Chapter 1

The Life Cycle in Its Changing Context: Individual, Family, and Social Perspectives

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Learning Outcomes

- Describe how generations within a family impact each other.
- List changes in family life cycle patterns that have occurred in recent decades.
- Describe the importance of belonging and friendship in healthy development.
- Define the individual, family, and social levels of the multi-contextual framework for clinical assessment, and describe the components of each level.
- List and describe the guidelines for a multi-contextual life cycle assessment.

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"Life must be understood backward, but . . . it must be lived forward."

Soren Kierkegaard, 1843 (Kierkegaard, 2000, p. 12)

The Family Life Cycle: A System Moving Through Time

Human development takes shape as individuals evolve through the matrix of the family life cycle, embedded in the larger sociocultural context. All human experiences are framed by the interlocking nature of individual trajectories and kinship networks in the context of temporal motion, culture, and social change. An individual's life takes place in the context of the family and the social system's past, the present tasks it is trying to master, and the future to which it aspires. Thus, the family life cycle, embedded in the larger social context, is the natural framework within which to focus our understanding of human identity and development. This chapter and this book offer a multicontextual life cycle framework for understanding families in the United States in their cultural context over their life course. Statistics offered refer to the United States unless otherwise specified and are an effort to help clinicians appreciate individuals as they move through their lives, in the context of their families and the larger social system.

We are born into families. They are the foundation of our first experiences of the world, our first relationships, and our first sense of belonging to a group. We develop, grow, and hopefully die in the context of our families. Families comprise people who have a shared history and an implied shared future. They encompass the entire emotional system of at least three, and frequently four or even five, generations held together by blood, legal, emotional, and/or historical ties. Relationships with parents, siblings, and other family members go through transitions as they move through life. Boundaries shift, psychological distance among members changes, and roles within and between subsystems are constantly being redefined (Norris & Tindale, 1994; Cicirelli, 1995;

Tindale, 1999; Meinhold, 2006; McKay & Caverly, 2004; Connidis, 2001, 2008). It is extremely difficult to think of the family as a whole because of the complexity involved.

As a system moving through time, families are different from all other systems because they incorporate new members only by birth, adoption, commitment, or marriage, and members can leave only by death, if then. No other system is subject to these constraints. A business manager can fire members of his organization viewed as dysfunctional, and members can resign if the organization's structure and values are not to their liking. In families, by contrast, the pressures of membership with no exit available can, in the extreme, lead to severe dysfunction or even suicide. In nonfamily systems, the roles and functions are carried out in a more or less stable way, by functional replacement of those who leave for any reason, or else the group dissolves and people move on into other systems. Although families also have roles and functions, their main value is in the relationships, which are irreplaceable.

Until recently, therapists have paid little attention to the family life cycle and its impact on human development. Even now, psychological theories tend to prioritize individual development, relating at most to couples or parents and children in the nuclear family, ignoring the multigenerational context of family connections that pattern our lives. But our society's swiftly changing family patterns, which assume many configurations over the life span, are forcing us to take a broader view of both development and normalcy. Those milestones around which life cycle models have been oriented (birth, marriage, childbearing, and death) hold very different roles in the lives of families in the twenty-first century than they did in earlier times. Even in the three decades of this book's history, we have revised the definitions of life cycle phases and their meanings with each of our five editions to reflect our evolving understanding of this framework and the exciting and dramatically changing realities of the life cycle of families in the United States in our times.

The tremendous life-shaping impact of one generation on those following is hard to overestimate. For one thing, three, four, and sometimes now five different generations must adjust to life cycle transitions simultaneously. While one generation is moving toward old age, the next is contending with late middle age, caregiving, or the empty nest. The next generations cope with establishing careers and intimate peer adult relationships, having and raising children, and adolescents, while the youngest generations are focused on growing up as part of the system. Naturally, there is an intermingling of the generations, and events at one level have a powerful effect on relationships at each other level. The important impact of events and relationships in the grandparental generation is routinely overlooked by therapists who focus only on the nuclear family. Indeed, human beings are unique for the role grandparents and other adults play in parenting (Bateson, 2010). This supportive role is supremely important for our very survival as a species, as the extra caretaking provided by grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other adults is very protective for children's development.

The developmental literature has also largely ignored the powerful impact children have on adult development. Children's role in changing and "growing up" their parents, as parents respond to the unfolding of their children's lives, is lost in a unidirectional linear framework. It also ignores the powerful role grandchildren often play in promoting their grandparents' development, just as grandparents are often a major influence on their development (Mueller, Wilhelm, & Elder, 2002; Mueller & Elder, 2003). Children are actually a major impetus for growth for older generations. Indeed, there is suggestive evidence that having only daughters impacts fathers' feminist sympathies, and the more daughters they have, the more impacted they are (Washington, 2007). Just as parents, siblings, peers, and neighbors influence us (Bertrand, Luttmer, & Mullainathan, 2000; Fernandez, Fogli, & Olivetti, 2004), so do our children. Far from being the one-way street that most life cycle formulations have offered us, our lives continually spiral through multigenerational and contextual connections with those who come before us, those who go with us through life, and those who come after us.

In addition to what we have inherited from past generations and what we learn from our children, as we move through the family life cycle, there is also, of course, the impact of living in a given place at a given time. It is always important

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to consider the cohort to which family members belong, that is, the period in history when they grew up. The cohort to which people belong historically influences their worldview, their sense of possibility, and their beliefs about life cycle transitions. Each generation or cohort is different, as cultures evolve through time, influenced by the social, economic, and political history of their era, which makes their world view different from the views of those born in other times (Elder & Shanahan, 2006; Elder & Giele, 2009; Gladwell, 2008).

