams in?”
“Yes, speaking.”
“I’m calling regarding one of the doctor’s patients. May I speak with the doctor please?”
“This is the doctor.”
“No, I need to speak with the doctor, Dr. Williams.”
“This is Dr. Williams.”

Because the caller’s gender schema associates doctors with masculinity, the person has difficulty recognizing that the doctor is, indeed, on the phone. Interestingly, the caller was female.

Gender schemas across the globe show considerable similarities as well as differences. One team of researchers gave an adjective checklist with 300 items (e.g., aggressive, arrogant, artistic, bossy) to university students in 25 countries and asked them to rate whether the words were more characteristic of men, women, or neither (Best & Williams, 1998; Williams & Best, 1982). Although many adjectives were categorized differently in different countries, a number were almost universally associated with men or with women. Broadly speaking, people everywhere consider men more active, aggressive, and dominant, and perceive women as more affectionate, emotional, and sensitive (Table 14.2).

The consistency of these findings is striking, although two qualifications are in order. First, technological change is reducing the distinctions between the sexes. Using a similar method, in a follow-up to their initial investigation the researchers examined sex-role ideology, beliefs about appropriate behaviors of the sexes, in 14 countries (Williams & Best, 1990). Technologically developed, urban, individualistic societies tended to have more egalitarian sex roles, with less divergent views of appropriate behaviors for men and women. Protestant countries were also more likely to be egalitarian, while people in predominantly Muslim countries tended to believe men should be dominant and women, submissive.

A second qualification is that gender differences are average differences (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Williams, 1983). For most traits, such as aggressiveness or sensitivity,
the bell-shaped curves for males and females overlap substantially. Thus, within a culture, some women score higher than some men even on “masculine” traits, and vice versa, although the typical member of each sex is higher on gendered traits than the average member of the opposite sex (Figure 14.7). For example, women and men differ on the importance they attach to a vast number of criteria when selecting jobs, but the differences tend to be relatively small (Konrad et al., 2000).

Cross-Cultural Gender Stereotypes Why are gender stereotypes so similar cross-culturally? As early as age 2, Western boys prefer blocks and transportation toys such as trucks and cars, and girls prefer dolls and soft toys. Boys play more actively at manipulating objects and are more likely to engage in forbidden activities (Fagot, 1985; Smith & Daglish, 1977), whereas girls are more likely to play dress-up and dance. Girls also tend to talk earlier than boys (Schachter et al., 1978). Cross-cultural research with a large sample of preindustrial societies shows that the vast majority socialize boys from early childhood to be brave and self-reliant and girls to be responsible, self-restrained, obedient, and sexually restrained (Low, 1989).

Why do so many cultures socialize children in similar ways? As we saw in exploring the links between gender differences and brain structures in Chapter 3, where nature lays a foundation, culture tends to adorn, embellish, and reshape it. This is likely to be the case with the most well-documented difference between the sexes, that males are more aggressive and females more nurturant (see Clinchy & Norem, 1998; Jacklin, 1989; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). These differences occur across cultures and species and are evident well before children begin school. Boys display higher rates of aggression in virtually every society and are far more likely to engage in rough-and-tumble play (Edwards & Whiting, 1983). Girls have never been found to be more prone to initiate aggressive encounters in any society (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1980).

Biology and Evolution The male hormone testosterone appears to be related to aggression in both males and females (Chapter 18). Highly suggestive data come from studies of girls with adrenogenital syndrome, a malfunction of the adrenal glands that exposes the female fetus to unusually high levels of male hormones (Chapter 10). The result is not only an increase in aggressiveness but also a general increase in “tomboy” behavior during childhood (Erhardt & Baker, 1974; Money & Erhardt, 1972). From an evolutionary perspective, sex differences in aggression and nurturance are products of natural selection. In many species, including most primates, males compete for sexual access to females, often physically establishing dominance over other males by fighting. Hence, males’ tendency to exhibit aggressive behavior and to practice such behavior in childhood would optimize reproductive success. Behavioral

### Table 14.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Affectionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>Attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear thinking</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coarse</td>
<td>Fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courageous</td>
<td>Gentle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruel</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Sentimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egotistical</td>
<td>Sexy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceful</td>
<td>Submissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardhearted</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemotional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For these adjectives, over 20 of 25 countries share the gender stereotype.
Apply & Discuss

Women, like men, respond emotionally when people violate gender stereotypes. Many women, for example, find Senator and former First Lady Hillary Clinton’s no-nonsense, take-charge style off-putting.

- To what extent do men’s and women’s reactions to Senator Clinton reflect the discrepancy between her public behavior and cultural views of the way “ladies” (especially First Ladies) should behave?

- Women in the United States still earn less than three-quarters of what men earn for equivalent work, and when women begin to predominate in a formerly male occupation (such as teaching, which became feminized in the twentieth century), salaries decline. How much does this depend on explicit discrimination versus implicit expression of gender stereotypes?

Big Picture Question 1

To what extent can mental processes be reduced to the brain or body?

Big Picture Question 6

What is the relation between nature and nurture in shaping psychological processes?

differences would likely have been selected alongside physical differences such as the greater body mass in males of most species, including humans. Females, in contrast, carry infants in their uterus for nine months and hence have already made substantial investments in their offspring by birth. In the context of these sex differences, a division of labor may have evolved in which males tend to fight for status and protect the group and females tend to care for infants and young children.

Culture and Social Learning  

A strictly biological version of this hypothesis about sex differences would be difficult to sustain because research finds that males are quite capable of nurturant behavior (Fogel et al., 1986). In fact, changing gender roles now allow fathers to care for infants and young children in ways that would have been considered “unnatural” decades ago, and children whose fathers are more involved and nurturant with them tend to benefit psychologically in multiple ways (e.g., Black et al., 1999).

A social learning interpretation of sex differences holds that most behavioral differences observed between women and men result not primarily from innate differences but from expectancies, which in turn reflect the way society is organized (Eagly, 1983; Eagly & Wood, 1999). Women and men frequently find themselves in hierarchical relationships in which men are in positions of power and status and women are subordinate (e.g., doctor/nurse, executive/administrative assistant). Because these occur so often, people see them as natural and generalize to other situations, even where status is presumably equal, such as dinner-table discussions of politics. That they also adapt themselves to the roles in which they are likely to find themselves leads to substantial gender differences in behavior.

Nature and Nurture: An Integrative View  

Although the social learning hypothesis is compelling, it does not account for the fact that such similar social structures have emerged across cultures. Nor does it account for the finding that boys are more active in utero than girls, even before their parents have begun to push them toward more rough-and-tumble play (DiPietro et al., 1996a).

A more integrated account considers the interaction among biological evolution, cultural evolution, and learned expectations. (In fact, advocates of both evolutionary and social learning approaches tend to acknowledge the importance of both evolution and learning but focus on one side or the other; e.g., Eagly & Wood, 1999.) From an integrative standpoint, biological evolution produced motivational “pulls” that diverge in various ways for the two sexes, such as a tendency toward aggressive behavior in males and nurturant behavior in females, along with physical differences such as body size and strength. Based on these biological differences, nearly all cultures create a division of labor between the sexes and amplify innate tendencies. Simply noting the differences in size and strength between the average man and woman, for example, most cultures would be expected to enlist men and not women in warfare.