Cohorts born in different cultures and living through different periods vary, of course, in fertility, mortality, acceptable gender roles, migration patterns, education, attitudes toward child-rearing, couple relationships, family interrelationships, and aging. Those who lived through the Great Depression and World War II, those who experienced the Black migration to the North in the 1940s, the baby boomer generation that grew up in the 1950s, those who came of age during the Vietnam War in the 1960s, and cohorts who grew up during the Reagan years, will have profoundly different orientations to life, influenced by the times in which they have lived. For more references on cohorts, see Elder (1992, 1999); Elder and Shanahan (2006); Elder and Johnson (2002); Mueller and Elder (2003); Schaie and Elder (2005); Johnson, Foley, and Elder (2004); Neugarten (1979); Treas (2002); Shanahan and Elder (2002); Brown and Lesane-Brown (2006); Gladwell (2008).

And as Malcolm Gladwell (2008) points out, there are specifics of being at a certain key life cycle point when opportunities open up. For example, 19 percent of the wealthiest 75 people ever born anywhere in the world were born in the United States between 1830 and 1840. These people made their money in the industrial manufacturing era of the 1860s and 1870s, when Wall Street emerged, and the rules by which the economy had traditionally operated were transformed. Gladwell suggests that those born after the 1840s were too young to participate and those born before the 1830s were too old and fixed in their ways of doing things to become part of the new era. Thus, there is a certain life cycle trajectory that influences our creativity in particular ways, assuming that we have the family and community to support the endeavor.

A similar pattern occurred with the development of computers in the 1970s. Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and a great many of the other key geniuses of the computer age were born smack in the mid-1950s and came of age at the first moment when anyone had the opportunity to work on the newly developed main frame computers. They grew up in communities and families that fostered their developing interests and allowed for their creative energy. Thus, if we want to understand what creates resilient, innovative, healthy citizens, we need to look at a multiplicity of factors including the historical era, the individual, the family and its social location (in terms of class, race, and ethnicity), and the community life in which they were embedded. Each group or cohort born at a given time in history and living through various sociocultural experiences at the same life cycle phase is, to an extent, marked by its members' experiences, particularly those that occur during their "coming of age" phase of the life cycle (late adolescence and early adulthood).

Assess your comprehension of the family life cycle: a system moving through time by completing this quiz.

The Changing Patterns of the Family Life Cycle

Of course, the phases of the life cycle themselves are rather arbitrary breakdowns. The meaning of various phases is also changing in our time. For example, the phase of aging has changed dramatically in the past century, as people are living 30 years longer in the past century than they ever lived in human history. Even the phase of "retirement" has a completely different meaning in the past 50 years, as people are now in the same physical condition at 65 or 70 as they used to be in their early 50s or even younger (Bateson, 2010). The phase of midlife, some are calling it "Adulthood II" (Bateson, 2010), is also new, since there never before was a phase of active healthy adult life post child-rearing. Even the notion of childhood is not universal. It has been described as the invention of eighteenth-century

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Western society and adolescence as the invention of the nineteenth century (Aries, 1962), related to the cultural, economic, and political contexts of those eras. The notion of young adulthood as an independent phase could be thought of as an invention of the twentieth century, due to society's technological needs. In recent times, it is even suggested that we need a new phase called "adultolesence" to describe the period that is expanding at both ends in between adolescence and independent adulthood (Kimmel, 2009). Adolescence has expanded downward by about 4 years in the past century to about 12 for girls and 14 for boys. Our society has created a huge dilemma with children who are physically the size of adults, and think they should be free to act like adults, but they are often unable to support themselves for as long as 20 years from age 12 into their 30s! Where it used to be possible for someone with a high school education to support a spouse and children, this is, for the most part, no longer the case. In general, the tasks of finishing one's education, leaving home, finding a spouse, and becoming a parent all used to occur within a short period of time in the early 20s. But within the past generation, these tasks have been spread out and changed so that the average marriage does not occur until people are in their late 20s, and education may continue until at least that late. So there may be an increasing phase of "preparation" for adulthood during which unlaunched children require ongoing parental support in a very changed life cycle process than has ever been the case before.

The inclusion of women as independent individuals could be said to be a construct of the late twentieth century. The lengthy phases of midlife, the empty nest, and older age have certainly been developments primarily of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, brought about by the smaller number of children and the greatly increased life span of our times. Given the current changes in the family, the twenty-first century may become known for an even more expanded launching phase, influenced by the educational requirements of the postindustrial age. We are also certainly involved in a transformation in our concept of marriage and of nurturing/caretaking relationships with both children and older family members. So we must be extremely cautious about stereotyping people who do not fit into traditional norms for marriage, or having children, as if these were in themselves measures of maturity, which they are not. We must consider in our clinical assessment the critical life cycle challenges of individuals and families at each point in their lives, while being careful not to marginalize those whose life courses differ from the norms of the majority. As Johnnetta Cole (1996) put it: "No one family form—nuclear, extended, single-parent, matrilineal, patrilineal, fictive, residential, nonresidential—necessarily provides the ideal form for humans to live or raise children in" (p. 75).

And we must keep in mind that the family of the past, when the extended family reigned supreme, should not be romanticized as a time when mutual respect and satisfaction existed between the generations. The traditional, more stable multigenerational extended family was supported by patriarchy, sexism, classism, racism, and heterosexism. In those traditional family structures, respect for parents and obligations to care for elders typically went along with their control of resources, and was often reinforced by religious and secular sanctions against those who did not go along with the ideas of the dominant group. Now, with the increasing ability of younger family members to determine their own fate regarding marriage and work, the power of elders to demand filial piety is reduced.

Family life cycle patterns are changing dramatically in the past century. In 1900, the average life expectancy in the United States was 47 years; by the year 2000, dying before old age has become a rare event. About 75 percent of the population lives beyond their 65th birthday, whereas, in 1850, only 2 percent of people lived to this birthday (Skolnick, 2013)! Half of the longevity increase of all human history has taken place since 1900. At that time, half of all parents experienced the death of a child; by 1976, this rate was only 6 percent. In 1900, 25 percent of children had lost a parent by death before the age of 15; by 1976, only 5 percent of children experienced this. In 1900, one out of 62 children had lost both parents; by 1976, this was only 1 out of 1800 (Skolnick, 2013).