As ecological conditions shift (such as the disappearance of hand-to-hand combat or the ability of women to compete on an equal footing in the workplace), cultural ideology changes, and so do socialization practices. In fact, cross-cultural data document that where women have more power (where they control resources such as property), girls are taught to be less submissive and more aggressive, although they still remain less aggressive than males (Low, 1989). It is important to note, as well, that evolutionary pressures would not likely select men and women to have completely divergent behavioral tendencies. Women in all cultures need aggression in their behavioral repertoire, just as men need nurturance to maximize their reproductive success. Evolution has undoubtedly selected for flexibility in human behavior.

The Politics and Science of Gender  

One of the great difficulties of drawing conclusions about gender differences is the extent of passion and politics involved (Eagly, 1995). The systematic study of gender differences emerged in the 1970s with the rise
of the feminist movement, which attempted to use psychological findings to discredit pervasive stereotypes that devalued women. Yet more recent research challenges the view that gender differences tend to be small. Men and women differ substantially in a number of ways, particularly in their relative attraction to and ability for verbal versus mathematical tasks and their tendency to be nurturant or aggressive (e.g., Feingold, 1994). Whereas the first wave of feminist influence on the understanding of gender attempted to show that gender differences are actually small, more recent thinking suggests that men and women do differ in some important respects, but that the problem lies less in those differences than in our tendency to devalue the things at which women excel.

INTERIM SUMMARY

Children’s understanding of their own and other people’s gender begins in the toddler years, when they start to classify themselves and others according to gender. Over time, they develop gender constancy, the knowledge that gender cannot be altered by changes in appearance or activities. Children encode and organize information about their culture’s definitions of maleness and femaleness in gender schemas. People everywhere share certain stereotypes about men and women, which appear to be rooted in both evolved differences between the sexes and social and cultural practices and beliefs.

Moral Development

INTERVIEWER: Should boys get more? Why should they get more?
FOUR-YEAR-OLD BOY: Because they always need more.
INTERVIEWER: Why do they need more?
BOY: Because that’s how I want it.
[Damon, 1977, p. 121]

Fortunately, children’s thinking about what is fair (and why) changes dramatically over the years, so that older children and adults do not operate at the same level of morality as the four-year-old above (or they do it with more subtlety and conviction borne of biased reasoning). Researchers who study the development of morality—the set of rules people use to balance the conflicting interests of themselves and others—have focused on the roles of cognition and emotion in children’s evolving sense of right and wrong (see Rest, 1983; Turiel, 1998).

The Role of Cognition

Several theories focus on cognition in moral development. These include cognitive–developmental, cognitive–social, and information-processing theories.

Cognitive–Developmental Theories The cognitive–developmental models of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg focus on moral reasoning. These models propose that moral development proceeds through a series of stages that reflect cognitive development.

Piaget’s Theory Piaget observed a simple type of event—games of marbles among children—and noted important differences in the way younger and older children thought about the rules (Piaget, 1932/1965). The youngest children, who were essentially pre-moral, arbitrarily altered the rules to enhance their enjoyment of the game and their chances of winning. Once children accepted the notion of rules, however,
they would stick staunchly to them. If asked where the rules for playing marbles came from, they would reply with answers like, “They just are,” “From Daddy,” or “From God!”

Piaget called this first stage of moral judgment, in which children believe that morals are absolute, the morality of constraint. This form of moral reasoning is typical of children before the age of 9 or 10. Piaget described this morality as one “of duty pure and simple,” in which children conform to societal rules that are viewed as unchanging and unchangeable (1932/1965, p. 335). When judging the actions of others, children in this stage tend to center on the most salient characteristic of the act—its severity—and have difficulty simultaneously keeping in mind other aspects of the act, such as the intention behind it.

Consider what happens when a child is asked to decide who is more blameworthy, a boy who went to steal a cookie from the kitchen and broke a glass while reaching into the cookie jar or another boy who accidentally slipped and broke five glasses. In line with the tendency of preoperational children to focus on only one salient attribute at a time (Chapter 13), a five-year-old is likely to reason that the boy who broke more glasses has committed the worse offense, even though his “crime” was accidental.

Older children and adults focus more on their inferences about others’ intentions. They also tend to view rules as means to ends, as strategies for keeping social interactions safe, fair, and comfortable. In this morality of cooperation, moral rules can be changed if they are not appropriate to the occasion, as long as the people involved agree to do so. Older children playing marbles may thus change the rules by mutual consent without believing they are violating something sacred.

Kohlberg’s Theory  Lawrence Kohlberg shared two of Piaget’s central convictions about moral development. The first is that changes in moral reasoning result from basic changes in cognitive structures—that is, changes in ways of thinking. For example, as children’s thinking becomes more abstract, so, too, does their moral reasoning. Second, Kohlberg conceptualized children as active constructors of their own moral reality, not passive recipients of social rules.

Kohlberg (1976; Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969) proposed a sequence of three levels of moral development, each comprised of two stages. He assessed moral development by presenting subjects with hypothetical dilemmas and asking them how these dilemmas should be resolved and why. Each dilemma forces a person to choose between violating the law and helping another person in need. An example is the dilemma of Heinz and the druggist (Kohlberg, 1963, p. 19).

In Europe a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid $200 for the radium and charged $2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman’s husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about $1,000, which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, “No, I discovered the drug, and I’m going to make money from it.” So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man’s store to steal the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that?

Kohlberg’s example of Heinz and the druggist turned out years later to be a real-life moral dilemma that found its way into the courtroom, when the South African government tried to compel the Western pharmaceutical industry to sell medications for life-threatening illnesses such as AIDS to people who could not otherwise afford them.

The level of moral development a person shows in answering this question depends not on the particular answer (to steal or not to steal) but on the reasoning be-
hind the response (Table 14.3). At the first level, preconventional morality, children follow moral rules either to avoid punishment (Stage 1) or to obtain reward (Stage 2). A preconventional child might conclude that Heinz should steal the drug “if he likes having his wife around.” At the second level, conventional morality, children (and adults whose moral reasoning remains conventional) define what is right and wrong by the standards they have learned from other people, particularly respected authorities such as their parents. People with conventional morality justify their choice of moral actions on the basis of their desire to gain the approval or avoid the disapproval of others (Stage 3) or on the need to maintain law and order (e.g., “if everyone stole whenever he wanted to, what would this world come to?”) (Stage 4).

The third level, postconventional morality, is a morality of abstract, self-defined principles that may or may not match the dominant morals of the times. A postconventional adult, like a preconventional child, might condone stealing the drug, but for a very different reason, such as “the value of a human life far exceeds any rights of ownership or property.” (Distinctions between two postconventional stages originally outlined by Kohlberg have not proven empirically useful and will thus not be described here.) Only about 5 percent of people actually reach the postconventional level (Colby & Kohlberg, 1984).

The basic logic of Kohlberg’s theory is that at the preconventional level, the person accepts moral standards only if doing so is personally advantageous; this is an ethic of hedonism or self-interest. The child is preconventional in the sense that he has not yet come to accept society’s conventions in their own right as rules that good people should follow. At the conventional level, the individual believes in the moral rules he has learned. The person with postconventional morality, in contrast, views the values of the time as conventions—rules established by social contract rather than by any absolute or divine power—and hence as both potentially fallible and changeable. Virtually all normal children progress to Stage 3 by the age of 13. Beyond Stages 3 and 4, however, the development of moral reasoning is not related to age and is more a matter of individual differences and culture.

Cognitive–Social Theories  Cognitive–social theories (Chapters 5 and 12) focus less on moral reasoning than on moral behavior. According to behaviorist and cognitive–social theories, moral behaviors, like other behaviors, are learned through

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Reasons to Steal the Drug</th>
<th>Reasons Not to Steal the Drug</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preconventional:</td>
<td>He should steal it if he likes her a lot; if he gets caught, he won’t get much of a jail term, so he’ll get to see her when he gets out.</td>
<td>He’ll get caught; he shouldn’t have to pay with jail time for his wife’s problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional:</td>
<td>If he doesn’t steal it, everyone will think he’s a terrible person; it’s his duty to care for his wife.</td>
<td>If he steals it, everyone will think he’s a criminal; he can’t just go stealing things whenever he wants to—it isn’t right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postconventional:</td>
<td>If he has to run from the police, at least he’ll know he did the right thing; sometimes people have to break the law if the law is unjust.</td>
<td>If he steals it, he’ll lose all respect for himself; other people might say it was okay, but he’ll have to live with his conscience, knowing he’s stolen from the druggist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
processes such as conditioning and modeling (Bandura, 1977b; Mischel & Mischel, 1976). Cognitive–social researchers measure moral development in terms of **prosocial behavior**—behavior that benefits other individuals or groups (Holmgren et al., 1998; Mischel & Mischel, 1976). Anyone who has ever watched (or been) a child knows how powerful the words “good boy!” or “good girl!” can be in shaping prosocial behavior.

From this point of view, morality develops as children come to discover through trial and error and deliberate instruction that certain actions will be reinforced or punished. Thus, children learn that stealing is wrong because they are punished for it, see someone else punished (vicarious conditioning), or are told they will be punished (direct tutelage). They acquire expectancies about the outcome of their behaviors under different circumstances (whether they will or will not be punished), and they develop conditioned emotional responses (such as anxiety or guilt) to behaviors that are regularly punished. They also generalize from one situation to the next, recognizing, for example, that talking in one library is no more acceptable than talking in another.

Clear cultural differences in how altruistically children behave toward others have been observed (Whiting & Edwards, 1988). Children raised in more individualistic cultures, such as the United States, behave more selfishly and with less concern for the needs and well-being of others. In more collectivist cultures, however, where the needs of the group are emphasized and children are required to contribute to the family income, empathy and concern for others is much more apparent.

**Information-Processing Theories** An alternative cognitive view of moral development is an information-processing approach (Darley & Schultz, 1990; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Nelson & Crick, 1999). Information-processing theories do not postulate broad stages of moral development. Rather, they break moral thinking down into component processes and examine the way each of these processes changes during childhood.

According to one such view (Schultz & Schliefer, 1983), when adults make decisions about whether an act is immoral and whether it deserves punishment, as in jury deliberations, they make a series of sequential judgments. As Figure 14.8 shows, the first question concerns cause: Did the person cause the damage? Did his actions contribute to it in some way?

---

**FIGURE 14.8** An information-processing model of moral decision making. According to this model, when people make decisions about whether an act is immoral and whether it deserves punishment, they make a series of sequential judgments, such as whether the person caused the event, was morally responsible, is blameworthy, and deserves punishment. Source: Adapted from Darley & Schultz, 1990, p. 532.

---

**CAUSE**

Did the person cause the damage? Did his actions contribute to it in some way?

**MORAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Did he intend to do harm? Was he reckless or negligent? Should he have foreseen it?

**BLAME**

Was the harm substantial? Was it justified for any reason?

**PUNISHMENT**

Has the perpetrator made restitution or suffered from his action?
If the individual is morally responsible, the next question is whether he is blame-worthy—that is, did he do significant harm, and were his actions justified in some way? For example, jurors often make very different judgments about blameworthiness of defendants who attacked someone who molested their child. Finally, if the person caused unjustified harm, what should be his punishment? People in the West tend to determine appropriate punishment, whether in a jury trial or in the discipline of their children, according to three criteria: the extent of the damage, whether the perpetrator has already made appropriate restitution (e.g., by apologizing), and whether the perpetrator has suffered as a result of his actions.

From an information-processing view, then, understanding moral development means understanding changes in the way children answer these multiple questions. For example, when do children come to understand the difference between directly causing someone to suffer (e.g., taking something from them) as opposed to taking an action that, combined with someone else’s action, produces suffering (e.g., forgetting to lock a door, which contributed to a theft)? According to this view, global stage theories cannot capture developmental changes in the multiple components of moral reasoning, which often occur at different times.

**INTERIM SUMMARY**

Cognitive theories stress the role of thought and learning in moral development. According to Piaget, children at first believe moral rules are immutable but ultimately come to understand that they are the product of convention. Young children also tend to center on consequences rather than intentions in making moral judgments. Kohlberg distinguished three levels of moral development: preconventional morality (people follow moral rules either to avoid punishment or to obtain rewards); conventional (individuals define what is right by the standards they have learned from other people, particularly respected authorities), and postconventional (people reason using abstract, self-defined moral principles that may not match conventional moral beliefs). Cognitive–social approaches measure moral development in terms of prosocial behavior. Information-processing approaches examine changes in the component processes involved in moral thinking.

**The Role of Emotion**

The theories discussed thus far emphasize the role of cognition—judgment and decision making—in moral development. Other approaches, however, focus on the emotional side (see Eisenberg, 2000), particularly on guilt and empathy as motivators of moral action.

**Psychodynamic Theories** The psychodynamic view of moral development proposes that children start out relatively narcissistic (self-centered and interested in gratifying their own needs), as when a young child who wants an extra piece of cake simply grabs it. This orientation begins to change with the development of a conscience between ages 2 and 5 (Chapter 12) but can be seen in individuals with narcissistic and antisocial personality disorders, who remain self-centered and focused on their own needs as adults (Chapter 15).

From a psychodynamic perspective, moral development occurs through identification or internalization: Children take in the values of their parents, which are at first external, and gradually adopt them as their own. Empirically, parents and their children tend to think similarly about moral questions (Speicher, 1994), and four-year-olds, unlike older children (whose conscience is more internalized), do not associate lying with self-disapproval, or truth-telling with positive feelings about themselves (Bussey, 1999).