At the same time that we are living much longer and experiencing much less untimely loss than ever

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in history, our couple and parent–child patterns have been changing rapidly. One of the greatest changes in living patterns in the United States in recent years is the increase in single-person households. Since 1960, the percentage of people living alone has doubled. Today, 27 percent of all households consist of one person, the highest level in U.S. history (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Overall changes in family life cycle patterns have escalated dramatically, in recent decades owing to many societal patterns as indicated in Figure 1.1.

Despite the fact that in our era nuclear families often live on their own and at great distance from extended-family members, they are still part of the larger multigenerational system, their past, present, and anticipated future relationships being intertwined. Family members have many more choices than they did in the past: whether or whom to marry; where to live; how many children to have, if any; how to conduct relationships within the immediate and extended family; and how to allocate family tasks. Our society has moved from family ties that were obligatory to those that seem voluntary, with an accompanying increase in ambiguity of the norms for relationships. Relationships with siblings and parents are fairly often disrupted by occupational and geographic mobility as families move through the life cycle; even couples are increasingly managing long-distance relationships.

Another major change in life cycle patterns is that child-rearing, which used to occupy adults for their entire active life span, now generally occupies less than half of adult life prior to old age. Even women who choose primary roles as mother and homemaker now face an "empty nest" phase that is likely to be longer than the number of years they devote to child care. The meaning of family is thus changing drastically, and there are often no agreed-upon values, beyond child-rearing, by which families define their connectedness.

Indeed, the notion of the nuclear family seems to be an invention of the industrial age. Prior to that, families lived in community groups, but with mechanized transportation and the need for concentrated groups of workers for factories, the size of family groups became smaller. In traditional societies, when children were raised in large family groups, there were usually three or more caregiving adults for each child younger than six, and there was little privacy. Through most of history, families lived in clans of extended families of about 40 people (Perry, 2002). By 1500 in the west, the average household had decreased to 20 people, by 1850 to 10, and by 2000 to less than 3 in the United States with, as stated earlier, 27 percent living alone!

In our society, with three people or fewer in the average household, families often do not even eat family meals together, and spend a great percent of available family time watching TV or on the computer (Perry, 2002). Children, young adults, as well as parents who have launched their children, and the aging, tend to live in age-segregated cohorts. Age segregation is a big factor in the frequent isolation of family units, which is also a result of the high mobility of families and the frequent lack of stable, long-lasting community networks.

Figure 1.1 Recent societal changes influencing life cycle patterns.

- A lower birth rate
- Longer life expectancy
- The changing role of women
- The rise in unmarried motherhood
- The rise in unmarried couples
- Increasing single-parent adoptions
- Increasing LGBT couples and families
- Increasing longevity with the implications of caretaking needs at the end of life
- Greater physical distance among family members
- Increasing work time, especially for women
- High divorce and remarriage rates
- Increasing two-paycheck marriages to the point where they are now the norm
- Changing household composition: more single-person households than ever before

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The changing role of women has been central in changing family living patterns. Almost half of the U.S. labor force is made up of women (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011), which means they have less time to be social connectors within the family and within the community. Yet, our social institutions still operate mainly on the assumption that women in families will do all the caretaking society needs without compensation. And women are still, largely, trying to do this caretaking. The "typical" caregiver in the United States is a woman in her 40s, who works outside the home, and spends more than 20 hours a week providing unpaid care (Family Caregiver Alliance, 2009; Folbre, 2012). But, because our society does not reward attention to the needs of others, women, shockingly, have no Social Security benefits for any time they have spent caretaking! They often experience serious economic losses for the time they spend caring for others, including lost wages, health insurance and other job benefits, and lower retirement savings (Rivers & Barnett, 2013a).

There is also an increasing chasm between less fortunate children, who grow up in poverty with financially pressed, often single parents, and more advantaged children, who grow up in comfortable circumstances with highly educated dual-earner parents. While privileged children live lives with many scheduled activities and have little time for free play, children in poor families often have no access to resources that would support their development and education at all. These profound differences create a huge differential even in longevity between the rich and the poor. Education is, in fact, a powerful differential in the potential for a longer, healthier life (Kolata, 2007; Vaillant, 2012). In 1980, the differential was only 3 years, but that difference has increased to 10 years (Pear, 2008). At the age of 35, even a year of more education leads to as much as a year and a half longer life expectancy (Pear, 2008). Children, in general, might develop very differently if our society provided real equity in access to education and health care, most of all for our youngest citizens (Neuman & Celano, 2012; Friedman, 2012). If we as a society really believe in social justice, we owe it to our children to be accountable to them, rather than individualizing our response to child problems with punishment, medication, and court sanctions. What if we required children to be accountable to the community in making up for their misdeeds? Speck and Attneave (1973) recommended such interventions decades ago. If we were accountable to our children, they could be accountable back to the community of those who care for them, and our world might begin to look very different (Perry, 2002).

Our social institutions must change to address the needs of families today. Hopefully, the more flexible upcoming generations will assist in this process and the universality of changes in families' structure will bring about new thinking on family and social policy and a new attention to the integrity of families in their community context.

Assess your comprehension of the changing patterns of the family life cycle by completing this quiz.

Dimensions of Human Development in the Context of the Family and Society

This chapter and this book attempt to broaden traditional Euro-American formulations of human development, which have begun with the individual as a psychological being and generally defined development as growth in the human capacity for autonomous functioning. In African and Asian cultures by contrast, the very conception of human development begins with a definition of a person as a social being and defines development as the evolution of the human capacity for empathy and connection. It makes much more sense to think of human development always in the context of the family and society (Korin, McGoldrick, & Watson, 1996; Jordan, 1997). This framework defines maturity by our ability to live in respectful relation to others and to our complex and multifaceted world. Maturity requires us to appreciate our interconnectedness and interdependence on others and to behave in interpersonally respectful ways, controlling our impulses and acting on the basis of our beliefs and values, even if others do not share them. This view of maturity requires the ability to empathize, trust, communicate, collaborate, and

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respect others who are different and to negotiate our interdependence with our environment and with our friends, partners, families, communities, and society in ways that do not entail the exploitation of others.