From a psychodynamic perspective, guilt is the primary emotion that motivates people to obey their conscience. A substantial body of research supports the role of
guilt in moral development and behavior (Eisenberg, 2000). Guilt arises from discrepancies between what people feel they should do and what they contemplate or observe themselves doing. When toddlers are learning about morals, they may feel anxious or ashamed at being caught. Yet they do not experience genuine guilt until they actually internalize their parents’ values as their own—that is, until they not only know these values but also believe in them.

Young children’s moral beliefs are very concrete and specific and are often tied directly to a mental image of a parent. Toddlers may thus be observed telling themselves “No!” even as they follow a forbidden impulse, or repeating their parents’ admonitions as a way of stopping themselves from doing something they have been told is wrong (“Don’t make a mess!”). Research suggests that as children get older, they rely less on an internalized parent “sitting on their shoulder” and more on abstract moral demands integrated from their parents and the wider culture (see Williams & Bybee, 1994).

Empathy Unpleasant emotions such as guilt, anxiety, and shame are not the only emotions involved in moral behavior. Some theorists emphasize the motivational role of empathy, or feeling for another person who is hurting (see Holmgren et al., 1998). Empathy has both a cognitive component (understanding what the person is experiencing) and an emotional component (experiencing a similar feeling). Research supports the view that empathy contributes to prosocial behavior, although empathizing too much emotionally can actually make people self-focused and hence less helpful (Strayer, 1993).

According to one theory (Hoffman, 1978, 1998), the ability to respond empathically changes considerably over the course of development. During the first year, infants experience global empathy; that is, they feel the same distress as the other person but cannot separate whose distress is whose. An 11-month-old who witnesses another child fall and cry may put her thumb in her mouth and bury her head in her mother’s lap as if she were hurt herself.

As children become better able to distinguish their own thoughts and feelings from those of others, they begin to experience genuine empathic distress—feeling upset for another person—which motivates moral or prosocial behavior. As early as the second year of life, children can recognize when someone is hurting, feel bad for that person, and try to take action to make the person feel better (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992a). The response may nonetheless be egocentric: A 13-month-old may give a sad-looking adult his own favorite stuffed animal or bring his own mother over to comfort a crying playmate, reflecting the immature perspective-taking ability of the young child.

As children get older, they respond more accurately to cues about what other people are feeling. By adolescence, a more mature form of empathy emerges, as individuals begin to think about suffering that exists beyond the immediate moment and hence become concerned about broader issues such as poverty or moral responsibility.

If empathy leads to prosocial actions, what type of actions does an individual who lacks empathy display? Do they try to hurt others or are they simply unaware of the needs and feelings of others? The answer appears to favor the former. For example, children with conduct disorder display violent and aggressive behavior directed toward other people and/or animals. They may also destroy property and lie. In short, they display behaviors that clearly run counter to the social norms of society. Although a number of explanations have been offered to explain the origins of conduct disorder, one recent hypothesis suggests that people with conduct disorder lack empathy. To test this idea, levels of empathy among individuals with conduct disorder and normal individuals were compared. The adolescents viewed videotaped vignettes portraying people in distress. They then completed a series of questionnaires assessing their reactions to the vignettes. Indeed, the individuals with conduct disorder showed significantly less empathy than did the normal controls to whom they were compared (Cohen & Strayer, 1996).

Apply & Discuss

Moral values tend to be highly similar in fathers and sons. A prime example: President George W. Bush and his father, former President George Bush. Explain this similarity from a psychodynamic perspective.

Explain this similarity from a behaviorist perspective.

Explain this similarity from a cognitive perspective.

To what extent do phenomena such as this require a behavioral genetic point of view, which focuses on the genetic transmission of individual differences in personality traits such as conservatism (Chapters 3 and 12)?
Making Sense of Moral Development

Cognitive and emotional approaches to moral development each present part of the picture, but none alone covers the entire landscape.

Cognitive Approaches

The strength of the cognitive–social approach is its emphasis on precisely what is missing from most other approaches, namely, moral or prosocial behavior. Thinking about morality is irrelevant if it does not affect action. Research does not, in fact, show particularly strong correlations between moral reasoning and prosocial behavior in older children and adults; correlations between empathy and prosocial behavior tend to be relatively small as well (see, e.g., Eisenberg et al., 1991; Miller et al., 1996).

The cognitive–social approach, however, tends to assume that certain behaviors are prosocial and generally does not address situations that require choices between imperfect moral options. For example, during the Vietnam War, people agonized over the question of what was moral or “prosocial.” Was it moral to answer the draft, even though many considered the war immoral or nonsensical? Evade the draft and let other people die instead? Protest the war? These kinds of questions are the essence of moral decision making.

Cognitive–developmental models have advantages and disadvantages as well. Kohlberg’s theory highlights a phenomenon that no other theory addresses—that moral development may go beyond the internalization of society’s rules. This has been the principle of many moral leaders, from Jesus to Gandhi to Martin Luther King.

At the same time, Kohlberg’s theory has drawn considerable criticism. People at the higher stages of moral reasoning do not necessarily behave any differently from people who are conventional in their moral reasoning. The philosopher Martin Heidegger, who reflected deeply and abstractly on a range of human experiences, found ways to rationalize cooperation with the Nazi regime, which many more “ordinary” Europeans did not (Chapter 18).

Relatedly, moral reasoning does not always translate into moral behavior. Indeed, as noted earlier, Kohlberg was less concerned with the ultimate decision a person makes and more with the reasoning processes by which they arrive at that decision. Thus, according to the model, morality is clearly determined by the level of reasoning rather than the behavior itself.

Other critics argue that Kohlberg’s model overlooks the role of educational level in influencing moral reasoning. People with higher educational levels display higher levels of moral reasoning than people with less education, but this characteristic does not necessarily mean that they are more moral. Rather, they are more articulate in their reasoning abilities (Eckensberger, 1994). Furthermore, people do not always display the same level of moral reasoning in different situations (Fishkin et al., 1973). In other words, in the face of one moral dilemma, a person’s reasoning may be at the conventional level; when confronted with another moral dilemma, the person may reason at the postconventional level of morality.

Yet other critics, notably Carol Gilligan (1982, 1996), contend that Kohlberg’s theory is gender biased. In Kohlberg’s early studies, women rarely transcended Stage 3 morality, which equates goodness with pleasing or helping others. Men more often reached Stage 4, which focuses on maintaining social order. Does this mean women are morally inferior? Gilligan thinks not—and a glance around the globe at most of the perpetrators of violence supports her view. According to Gilligan, women and men follow divergent developmental paths, with one no less mature than the other. Women’s moral concerns, she argues, more likely center on care and responsibility.
for specific individuals, whereas men tend to favor the justice orientation emphasized by Kohlberg. A meta-analysis (a review that summarizes the data across dozens or hundreds of studies quantitatively, by averaging their findings; Chapter 16) found that women and men do tend toward care and justice orientations, respectively, but that the differences are relatively small (Jaffee & Hyde, 2000).