Most previous theories of "normal" human development proposed supposedly inherent, age-related, developmental stages for the individual (Erikson, 1963, 1994; Levinson, 1986, 1996; Sheehy, 1977, 1995; Vaillant, 1977; and others). Even many feminist theorists have ignored the family system in their effort to move away from traditional notions of the family, and act as if the individual existed in society with no mediating family context.

Part of the pull, even for family therapists, to revert to psychodynamic thinking whenever the individual is under consideration, seems to come from the predominance of models of psychology built on Freud and Erikson's ideas of psychosocial development. Compared to Freud's narrow focus on human development evolving through different erogenous zones, Erikson's (1963, 1968) outline of eight stages of human development was an effort to highlight the interaction of the developing child with society. However, Erikson's stages actually emphasize not relational connectedness of the individual but the development of individual characteristics (mostly traits of autonomy) in response to the demands of social interaction (Erikson, 1963). Thus, trust, autonomy, industry, and the formation of an identity separate from his family are supposed to carry a child to young adulthood, at which point he is suddenly supposed to know how to "love," go through a middle age of "caring," and develop the "wisdom" of aging. This discontinuity—a childhood and adolescence focused on developing one's own individuality and autonomy—expresses exactly what we believe is wrong with developmental norms of male socialization even today; they devalue by neglect most of the major tasks of adulthood: collaboration, interdependence, intimacy, caring, teamwork, mentoring, and sharing one's wisdom.

We want to draw attention to the developmental transitions required as people move through life and to help clinicians think in terms of where people are in their life cycle development and what tasks they need to accomplish at this phase. We believe it is essential to embrace and affirm (with all their complexities) the importance of all levels of the human system: individual, familial, and social.

Although we do not believe life cycle stages are inherent or universal, we do believe that individuals and families transform, and need to transform, their relationships as they evolve, to adapt to changing circumstances over the life course. Moving to a new phase requires a change of the system itself. That is, family members must change their roles and rules of relating as they move to a new phase. Most of these phases pertain to entries and exits of family members or to changes in the nature of family members' relationships, role functioning, and status in relation to each other. Coupling and having children are, of course, the major life cycle phases of family member expansion, while launching and death are the major phases of contraction. The relationships and roles of family members with each other must also shift as parenting phases move from parents raising young children, to parents managing adolescents, to parents launching young adults, to parents welcoming their children's partners and their families, to midlife adults caring for aging parents. Each of these phases requires major change in how the family is organized and how it functions. All families must renegotiate their relationships with each other many times as they move through life. When families cannot adapt to individual and systemic changes as their life cycle phases require, they become stuck and their healthy development is subverted.

Our conceptualization of human development broadens the focus from discrete tasks and stages of accomplishment to an identity which evolves in the context of our families, and our social and cultural world, including dimensions of gender, class, race, spirituality, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. We believe that these dimensions of culture structure development in fundamental ways. Because our society so quickly assigns roles and expectations based on gender, culture, class, and race, children's competences are not milestones that they reach individually, but rather accomplishments that evolve within the complex web of these dimensions. Racial, religious, and other prejudices are generally learned emotionally in childhood and are very hard to eradicate later, even if one's intellectual beliefs change.

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Children's acquisition of cognitive, communicative, physical, emotional, and social skills to succeed over the life course is circumscribed by the social context in which they grow up. Our evaluation of their abilities is meaningful only if these constraints are taken into account.

Developing a schema that examines human development by including milestones of emotional connectedness from earliest childhood has drawn us to the work of those whose perspectives have gone beyond White male development. These include Hale-Benson (1986), who explored the multiple intelligences and other developmental features she identified in African American children; Comer and Poussaint (1992), who factored racism and its effects into their blueprint for the development of healthy Black children; Ian Canino and Jeanne Spurlock (2000), who outlined many ways in which minority ethnic groups socialize their children; and Joan Borysenko (1996), whose descriptions of the stages of female development appear to have universal applicability for understanding interdependence, a concept that girls and children of color learn early, but that is ignored in traditional western theories of development.

Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, and Johnson (1993), and Burton, Winn, Stevenson, and Clark (2004), and their colleagues argue for the importance of a life cycle perspective because it is based on interdisciplinary ways of thinking, being a framework that emerged from the cross-fertilization of the sociology of aging, demographic cohort analysis, and the study of personal biography in social psychology and history. In their view, a life cycle perspective represents a dynamic approach to the study of human development by focusing on the interlocking nature of individual trajectories within kinship networks in the context of temporal motion, culture, and social change. They have highlighted the importance of a life cycle perspective for research, offering as it does the conceptual flexibility to design frameworks and studies that address families in their diverse contexts and structures (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993). This is a most compelling argument, and one that we highlight to encourage culturally meaningful research that includes diverse populations.

Coming from a very different context as a psychodynamically trained psychiatrist who inherited two large longitudinal research samples, George Vaillant has come to argue very similarly for the importance of a life cycle perspective based on multiple conceptualizations (1977, 1983, 1995, 2002, 2012). Vaillant, whose work has now gone on for more than 40 years, has indeed offered a magnificent developmental account of the evolution of his longitudinal research. He demonstrates the complex dynamics and interplay of his own life cycle and that of the other researchers, with the lives and theories of the men they have been studying.

Developing a self in context: Belonging

Healthy development requires establishing a solid sense of our cultural, spiritual, and psychological identity in the context of our connections to others. This context carries every child from birth and childhood through adulthood to death and defines his or her legacy for the next generation. As we have been stressing, gender, class, culture, race, sexual orientation, and spirituality structure, our developing beliefs, values, relationships, and ways of expressing emotion, prescribe each person's identity and ways of being emotionally connected to others.