Both Gilligan’s and Kohlberg’s theories may require some modification when applied to cultures in which concepts of duty and caring are different and less gender based than in the West—that is, where both men and women show a greater orientation toward relationships and community than in the West (Miller, 1994). For example, when six-year-olds in the United States and China tell stories in response to pictures or describe emotional memories, Chinese children show a greater concern with social engagement and obedience to authority, whereas Western children’s stories show more themes related to autonomy (Wang & Leichtman, 2000).

The information-processing approach to moral development fills in and clarifies many of the broad strokes painted by stage theories. Nevertheless, it leaves many questions unanswered, particularly about the way motivation influences moral reasoning and behavior. Why do children accept values in the first place, when doing so produces guilt? Why are they willing to control their impulses at all? How do their judgments about their own guilt or responsibility differ from their judgments about others? Asking people to make judgments about what other people have done is very different from understanding their own struggles to remain faithful to their lovers, to report their income honestly to the Internal Revenue Service, or to resist saying something unkind behind a friend’s back.

**Emotional Approaches**

Perspectives that focus on the emotional side of morality fare better in answering these questions. Because morality so often requires self-sacrifice and self-restraint, an emotional counterweight such as anxiety or guilt seems essential to balance out the net losses in gratification. Empathy adds a further source of motivation for moral behavior: Helping other people leads to a sense of satisfaction and reduces the empathic distress that comes from observing someone else’s suffering (Chapter 18).

Emotional approaches, however, also have their pitfalls. Why children internalize moral values is unclear. Freud linked identification with the father to the fear of castration in boys (Chapter 12). This seems a rather unlikely impetus for the development of morality and cannot account for moral development in females. Moreover, research indicates that mothers are more responsible for moral training in most Western families (Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967) and that internalization of values is associated with the extent to which mothers engage in an emotionally responsive, reciprocal relationship with their children (Kochanska et al., 2000). Identification with the father is probably not as central as Freud supposed, although research on moral reasoning does show particularly strong links between fathers’ level of moral reasoning and the moral reasoning of both their sons and daughters (Speicher, 1994).

Empathy theories do not provide insight into specifically moral questions, which arise when people’s needs are in conflict. Prosocial responses are common by 18 to 20 months when infants witness other people’s distress but not when they cause the distress themselves (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992b). Infants as young as 12 to 18 months often share toys with other children or with their parents, but by age 2 they are less likely to share if it means giving up their toys (Hay et al., 1991). Perhaps not incidentally, by this age most children have mastered the word “mine.” Prosocial responses aimed at making up for a transgression emerge around two years, precisely when theorists have argued for the beginnings of moral conscience fueled by guilt.

Research suggests that the roots of conscience may lie in both the fear emphasized by Freud and the empathy emphasized by recent researchers (Kochanska,
INTERIM SUMMARY

Emotion, like cognition, is central to moral development. Psychodynamic theories emphasize the role of guilt in moral development and argue that conscience arises through identification with parents. Other theories emphasize empathy, or feeling for another person who is hurting. Moral development probably reflects an interaction of cognitive and affective changes that allow children to understand and feel for other people as well as to inhibit their own wishes and impulses.

An Integrated View

An integrated account of moral development would spell out the interactions of cognition, affect, and motivation that are involved when children and adults wrestle with moral questions. Infants and toddlers have many selfish impulses, but they also have prosocial impulses based on an innate capacity for empathy. When self-centered and other-centered motives clash, young children tend to opt for the most gratifying course of action.

This behavior probably changes over time for a number of reasons. Children mature in their capacity to love and care about other people and to understand the perspective of others. They also become more able to regulate their impulses as neural circuits in the frontal lobes mature and as expanding cognitive abilities allow them to transform situations in their minds.

Furthermore, through social learning, children come to associate actions such as sharing with positive reinforcement and hitting and lying with punishment. By identifying with people they fear and admire, children’s fear of punishment gradually becomes transformed into fear of their own internal monitor of right and wrong—and hence into guilt. Eventually, they reflect more abstractly about moral questions and try to integrate the moral feelings and beliefs they have accrued over the course of their development.

Social Development across the Life Span

In discussing social development, we have thus far focused on the first quarter of the life span. Like physical and cognitive development, however, social development continues throughout life. In this section, we begin by examining the most widely known theory of life-span development, formulated by Erik Erikson (1963). We then examine central aspects of life-span development from adolescence through old age.

Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development

Erikson’s is not the only model of adult development, but it has three important features. First, it is culturally sensitive, reflecting Erikson’s experience living in and study-
ing several cultures, from Denmark and Germany to a Sioux reservation. Research since Erikson’s time suggests that when and where people develop is crucial to the way they grow and change throughout their lives, even within a single culture (Elder, 1998). For example, people who were young children during the Great Depression never forgot the lessons of poverty, even when they were financially secure years later.

Second, Erikson’s theory integrates biology, psychological experience, and culture by grounding development simultaneously in biological maturation and changing social demands (Chapter 1). For example, like his mentor, the psychoanalyst Anna Freud (1958), Erikson observed that adolescents wrestle with questions about who they are and what they believe during puberty, a time in which teenagers have a surge of new feelings and impulses. Reconstituting a self-concept that now includes the self as a sexual being is a major task spurred by biological maturation. The extent to which adolescents find this conflictual, however, depends on the beliefs, values, rituals, and sexual practices of their culture (Mead, 1928).

Third, although Erikson’s theory offers a very broad framework, many aspects of his developmental model have received empirical support in cross-sectional, longitudinal, and sequential studies (e.g., Bradley & Marcia, 1998; Marcia, 1987, 1999; McAdams et al., 1998; Whitbourne et al., 1992).

Erikson intended his model of psychosocial stages—stages in the development of the person as a social being—to supplement Freud’s psychosexual stages (see Table 14.4). Thus, the toddler years are not only a time of toilet training but also, more generally, a time of learning what it means to submit to authority, to control impulses, and to assert one’s own autonomy. At each of eight stages, the individual faces a developmental task, a challenge that is normative for that period of life. Each successive task provokes a crisis—an opportunity for steaming ahead or a danger point for psychological derailment. These alternative “tracks” at each juncture are not, of course, absolute. No infant, for example, ever feels totally trusting or mistrusting, and people have many opportunities over the course of development to backtrack or take a new route.

### Table 14.4: Erikson’s Psychosocial Stage Model of Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychosocial Stage (Approximate Age)</th>
<th>Developmental Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–12 to 18 months</td>
<td>Trust versus mistrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>Autonomy versus shame and doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 6 years</td>
<td>Initiative versus guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 11 years</td>
<td>Industry versus inferiority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenage years (adolescence)</td>
<td>Identity versus identity confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20s and 30s (Young adulthood)</td>
<td>Intimacy versus isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40s to 60s (Midlife)</td>
<td>Generativity versus stagnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60s on</td>
<td>Integrity versus despair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Childhood During the first stage, basic trust versus mistrust, infants come to trust others or to perceive the social world as hostile or unreliable. This stage comprises roughly the first 18 months of life, when infants are developing their earliest internal working models of relationship.

By age 2, children have learned to walk and talk—a result of biological maturational that has profound psychological consequences. Now they can say what they want and move where they want. This is the time of the “terrible twos,” in which toddlers regularly assert their will. Erikson calls the period from around ages 2 to 3 autonomy versus shame and doubt, because toddlers at this stage learn to feel se-
cure in their independence or to experience doubt in their newfound skills and shame at their failures.

Empirically, some of the feelings of excitement and shame children experience at this age are self-generated, whereas others can be traced to the ways their parents respond to their successes, failures, and efforts at mastery. During the second year, children spontaneously set standards for themselves and experience pride in their accomplishments (Kagan, 1984). Yet research also finds that two-year-olds whose mothers are critical and controlling as they attempt to teach their toddlers achievement-related tasks in the laboratory tend to demonstrate more shame and less persistence at similar tasks a year later (Kelley et al., 2000).

The third stage, roughly between ages 3 and 6, is called initiative versus guilt. The poles of this stage are a sense of goal-directness and responsibility versus a rigid, tyrannical conscience. Initiative enables a child to follow through with ideas and goals. Children who have difficulty with this stage, in contrast, may be highly self-critical, or may become rigid and constricted to avoid acting on feelings and impulses they have learned to think of as “bad.”

The next stage, which occurs roughly between ages 3 and 6, is industry versus inferiority. In this stage, children develop a sense of competence (industriousness) or of inadequacy, as they begin to develop and practice skills they will use for a lifetime in productive work. In literate cultures, children enter school during this stage, and their experiences of academic and social success or failure shape both their self-concepts and the strategies they use to protect their self-esteem. Some children become caught in a vicious cycle, in which a sense of inferiority leads them to give up quickly on tasks, which in turn increases the probability of further failure.

Adolescence. According to Erikson, the developmental crisis of adolescence is identity versus identity confusion. Identity refers to a stable sense of who one is and what one’s values and ideals are (Erikson, 1968). Identity confusion occurs when the individual fails to develop a coherent and enduring sense of self and has difficulty committing to roles, values, people, or occupational choices. Empirically, individuals differ in the extent to which they explore and maintain commitments to ideologies, occupational choices, and interpersonal values (Marcia, 1987). Some establish an identity after a period of soul searching, while others commit early without exploration, foreclosing identity development. Still others remain perpetually confused or put off identity consolidation for many years while trying on various roles throughout their 20s.

These different paths to identity depend heavily on culture (Erikson, 1968; Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Many traditional cultures have initiation rites, ceremonies during adolescence that initiate the child into adulthood and impose a socially bestowed identity. A period of identity confusion occurs primarily in technologically more advanced societies or in cultures that are undergoing rapid change, as in much of the contemporary world.

Sometimes adolescents have trouble establishing a positive identity; they may be doing poorly in school or lack models of successful adulthood with whom to identify. As a result, they may develop a negative identity, defining themselves as not something or someone (such as a parent) or taking on a role society defines as bad. This is a path often taken by gang members and chronic delinquents, who seemingly revel in their “badness.”

Failure to form a cohesive identity beyond adolescence can signify problems later on. Girls who have difficulty forming an identity in late adolescence are more likely than their peers to experience marital disruption at midlife. Boys with late-adolescent identity problems are more likely to remain single and be unsatisfied with their lives in middle age (Kahn et al., 1985). Identity disturbances are common in certain forms of personality disorder in adulthood (Chapter 15), such as borderline personality disorder (Wilkinson-Ryan & Westen, 2000).
Adulthood  Erikson was one of the first theorists to take seriously the notion of development after adolescence. He describes the developmental task confronting young adults as **intimacy versus isolation**, establishing enduring, committed relationships or withdrawing and avoiding commitment. The task applies to friendships as well as romantic relationships.

Erikson describes the crisis of midlife as **generativity versus stagnation**, in which people begin to leave some kind of lasting legacy or feel alienated from relationships and community. Generativity means concern for the next generation as well as an interest in producing (generating) something of lasting value to society. People express their generative impulses through rearing children, participating in culturally meaningful institutions such as churches or civic organizations, mentoring younger workers, or creating something that will last beyond them, such as a work of art. Empirically, people in midlife express more generative themes than younger adults when describing their lives, and they report more generative activities (de St. Aubin et al., 2004; McAdams et al., 1993; McAdams et al., 1998). As Erikson hypothesized, individuals also differ in the extent to which they maintain an active, generative stance during middle age (Bradley & Marcia, 1998). People who have difficulty with generativity experience stagnation, a feeling that the promise of youth has gone unfulfilled. Stagnation may be expressed as dissatisfaction with a marital partner, alienation from one’s children, or chronic feelings of boredom or unhappiness.

Erikson’s final stage is **integrity versus despair**, a time in which individuals look back on their lives with a sense of having lived it well or with despair and regret. In many respects, the balance between integrity and despair is fluid, as individuals must inevitably cope with losing people who have made their lives meaningful. For example, whereas roughly two-thirds of people in the United States are married in middle age, by age 65, that number has dropped to half for women, and by age 75, it has dropped below half for men and to about one-fourth for women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998a). Thus, members of both sexes, but particularly women, face the death of a spouse (because women tend to live longer and to marry older men) while dealing with the gradual health declines of aging themselves.

**INTERIM SUMMARY**

Erikson proposed a life-span model of psychosocial stages—stages in the development of the person as a social being. In **basic trust versus mistrust**, infants come to trust others or perceive the social world as hostile or unreliable. In **autonomy versus shame and doubt**, toddlers come to experience themselves as independent sources of will and power or feel insecure in their newfound skills. In **initiative versus guilt**, young children develop the capacity to form and carry out plans, but their emerging conscience can render them vulnerable to guilt. In **industry versus inferiority**, school-age children develop a sense of competence but may suffer from feelings of inadequacy. Erikson described adolescence as a period of **identity versus identity confusion**, in which the task is to establish a stable sense of who one is and what one values. The crisis of young adulthood is **intimacy** (establishing enduring, committed relationships) **versus isolation**. In **generativity versus stagnation**, middle-aged individuals attempt to pass something on to the next generation. In **integrity versus despair**, people look back on their lives with a sense of satisfaction or sadness and regret.

**Development from Adolescence through Old Age**

Erikson’s theory provides a backdrop for empirical research on social development throughout the life span. Here we focus on some of the central issues in the study of development from adolescence through old age.

**Adolescence** Psychologists have offered two conflicting views of adolescent social and personality development (Arnett, 1999; Westen & Chang, 2000). One ap-
proach emphasizes that as adolescents grow less dependent on their parents and try out new values and roles, they often become rebellious and moody, shifting from compliance one moment to defiance the next. According to this conflict model, put forth at the turn of the twentieth century (Hall, 1904) and later elaborated by psychodynamic theorists (Blos, 1962; A. Freud, 1958), conflict and crisis are normal in adolescence. Conflict theorists argue that adolescents need to go through a period of crisis to separate themselves psychologically from their parents and to carve out their own identity. Beeper studies (which page or “beep” participants at random intervals over the course of a day to measure what they are thinking or feeling at the moment; Chapter 9) show that adolescents do, in fact, experience a wider range of moods over a shorter period of time than adults (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984). Longitudinal studies find decreases in hostility and negative emotionality and increases in diligence, self-control, and congeniality as teenagers move into early adulthood (see McGue et al., 1993).