This context involves the development of a sense of belonging or "home," as we go through life. Researchers on African Americans and others who have been marginalized in our society have written often about the need for "homeplace," for belonging, for rootedness, and connection to place and kin that is a crucible of affirmation for their sense of social and cultural identity (hooks, 1999). Homeplace involves multilayered, nuanced individual and family processes that are anchored in a physical space that elicits feelings of empowerment, belonging, commitment, rootedness, ownership, safety, and renewal. This includes the ability to develop relationships that provide us with a solid sense of social and cultural identity. In the long-term ethnographic and clinical research with African Americans of Burton and her colleagues, "homeplace" emerges as a pivotal force for individuals and families throughout their life course (Burton, Hurt, Eline, & Matthews,

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2001; Stevenson, Winn, Coard, & Walker-Barnes, 2003; Burton, Winn, Stevenson, & Clark, 2004).

While the particulars of the meaning of home are likely to change over the life cycle, the need for a sense of belonging remains essential to our well-being throughout life. This sense of belonging is especially important for marginalized populations, who are denied a sense of belonging by the dominant culture, and for immigrant groups, who must find ways to recreate their sense of belonging in a new culture. Many people in the United States do not seem to have an evolving sense of themselves as community members or participants in the development of a U.S. identity or as evolving citizens of a global community.

A sense of home provides the security and safety to develop self-esteem, political consciousness, and also to resist the oppressive forces of our society (Burton et al., 2004). Of course, those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender may need special adaptive strategies to find a place where they can feel at home, because the very place that others rely on fundamentally may become a place of greatest danger. This is often true as well for children whose families suffer from mental illness, violence, addictions, and other negative or disruptive forces.

Home may be a physical location, with physical associations, but it is also absolutely a spiritual location. Burton and her colleagues provide important clinical examples of the value of proactively attending to our clients' need for the continuity and belonging provided by the concept of "homeplace" (Burton et al., 2004). Transferring clients to a new therapist or a new home, or ignoring their important kin connections, even where there are serious dysfunctions, may only compound their distress. We see the concept of belonging, homeplace, and connection to what feels safe as being at the core of a meaningful life cycle assessment.

Grasping where this sense of home is for a client is an essential part of any assessment, and clinicians and policy makers who do not consider our deep-seated need for continuity and belonging as we go through life, especially through traumatic transitions and disruptions, will increase the trauma of the original experience. We can, through our clinical efforts, validate, empower, and strengthen family and community ties or, by ignoring them, perpetuate the invalidation, anomie, and disconnection of the dominant value structure of our society, which privileges individualism, autonomy, competition, and materialistic values, over connectedness to a whole network of kin with whom one is linked by history and hopefully by a shared future.

Friendship through the life cycle

As part of our sense of home and the importance of community, friendship is one of our most important resources through life. Indeed, dramatic research on women in the past few years has turned upside down five decades of stress research that focused on the fight-flight responses to stress, by demonstrating that women are more likely to "tend and befriend," that is, their tendency to turn to their friends when under stress throughout the life cycle is a major resource and protection (Taylor, Klein, Lewis, Gruenewald, Gurung, and Updegraff, 2000). It helps when marriages are in trouble, when a spouse has died, and it even contributes to longevity. While our society has a well-developed ideology about marriage and family, we have tended to relegate friendship to the cultural attic, which has blinded us to its importance throughout the life cycle (Rubin, 1993). Friends can be crucial supports from early childhood and through adolescence and young adulthood, mitigating family trauma and dysfunction and providing encouragement, socialization, and inspiration for our development. In the phases of adulthood, friends can again buffer stress, tell us the truth about ourselves, stimulate us to change our ways, and, in fact, keep us healthy. The loss of a close friend at any point in the life cycle can be a major stress. Friends should always be included on genograms and considered in our life cycle assessment and intervention. Indeed, Christakis and Fowler (2011), and others (Conniff, 2014) are suggesting through scientific research what we have always known, that our lives are majorly determined not just by nature and nurture, but by our social networks.

Developing a self in context: Gender

Although there has always been a "his" and "hers" version of development, until the late twentieth century,

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only the former was ever described in the literature (Dinnerstein, 1976; Gilligan, 1993; Miller, 1976). Most theoreticians tended to subsume female development under male development, which was taken as the standard for human functioning. Separation and autonomy were considered the primary values for male development, the values of caring, interdependence, relationship, and attention to context being considered primary only for female development. In general, developmental theories have failed to describe the progression of individuals in relationships toward a maturity of *interdependence*. Yet human identity is inextricably bound up with one's relationships to others, and the notion of complete autonomy is a delusion. Human beings cannot exist in isolation, and the most important aspects of human experience have always been relational.

Most developmental theorists, however, even feminist theorists, have espoused psychodynamic assumptions about autonomy and separation, overfocusing on relationships with mothers as the primary factor in human development.

Much of the feminist literature continued the overfocus on mothering, even while locating the mother–child dyad within a patriarchal system (Chodorow & Contratto, 1991; Dinnerstein, 1976). Most child development theories, even feminist theories (Chodorow, 1974; Gilligan, 1993), explain male development's focus on autonomy and independence as resulting from the child's need to separate from his mother by rejecting feminine qualities. Silverstein and Rashbaum (1994), Gilligan (1993), and Dooley and Fedele (2004) have effectively challenged the assumption that male development requires separating from one's mother. Gilligan (1993) critiqued Piaget's conception of morality as being tied to the understanding of rights and rules and suggested that for females, moral development centers on the understanding of responsibility and relationships, whereas Piaget's description fits traditional male socialization's focus on autonomy. Eleanor Maccoby (1990, 1999), the Stone Center at Wellesley (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Jordan, Walker, & Hartling, 2004), and others (Barnett & Rivers, 2004; Michael Kimmel, 2009, 2012, 2013) have expanded our understanding of the power dimensions in the social context of development. Their work suggests a broader conception of development for both males and females.