Other theorists argue, however, that the stormy, moody, conflict-ridden adolescent is the exception rather than the rule (Compas et al., 1995; Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Offer et al., 1990). According to the continuity model, adolescence is not a turbulent period but is essentially continuous with childhood and adulthood. Research supporting this view finds that roughly 80 percent of adolescents show no signs of severe storm and stress (Offer & Offer, 1975).

How do we reconcile these two views of adolescence? Adolescence is a time of enormous individual differences, with many alternative paths that vary according to the individual, culture, and historical period (see Hauser & Safyer, 1994). As we will see, researchers have increasingly moved away from models of life-span development that propose a single pathway to “normal” or “successful” development, particularly in adolescence and adulthood, when biological maturation is not the driving force it is in childhood and cultural differences make generalizations much more difficult. Thus, adolescence may not inherently be a stormy era, but “storm and stress” is more likely in adolescence than in either childhood or adulthood, as suggested by data on adolescents’ conflicts with parents, mood disruptions, and high-risk behavior (Arnett, 1999).

Aside from individual differences, children show some increasing gender differences in adolescence. For example, across a number of domains, boys tend to become more confident and less dissatisfied with themselves over time, whereas the opposite occurs for girls. Already by third or fourth grade, and increasingly through at least early adolescence, boys tend to overestimate their scholastic ability, and girls underestimate it (Cole et al., 1999). Similarly, at age 13, boys and girls show similar levels of body dissatisfaction (Figure 14.9), but after that point their paths diverge, at least in Western cultures (Rosenblum & Lewis, 1999).
Early Adulthood and Middle Age  Erikson described the central task of young adulthood as the development of intimacy—establishing lifelong friendships and settling down and beginning to have a family of one’s own. Empirically, Erikson was probably right to name a stage of adult development “intimacy” and to tie it to finding a long-term mate. In the United States, for example, over 95 percent of people have married at least once by the age of 55, and many of the remaining 5 percent have lived with a partner outside matrimony (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998a).

Marital intimacy does not, however, come easily: In Western cultures, marital distress actually increases over the first three years of marriage, and maintaining intimate relationships in the face of conflict and disillusionment is a challenge that requires continuous negotiation and compromise (Gottman, 1998). Over half of divorces occur in the first three years of marriage (Whitbourne, 2001). Marital conflict is at its peak when children are young, when housework doubles, financial pressures mount, and intimate time alone is difficult to find (Belsky & Hsieh, 1988; Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Berman & Pedersen, 1987).

Women’s satisfaction with marriage appears to suffer more than men’s after the birth of a child (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). Motherhood usually involves a redefinition of roles and reallocation of time. The household division of labor tends to become more traditional, and women who are used to autonomy and invested in their work suddenly find themselves taking on more and more responsibility at home (Hoffman & Levy-Shiff, 1994). For men, fatherhood means that they are no longer the primary recipients of their wives’ attention and love; at the same time, they incur new financial and household and child-care responsibilities (Lamb, 1987).

Precisely when young adulthood ends and middle age begins is difficult to pinpoint. Some observers have described this period as a time of midlife crisis (Jacques, 1965; Levinson et al., 1978; Sheehy, 1976). One researcher found that roughly 80 percent of the men he interviewed were in a state of crisis around age 40, as they began to think of themselves as middle-aged instead of young and to question the basic structure of their lives (Levinson, 1978). In Western culture, people are frequently at the height of their careers in their 40s and 50s, enjoying leadership positions at work or in the community. At the same time, however, the death of parents, the occasional jarring death of siblings or contemporaries, and an aging body inevitably lead people to confront their mortality and to consider how they will live their remaining years.

As with adolescence, however, many psychologists have challenged the view of midlife as a time of crisis and suggest that midlife crisis may be a phenomenon that occurs primarily in upper middle class men (see Rosenberg et al., 1999). Empirically, only a minority of people report experiencing a midlife crisis, and in these cases, the crisis usually occurs along with a specific interruption in the normal rhythm of life, such as loss of a job or divorce (Costa & McCrae, 1988; Neugarten, 1977).

Old Age  The meaning of old age changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century. The average life span increased by almost 30 years, and the proportion of people over age 65 in North America grew from 1 in 30 in 1900 to a projected 1 in 5 by the year 2040 (see Figure 14.10) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998b). This demographic shift has produced substantial changes in perceptions of old age. Even three decades ago, people were considered “old” in their 60s. Today, no one is surprised to see 70-year-olds on the tennis court.

Technologically developed and Western cultures tend to devalue the elderly more than most cultures and to emphasize the despairing end of the continuum. William Shakespeare’s characterization of old age, from As You Like It (Act II, Scene vii), presents a grim picture that is not far from the contemporary Western conception of life’s final phase:

Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.

Although genuine declines do make life much more difficult as people grow old, fortunately Shakespeare took some poetic license, as reality is nowhere near this bleak. For example, contrary to stereotypes, only about 5 percent of the population over 65 have physical or mental impairments serious enough to require continuous nursing care (Tolliver, 1983). In fact, most people report having more positive and less negative affect as they move toward the end of middle age, and most people cross-culturally report being happy in old age (Diener & Suh, 1998; Helson & Klohnen, 1998; Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998). Why, then, are our stereotypes so negative?

One explanation is that many stereotypes of aging are built on our emotional forecasts of how we imagine we would feel if we gained weight, lost some hair, grayed, and suffered many of the more serious indignities of old age. The reality is that humans have a remarkable capacity for dealing with life’s blows with equanimity—for gradually adjusting to realities we cannot change and regaining our emotional equilibrium. As the writer Dostoevsky once said, humans are capable of adjusting to nearly anything.

A prime culprit in our negative views of old age may also be technological development (Cowgirl & Holmes, 1972). Ironically, the same factor that has prolonged life by decades has undermined the status of the aged by making their jobs obsolete, limiting the applicability of their beliefs and values in a radically changed social and cultural milieu, and eroding the concept of the extended family. The geographical mobility associated with economic development also means that children may live hundreds if not thousands of miles from their aging parents. In contrast, in more traditional societies, the aged are by definition the most knowledgeable because they have lived the longest and accumulated the most information, and mutual ties of affection between the generations are reinforced by daily interaction.

In the face of physical decline, negative stereotypes, and the loss of spouse, friends, and social roles, what allows an individual to find satisfaction, or what Erikson describes as integrity, in the final years of life? In one study of around 1000 people aged 65 to 72, several variables predicted life satisfaction: close relationships, an active social and community life, continuing recreation, good health, and sufficient income (Flanagan, 1978). In general, research suggests that people who find satisfaction in later life tend to be characterized by three factors: lack of significant disease, high cognitive and physical functioning, and an active engagement in productive activity and community with others (Rowe & Kahn, 1997).

Longitudinal studies suggest that earlier factors also predict happiness and physical and mental health in later life (Sears, 1977; Valliant & Valliant, 1990). These include marital and career fulfillment as a younger adult, sustained family relationships, and long-lived ancestors. Risk factors from young and middle adulthood include defense mechanisms that grossly distort reality (such as projection; see Chapter 12), alcoholism, and depression before age 50. The quality of old age thus appears to depend to a substantial degree on the quality of youth.

**INTERIM SUMMARY**

Some researchers adopt a **conflict model** of adolescence, arguing that conflict and struggle are normal in adolescence; others propose a **continuity model**, viewing adolescence as essentially continuous with childhood and adulthood. Each model probably applies to a subset of adolescents. Similarly, researchers disagree on the extent to which midlife crisis is common in middle age. In all likelihood, “crises” in both adolescence and at midlife depend on individual differences and cultural and historical circumstances. Although old age inevitably involves many losses, the realities appear far better than the negative stereotypes of aging seen in many technologically developed societies.

**Apply & Discuss**

At least in the West, parents tend to value their relationship with their adult children more than their adult children value their relationship with their parents (Christensen, 1992).

Explain this from an evolutionary perspective. Why would parents’ investment in their children be greater than their adult children’s investment in their aging parents?
Summary

1. **Social development** refers to predictable changes in interpersonal thought, feeling, and behavior over the life span.

**Attachment**

2. **Attachment** refers to the enduring emotional ties children form with their primary caregivers. **Separation anxiety**—distress at separation from attachment figures—occurs around the same time in all human cultures and peaks in the second year of life. Harlow’s experiments with monkeys showed that security, not food, is the basis for attachment. Integrating psychodynamic and evolutionary theory, Bowlby proposed that attachment is a mechanism to keep immature animals close to their parents.

3. Using a procedure called the Strange Situation, researchers have identified four styles of attachment: secure, avoidant, ambivalent, and disorganized. Early attachment patterns have a powerful impact on later social functioning and form the basis of adult attachment styles. Infants develop **internal working models**, or mental representations of attachment relationships, which form the basis for their expectations in later close relationships.

**Socialization**

4. **Socialization** refers to the processes through which individuals come to learn the rules, beliefs, values, skills, attitudes, and behavior patterns of their society. Socialization is transactional (involving mutual influence of “teachers” and “learners”), lifelong, and multifaceted. Like all psychological processes, it also occurs within constraints imposed by biology and the broader economic and cultural context.

5. Parents are particularly important socialization agents. Research distinguishes authoritarian, permissive, authoritative, and uninvolved parenting styles. Each parenting style tends to produce children with different characteristics. Parents vary across and within cultures in the extent to which they are accepting and rejecting of their children. Parental warmth and sensitivity are associated with self-esteem, independence, and emotional stability.

6. Among the most powerful roles into which people are socialized are **gender roles**, the range of behaviors considered appropriate for males and females. Unlike sex (a biologically based categorization), gender (the psychological meaning of being male or female) is influenced by learning, although evolutionary pressures have probably contributed to gender differences that cultures embellish and magnify. Gender socialization begins in the first days of life.

**Peer Relationships**

7. Children differ in the extent to which they are accepted by their peers. **Rejected children** are often teased and ostracized, although they may also elicit dislike if they are bullies. **Neglected children** are less likely to draw a positive or negative response from their peers and are more likely to be friendless or ignored. Sibling relationships have many dimensions, including both rivalry and closeness.

**Moral Development**

10. Moral development refers to the acquisition of values and rules for balancing the potentially conflicting interests of the self and others. Behaviorist and cognitive–social theories assert that **prosocial behavior** (behavior that benefits others), like other behaviors, is learned through processes such as operant conditioning and modeling. Cognitive–developmental models focus less on moral behaviors than on moral reasoning. Kohlberg’s stage theory distinguishes three levels of moral reasoning: preconventional (following moral rules to avoid punishment or obtain reward), conventional (defining right and wrong according to learned cultural standards), and postconventional (applying abstract, self-defined principles). Information-processing approaches break moral development down into component processes and examine the way each changes during childhood.

11. Psychodynamic and other theories suggest that children internalize their parents’ values, and that guilt motivates people to obey their conscience. Other research emphasizes the role of **empathy** (feeling for someone who is hurting) in motivating prosocial behavior. Recent research suggests that the paths to internalization of conscience in children depend on an interaction of temperament and parenting styles. Moral development reflects an interaction of cognitive and emotional development.

**Development of Social Cognition**

8. As with cognitive development in nonsocial domains, children develop in their **social cognition**—the way they conceptualize themselves, others, and relationships. The **self-concept** refers to a person’s organized way of representing information about the self. Initially, children lack a distinct concept of self. Their views of themselves, like their views of others, begin concrete and gradually become more abstract. By adolescence, they are much more likely to think about their own and others’ internal psychological processes such as feelings and personality traits. An important cognitive–social skill that develops gradually is **perspective-taking**, the ability to understand other people’s viewpoints.

9. Children’s understanding of what gender is and how it applies to them develops substantially throughout the first several years of life. Children develop **gender schemas**—mental representations that associate psychological characteristics with one sex or the other—by integrating cultural beliefs with their personal experiences. Gender schemas share striking similarities across cultures, which appear to reflect an interaction between biology and social learning.

**Social Development across the Life Span**

12. The most widely known theory of life-span development is Erik Erikson’s theory of **psychosocial stages**: basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, and industry versus inferiority in childhood; identity versus identity confusion in adolescence; and intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair during adulthood.
Psychologists disagree on the extent to which people experience “crises” in adolescence and midlife, but in general, there does not appear to be any single path to “successful aging.” Nor do the data support a stereotypically bleak view of aging. People who have high life satisfaction in later life tend to have had fulfilled lives earlier and to be characterized by physical and cognitive health and active engagement with productive activities and other people.

**Key Terms**

- adult attachment 503
- ambivalent attachment style 499
- attachment 497
- authoritarian 506
- authoritative 506
- autonomy versus shame and doubt 530
- avoidant attachment style 499
- basic trust versus mistrust 530
- conflict model 533
- continuity model 533
- conventional morality 523
- developmental task 530
- disorganized attachment style 499
- empathic distress 526
- empathy 526
- gender constancy 517
- gender identity 517
- gender roles 509
- gender schemas 518
- gender stability 517
- generativity 532
- generativity versus stagnation 532
- identity 531
- identity confusion 531
- identity versus identity confusion 531
- imprinting 498
- industry versus inferiority 531
- initiation rites 531
- initiative versus guilt 531
- integrity versus despair 532
- internal working models 500
- intimacy versus isolation 532
- morality of constraint 522
- morality of cooperation 522
- negative identity 531
- neglected children 511
- permissive 506
- perspective-taking 515
- postconventional morality 523
- preconventional morality 523
- prosocial behavior 524
- psychosocial stages 530
- rejected children 511
- secure attachment style 499
- self-concept 513
- separation anxiety 499
- sex-role ideology 518
- sex typing 509
- social cognition 513
- social development 496
- socialization 504
- stagnation 532
- theory of mind 516
- uninvolved 506