As women have come to insist upon the right to a personal identity, perhaps a feminist movement was inevitable. Having always had primary responsibility for home, family, and child care, women began to resist their burdens as they came to have more options for their own lives. Given their pivotal role in the family and their difficulty in maintaining concurrent functions outside the family, it is perhaps not surprising that they have been the most prone to symptom development at life cycle transitions. For men, the goals of career and family have been parallel. For women, these goals have generally presented a serious conflict. Surely, women's seeking help for family problems has much to do with their socialization, but it also reflects the special life cycle stresses on women, who have borne primary emotional responsibility for family relationships at every stage of the life cycle.

Men's roles in families are also changing. While men of color have long had more flexible family roles, White men and others are participating more in child care (Khazan, McHale, & Decourcey, 2008; Levine, Murphy, & Wilson, 1993) and housework (Byron, 2012; Barnett & Rivers, 1996; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007), and many are realizing, in their minds, if not always in action (Hochschild, 2012), that equity and partnership are a sensible ideal for couples (Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). Sociologist Michael Kimmel holds out the ideal of men cherishing and nurturing their family relationships and also reforming the norms of the public arena to increase everyone's potential to live in a way which honors family and community commitments (Kimmel, 2012). He welcomes feminism, gay liberation, and multiculturalism as blueprints for the reconstruction of masculinity. He believes that men's lives will be healed only when there is full equality for everyone (Kimmel, 2013).

Traditional norms of male development (Green, 1998; Kivel, 2010; Dolan Del Vecchio, 2008) have emphasized characteristics such as keeping emotional distance; striving for hierarchical dominance in family relationships; toughness; competition; avoidance of dependence on others; aggression as a means of conflict resolution; avoidance

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of closeness and affection with other males; suppression of feelings except anger; and avoidance of "feminine" behaviors such as nurturing, tenderness, and expressions of vulnerability. Such norms make it almost impossible for boys to achieve the sense of interdependence required for mature relationships through life. Given such distorted norms for healthy development, it is not surprising that men so often grow up with an impaired capacity for intimacy and connectedness. Our culture's distorted ideals for male development have made it hard for men to acknowledge their vulnerability, doubt, imperfection, role confusion, and desire for connection (Kimmel, 2013).

Female development was until relatively recently viewed from a male perspective that saw women as adaptive helpmates to foster male and child development. Values that were thought to be "feminine" were devalued by male theoreticians such as Erikson, Piaget, and Levinson, while values associated with men were equated with adult maturity. Concern about relationships was seen as a weakness of women (and men) rather than a human strength. George Vaillant (2002, 2012; Wolf, 2009), in the largest longitudinal study ever conducted, has come after many years to the conclusion that relationships are key to male development in the long run, a surprise to him and to many others!

In fact, women have always defined themselves in the context of their changing relationships over the life span. Erik Erikson's (1968, 1994) still widely taught eight stages of development ignored completely the evolution of our ability to communicate, "tend" or "befriend" (Taylor, 2002), characteristics that most distinguish us from all other animals. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, recent author of a wonderful book about creativity and learning in the "third chapter" of life, tries to use Erikson's scheme, but finally admits that his eighth-stage model "seems too linear and predictable to match the messier, more unruly stories people were telling me" (2009, p. 43). She has to admit as well that Erikson seems to have missed entirely the reciprocity that is such a powerful part of our "giving forward" in life. Identity is defined as having a sense of self *apart from* rather than *in relation to* one's family and says nothing about developing skill in relating to one's family or to others. It suggests that human connectedness is part of the first stage of trust versus mistrust, during the first 2 years of life, but he discusses this as attachment primarily to the mother, as have so many since then. The developmental literature, strongly influenced by the psychoanalytic tradition, has focused almost exclusively on mothers, giving extraordinary importance to mother–child attachment in the earliest years of life, to the exclusion of all other relationships in the family or to later developmental phases. This focus has led to a psychological determinism that early child experiences with one's mother are responsible for whatever happens later in the life cycle. The complex nature of human attachments from earliest infancy has been grossly oversimplified in discussions of early attachment that focus primarily on mothers. All of Erikson's five stages from infancy to adulthood focus on individual rather than relational issues: autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, and identity versus role confusion.

Doubt, shame, guilt, inferiority, and role confusion are all defined as counter to a healthy identity. Yet these concepts all have great significance in our understanding of our interrelationship to other human beings and to nature. We have to recognize that we need to develop skills in listening and learning, admitting our doubts and mistakes. While Erikson's own personal life story may explain his skewed perspective (McGoldrick, Gerson & Petry, 2008; see www.multiculturalfamily.org for Erikson's genogram life story), but we must still challenge such perspectives on human development. In Erikson's scheme, even the concept of generativity is ignored during the time of greatest human creativity, bearing and raising children, and appears only at midlife!

Children's sense of security evolves through their connection and identification with those who care for them—mothers, fathers, siblings, nannies, babysitters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, and all the others who participate in raising them. Traditional formulations of child development have ignored this rich context and offered us a one-dimensional lens for viewing a child's development: through the mother–child relationship. In most

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cultures throughout history, mothers have not even been the primary caretakers of their children, usually being busy with other work. Older siblings, grandparents, and other elders were more often the primary caregivers of young children. When we focus so myopically on mothers, we not only project impossible expectations on them, but we are also blinded to the richness of the environments in which most children grow up.

Eleanor Maccoby, who has been writing for many years about gender differences in sex-role development, has repeatedly pointed out that while innate gender differences do not appear to be major, the social context constricts girls from earliest childhood, and gender segregation is pervasive. This seems to be influenced primarily by boys' orientation toward competition and dominance, to which girls seem to be averse, and girls' apparent minimal ability to influence boys when they are together (Maccoby, 1999). It seems natural that girls are averse to interacting with anyone who is unresponsive and that they begin to avoid such partners. But what is it in the social context that reinforces boys for being unresponsive to girls? And what can we do to change these patterns? Obviously, there is much that we need to do as adults to ensure that girls' opinions are validated and given space in social interactions, but we must change our socialization of boys to increase their sensitivity and responsiveness to others. This is something that must be worked on from earliest childhood, if girls are to achieve equity in relationships.

Women tend to enter into deeper levels of reciprocity with their children than men do and to communicate with them better. Extensive gender segregation continues in workplaces (Chugh & Brief, 2008; Alksnis, Desmarais, & Curtis, 2008) and in some social-class and ethnic groups in which leisure time is still spent largely with others of the same sex even after marriage.

Kagan and Moss (1962) a generation ago traced achievement-oriented adults back to their relationships with their mothers, but did not look at their relationships with their fathers. They found that achievement-oriented males had very close, loving relationships with their mothers in infancy, while the females had less intense closeness with their mothers than the average. Hoffman (1972) suggested that a daughter is more likely to become achievement oriented if she does not experience the training in dependence that has generally been prescribed for girls. It appears that a mother's education and success play a larger role in the success of at least their sons.

Like Maccoby (1990, 1999), Kimmel and Messner (2008), and many others, we doubt that children's development of distinct styles of interacting has much to do with the fact that they are parented primarily by women. Maccoby thinks that processes within the nuclear family have been given too much credit and blame for sex-typing. The larger society's attitudes about gender roles, conveyed especially through the peer group, appears most relevant as the setting where children discover their differential social power: boys discover the requirement of maintaining their status in the male hierarchy, and the gender of friends becomes paramount. Many of the apparent gender differences we observe are undoubtedly not gender differences at all, but differences resulting from being in different positions in society (Kimmel, 2012).

Parents expect and reinforce different behaviors in their sons than in their daughters (Mallers et al., 2010; Rivers & Barnett, 2013b). They treat boys and girls differently from earliest infancy. In general, they discuss emotions—with the exception of anger—more with their daughters than with their sons. They use more emotional words when talking to their daughters (Brody & Hall, 1993). Fathers tend to treat young boys and girls in a somewhat more gendered way than mothers do (Raley & Bianchi, 2006). The "appropriateness" of these behaviors is then validated by the media as well as by teachers, pediatricians, relatives, babysitters, and by parents' own observations of children's play groups. Meanwhile, science argues about whether these are inborn differences or self-fulfilling prophecies. Only if we expand our lens to children's full environment can we properly measure the characteristics that may help them to attain their full potential and see clearly the influences that limit it. Seo (2007), for example, found that a father's involvement with his young children had a long-term influence on their children's later-life satisfaction.

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The connected self: Beyond autonomy and self-determination

Infants and toddlers begin early to develop trust in their immediate environment, which ideally supports their safety and development. As soon as they reach the point of leaving the safety of their home environment, however, developing trust depends on how their cultural group is positioned in the larger world. It takes greater maturity for children to be able to develop their sense of self in a nonaccepting environment in which they do not receive support, than in a context in which everyone in the outside world affirms their values. Members of the dominant groups of our society receive this affirmation daily, whereas many others do not. A gay or lesbian child, a disabled child, a girl, a child of color, or a poor child is often stigmatized and vilified, and is not the one depicted in books, TV programs, and movies as the "valued" child. Thus, a nonprivileged child who does manage to develop a strong self has accomplished a developmental feat beyond that of a child who has always been affirmed both at home and in the larger society (Kunjufu, 1995). Our theories of child development must take this into account.

Actually, because of the ways U.S. history is still mistaught to our children, emphasizing only the good of White domination and minimizing racial and gender inequities that have been so built into our nation's structure, we are still having to fight for them to receive liberty and justice for all. Some children may lack certain adaptive skills because they live in such an affirming, nonchallenging environment that they are sheltered from feeling "other" when messages are given about our heroes and our exploits from Columbus on down to current politics. The dominant versions of our history that are taught to children may keep them oblivious to the contributions of people of color to their lives, to our nation and to the development of civilization as a whole (Loewen, 2008, 2010). Children who have not had the experience of being "other" because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, or other reasons have a tendency to be oblivious to the experiences of those whose lives are not part of the dominant group in our society.

We must appreciate the adaptive and resilient strategies developed by families that are not part of the privileged group in our society. Children raised in poverty, of whom a much larger proportion are children of color, are incredibly disadvantaged in their development, having less access to a safe home and neighborhood environments, to adequate education and health care. They are less supported in every way by our society. Their families experience more illness, unemployment, incarceration, disruption, and untimely death than others, and their dreams tend to be short circuited throughout their lives. In addition, sometimes "children who cannot conceptualize a future for themselves, do not have the motivation to defer the gratification found in premature sexual activity or substance abuse" (Hale, 2001, p. 43). Their life cycle trajectories are stunted by their lack of support at every level: racism, class oppression, and growing up in physically and psychologically dangerous environments. Everything must be done to support their resilience and nurture their development as children. It is much more difficult to change their life course, if they are not supported in early childhood (Goldstein & Brooks, 2012).

Given the American focus on individualism and free enterprise, it is not surprising that autonomy and competitiveness have been considered desirable traits leading toward economic success in the marketplace, and qualities to be instilled in children (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993). While self-direction and self-motivation are excellent characteristics, they can be realized only in privileged individuals who have health and resources and are helped to do so by their families and by society. Development requires much more than intellectual performance, analytical reasoning ability, and a focus on one's own achievements, as if they resulted from completely autonomous efforts. The people with the most privilege in our society—especially those who are White and male and who have financial and social status—tend to be systematically kept unconscious of their dependence on others (Coontz, 1992, 1998, 2006). They remain unaware of the hidden ways in which our society supports their so-called autonomous functioning. Thus, many White men who benefited from the GI bill to attain their education now consider it a form of welfare to provide education to minorities of the current generation. Those who are privileged tend to develop connections amidst a web of dissociations. Their privilege generally maintains

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their buffered position and allows them the illusion of complete self-determination. When people of any class or culture are raised to deny their emotional dependence on others, they tend to experience a terrible awakening during divorce, illness, job loss, or other adversities of life. Indeed, the most challenging aspect of development involves our beliefs about, and interaction with, others who are different from ourselves. Our level of maturity on the crucial dimension of tolerance and openness to difference is strongly influenced by how our families of origin, communities, cultures of origin, and our society as a whole have dealt with difference.

We believe maturity depends on seeing past myths of autonomy and self-determination. The connected self is grounded in a recognition of human interdependence. It requires that we appreciate our basic dependence on each other and on nature as illustrated in Figure 1.2.

We believe that children are best able to develop their full potential, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually, when they are exposed in positive ways to diversity and encouraged to embrace it. Children who are least restricted by rigid gender, cultural, or class role constraints have the greatest likelihood of developing an evolved sense of a connected self.

Figure 1.2 Skills for mature relating.

Skills of Mature Relating Include the Following Abilities:

1. To listen with an open heart, without attacking or becoming defensive. Relate with openness, curiosity, tolerance, empathy, and respect for people who are different from ourselves.
2. To collaborate with others generously at work, at home, at play and in community activities.
3. To accept one's self and maintain one's values and beliefs, even if others do not agree.
4. To engage in nurturing, mentoring, and caring for others and accepting their care in return.
5. To consider other people and future generations, when evaluating sociopolitical issues such as the environment and human rights.

This framework requires us to learn to control our emotional reactivity so that, unlike other animals, we can control our behavior and think about how we want to respond, rather than being at the mercy of our fears, phobias, compulsions, instincts, and sexual and aggressive impulses. This kind of reactivity has nothing to do with authentic and appropriate emotional expressiveness. Daniel Goleman (2006) discusses this process of mind over emotional reactivity, attributing to Aristotle the original challenge to manage one's emotional life with one's intelligence: "Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way—this is not easy" (cited in Goleman, 2006, p. ix). The question is, as Goleman says, "How can we bring intelligence to our emotions, civility to our streets and caring to our communal life?" (2006, p. xiv).

Our assessment of development must also take into account the societal obstacles to a person's accomplishing the tasks leading to mature functioning. Women and people of color have generally grown up with an oppressive socialization that actually forbids the assertive, self-directed thinking and behavior essential for this definition of maturity. Girls in this society are expected to put the needs of others before their own. People of color are expected to defer to the beliefs and behaviors of White people, and the poor are expected to perform as well as the privileged without the same resources. A White male will generally be responded to with respect for asserting his beliefs, while a woman or person of color may be sanctioned or even harmed or ostracized by the community. Our developmental model must take this uneven societal playing field into account. Over the past 50 years, our society has made many strides in rebalancing support for girls' development and acknowledgment of the developmental needs of children of color and others who are not part of the dominant group. But we still have far to go to defeat the destructive gender and racial stereotyping of our children and to promote the full individual and social development of all children in our society. We are indeed the most flexible species on earth because of

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our social brains, which enable us to coordinate our needs with those of people around us. Our success as a species, as Shelly Taylor says in *The Tending Instinct* (2002), has come entirely from this gregarious nature. We owe it to the next generation not to permit the current deterioration of relationship and of community life to continue. No goal is more important for our future than developmental connectedness.

Assess your comprehension of dimensions of human development in the context of the family and society by completing this quiz.

A Multicontextual Life Cycle Framework for Understanding Human Development

We believe that individual development always takes place in the context of emotional relationships, the most significant of which are family relationships, whether by blood, adoption, marriage, or informal commitment. Families are always embedded in a social and cultural context. From this perspective, it is impossible to understand individuals without assessing their current and historical family and cultural contexts as they are evolving through time. The family is the most immediate focus for therapeutic intervention because of its primacy in mediating both individual and social forces, bridging the two.

Whatever affects one member of a family affects other members as well—siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, friends, godparents, and godchildren. The question often is, how involved are they with each other and how involved are they willing to be? What happens to an individual also has community ramifications. A person's education, health care, and safety require various community resources throughout the life cycle. Access to resources for help with an alcohol problem, mental illness, a stroke or other disability will have profound implications for the whole family's negotiation of their individual and family life cycles.

From the 1960s at least, some theorists began looking beyond the individual to the life cycle of families as well, the brilliant pioneers Reuben Hill (1970) and Evelyn Duvall (1977) being preeminent among them. Their organizing principles for thinking about family development were primarily focused on couples and children. However, as the family is no longer organized primarily around married heterosexual couples raising their children, but rather involves many different structures and organizing principles, identifying family stages and emotional tasks for various clusters of family members is complex. Yet, even within this diversity, there are some unifying principles that we use to define stages and tasks, such as the primary importance of addition and loss of family members for the family's emotional equilibrium through life's many transitions (Hadley, Jacob, Milliones, Caplan, & Spitz, 1974).

We offer the following map to help conceptualize the complexities of the life cycle, showing the individual (mind, body, spirit) in the context of the multigenerational family system (immediate family, and extended family and kinship system), both of which are always embedded in the larger social context (friends, community, culture, and the larger society), and all moving through time together (Figure 1.3).

Time, of course, never stands still, so we wish we could have a three-dimensional map to convey the motion of the entire system, which is always evolving. We have drawn the map with the three inner circles representing the spiritual self, the psychological or intrapsychic self or mind, and the body or physical self. The two middle circles represent the immediate family and extended family and informal kinship network. The four outer circles represent the sociocultural context, including the friendship and community systems, the culture, and the larger society.

All clinical assessment involves taking into account the individual, family, and social context in which people are living. We have outlined in Figure 1.4 the core dimensions of each level of the context. Whatever the presenting problem is, the three levels of individual, family, and social context should be carefully evaluated. Our discussion of the three levels begins with the outside level, the social context, to highlight its importance and because it is so often given short shrift in the assessment of clinical problems. This assessment guideline is a general framework with questions to be covered, not a guide for conducting an interview. We believe clients should be assessed on the dimensions we have outlined here.

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